

**PEDAGOGY OF PRACTICE: A HISTORY OF ART EDUCATION AND  
ART INSTITUTIONS IN NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY  
BENGAL (1850 – 1951)**

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARTS  
AT  
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY

**BY**  
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**2022**

Certified that the Thesis entitled

**Pedagogy of Practice: A History of Art Education and Art Institutions in  
Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Bengal (1850 – 1951)**

Submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at  
Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the supervision of

**Professor Tapati Guha-Thakurta**

And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any  
degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.

Countersigned by the

Supervisor:

Dated:

Candidate:

Dated

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## Acknowledgement

During the long course of my PhD research, I have received much support, encouragement and inspiration to see through my work and keep asking questions through my work. The most important role has been played by my supervisor, Prof. Tapati Guha-Thakurta, whose life's work had given me the impetus to take up this PhD thesis. Her work had made a strong impact on me while I was pursuing my Master Degree in 2006-08, and had reinforced the questions and interventions in art pedagogic history, which I wanted to act upon. And this thesis would not have seen the light of the day without her guidance, tough questions, patience, precision and care. Her commitment to her work, against all possible odds is a crucial life lesson that I have learned from her, and I am forever indebted to her for seeing me through this journey.

The extension of my foundation from Fine Arts (History of Art) to Social Sciences, has been a challenging, but exciting and a necessary progress. And Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta and its faculties have provided me with the optimal scope and guidance to navigate through the discipline. I would like to thank, Prof. Partha Chatterjee, Prof. Lakshmi Subramanian, Prof. Manabi Majumdar, Prof. Rosinka Chowdhuri, Prof. Anirban Das, Prof. Priya Sangameswaran, and Prof. Trine Nileena Banerjee, for the class lectures, seminars, and informal discussions which shaped my perception of the field of study, and its scope. I would also like to thank Abhijit Bhattacharya and Kamalika Mukherjee for their support and encouragement and for opening up to me their hard work and accomplishments in the practice of archiving of the Histeshranjan Sanyal Memorial Collection. This too has been a tremendous learning curve for me. I am also grateful to Sanchita Bhattacharya, Librarian CSSSC, who has extended her help and generosity whenever needed. I also extend my gratitude to Kavita Bhowal and all other staffs of the PhD programme, who coordinated all the administrative work with me. I am also thankful to Abhijit Ghosh, Debajyoti Das, Sreeparna Das and all other non-teaching staff of CSSSC for being an incredible support system for the researchers of the institution.

My research has taken me to numerous archives and museums in Calcutta and London, and I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the staffs of the National Library, Kolkata, Directorate of State Archives, Kolkata, Indian Museum, Kolkata, Rakesh Sahani and the Rasa Gallery Archives, Kolkata. I am also obligated to the India Office Records – British Library London, National Art Library, London and the Victoria & Albert Museum Archive from which

a substantial range of material has been sourced for this thesis. It has been a vital avenue of learning, in this research journey.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude all my former teachers at Kala Bhavan, Visva-Bharati, for eternally enriching me and encouraging me in all my endeavors. I am grateful to Prof. R. Siva Kumar, Prof. Janak Jhankar Narzary, Prof. Sanjoy Kumar Mallick, Prof. Anshuman Dasgupta, Prof. Soumik Nandy Majumdar, Prof. Nirmalendu Das, Prof. Pinaki Barua, Prof. Pulak Dutta, Prof. Rishi Barua, Prof. Pankaj Panwar, and Prof. Sanchayan Ghosh, who has fundamentally molded my perception. I am indebted for their contribution and unconditional support through my entire journey.

I would like to thank Amit Danda, Subhadra Roy and Mridula Banerjee of the Kala Bhavan Nandan Museum for providing me with access to the digital resources and collection of the museum, and for their guidance in navigating the repository. I am equally grateful to Nilanjan Banerjee and all the staff of the Rabindra Bhavan Archive and Museum, Visva Bharati for their endearing help in the research work. I also record my gratitude to the student community of Kala Bhvana for engaging with me in multiple discussions and questionnaires during my field work for this research. I thank Mimi Radhakrishnan, Jishu Bhattacharya, Madhumita Bhattacharya for providing me their home and care, during my field work in Santiniketan.

I would like to extent my gratitude to the principal Chhatrapati Dutta, and faculties Swati Bhattacharya, Soujit Das, Mrinmoyee Deb of the Government College of Art & Craft, Kolkata for their meaningful support and encouragement. I have also received encouragement and help from the larger art fraternity and I am particularly grateful to Paula Sengupta Ushmita Sahu, Samit Das, Arkaprava Basu, Sumona Chakraborty, Santosh Sakhinala, Samindranath Majumdar, Sujata Kar Saha, Soma Bhowmik and Shubham Roy Chowdhury

This Ph.D. research period has been long and demanding, and I am thankful to my friends Agnijita Mukherjee, Ritwika Mishra, Deborti Ghosh, Mrinalini Vasudevan, Shohini Gupta, Sahana Bajpei, Richard Herrett, Diya Deb, Saikat Dutta, Shameek Ray, Arijit Mandal, and to all my other friends, for upholding my sanity and for supporting me through thick and thin. A special vote of thanks goes out to Sukruta Alluri for helping me with the editing of this dissertation and being a crucial support system. I am glad that you have been there since before the beginning of this journey until the very end. I am specially thinking about Rajasri Mukhopadhyay, who had been a fellow researcher, friend and an elder sister to me during this

PhD journey, and whose sudden demise has left me distraught. I will remember her for the enthusiasm and love for her work, and our mutual admiration for cinema and art history.

I am obliged to my mother-in-law Mousumi Samaddar and father-in-law Swapan Samaddar for being my support system throughout and for providing me with a home I have yearned for. Their relentless encouragement and unconditional love and care, have sustained me through this period and I am deeply gratified for their presence in my life.

I have inherited from my parents the love, dedication and allegiance towards the art institutions in Bengal, and particularly the art schools that I have studied through this research. Their life values and sensitivities has been formed through these art institutions and they have rooted in me the same sense of commitment and ethics towards the field of art practice and the fraternity. It is through their endless sacrifices and encouragement that I have been able to pursue my intents. And I dedicate this work to my mother Indrani Chakraborty and my father Prolay Chakraborty. The other key person who have constantly been the pillar of strength and a source of inspiration is my grandmother Minati Sinha. I am indebted to her for showing me the way.

The person who I cannot possibly thank enough is Prachetash Samaddar. This Ph.D. thesis would not have become a reality without his unconditional support, love, criticism, discipline and encouragement from day one of this work. He kept his aspirations on hold so that I could pursue mine. And may women find more partners like him. Thank you.

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Indian Musuem, Calcutta

Nandan Museum Archive, Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan

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**Figure 7.6 a)** – ‘Untitled’ Indu Rakshit. Gouache on paper pasted on cloth pasted on ply board; **b)** – ‘Untitled’ Gouache on Silk by Maniklal Bandopadhyay; **c)** – ‘Street Dancer’ Tempera painting by Abdul Moin, 1933

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**Figure 7.8 a)** – Cover of the Catalogue of the Exhibition of Drawings, Paintings, Engravings, Pottery and leatherwork by Rabindranath Tagore. Government School of Art; **b)** – Poster for Rabindranath Tagore’s Exhibition at the Government School of Art. Poster designed by Sartish Chandra Sinha.

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## List of Abbreviations

DSA – Department of Science and Arts

IJASM – Indian Journal of Art Science and Manufactures

ISOA – Indian Society of Oriental Art

JIAI – Journal of Indian Art and Industries

JISOA – Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art

## Introduction

“...our education should be in full touch with our complete life, economical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual; and our educational institutions should be in the very heart of our society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operations. For true education is to realize at every step how our training and knowledge have organic connection with our surroundings.”

“The mind of our educated community has been brought up within the enclosure of the modern Indian educational system. It has grown as familiar to us as our own physical body, unconsciously giving rise in our mind to the belief that it can never be changed. Our imagination dare not soar beyond its limits; we are unable to see it and judge it from outside. We neither have the courage nor the heart to say that it has to be replaced by something else, because our own intellectual life has been its special product, for which we have a natural partiality and admiration.”

– Rabindranath Tagore. *The Centre of Indian Culture*, 1919<sup>1</sup>

### Research Theme and Questions

My thesis is a study of the formative history of art pedagogy and art institutions in Bengal from 1850 to 1951. To lay out the complex binaries of art pedagogic and institutional histories in Bengal, and their evolving canons and nomenclatures, I begin with two quotes from Rabindranath Tagore’s lecture given at Bangalore, where he was invited to preside over a craft fair in 1919.<sup>2</sup> This was a point in time, when Tagore was in the process of consolidating his ideas and resources to establish Visva-Bharati. Through the lecture, Tagore attempted to evaluate the scope of pedagogic purpose, tools and methods, established by the colonial government in India and the gap it had created in knowledge production in various fields of study by the early twentieth century in India. The above two quotes from this seminal lecture grasp the moot point in pedagogic ideals, which Indian educational institutions have been grappling with for the last two centuries. The formation of taught disciplines and institutional presence in India evolved through the British methods of education and the contrasting modules

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<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Centre of Indian Culture*. First published in 1919 followed by 1921. Reprinted on the occasion of The Golden Jubilee of Santiniketan. Visva-Bharati, 1951. pp. 2-3

<sup>2</sup> Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabindra-Jibani*. Part II (1912-1936). Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan 1936

of language and knowledge configurations, introduced as the primary scope for vocation. This colonial system was a rupture in the traditional education systems prevailing in India, until the first half of the nineteenth century. This system was essentially structured on the basis of practical knowledge which would uplift and match qualified prospects and vocational proficiency of the Indian population with that of their British counterpart; and denied the distinct, diverse and indigenous knowledge generating systems which were prevailing in India.<sup>3</sup> Tagore in his lecture criticized the objectives of the colonial education system and the controlling standardization of university education, which was introduced in India. He argued that the disparate social, economic, cultural and philosophical realities of India were different from that of the West, and demanded a holistic approach in pedagogic methods.

These contradictions are more apparent when engaging with the field of art in India. It has been configured as a practice-based discipline, having negotiated with the elementary principles of British academic-art, which progressively imbibed nationalist tendencies in its approach at the turn of the century, resulting in a hybrid modernity of art practice in India. To problematize this dichotomy further, art pedagogy and art practice in India, have had to perennially accommodate the professional as well as the creative ambitions of the field, and its leanings over the early twentieth century into new 'modern and contemporary' visual styles. The second half of nineteenth century India witnessed drastic remoulding of inherited artistic lineages, the colonial classification of archaeological, art and craft objects and the intervention of European artistic perception and methodologies, largely through industrial trade and art education policies established by the British government. In response, the twentieth century artistic

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<sup>3</sup> The East India Company did promote the learning of Indian languages in India by establishing various institutions in the country. However, that system of education was debated and officially altered when British Raj was established in India. An account on this development have been discussed in Chapter One of the thesis.



practices in India were essentially formed through intersections between imbibed European artistic styles and reclaimed Indian cultural identities in image making.

Here it is crucial to consider certain fundamental but key concerns through which art pedagogy and art institutions evolved in India. Accounts of the advent of modern art education as well as modernity in Indian art is a narrative of eclectic points of view, with different regional beginnings, varying definitions of what qualified as truly ‘modern’ and ‘Indian’, and contending positions on method, material, style and ideology. At the crux of these accounts is a continuing endeavour to unravel the overlapping strands of colonial and nationalist modernity and mark the passage from the colonial to the national in the making of modern Indian art.

Geeta Kapur explains,

“Modernity takes a precipitate historical form in the postcolonial world, while its praxis produces a cultural dynamic whereby questions of autonomy, identity and authenticity come to the fore. These are desired individually but are sought to be gained in collectivity...The characteristic feature of Indian modernism, as perhaps of many postcolonial modernisms, may be that it is manifestly social and historical. But western modernism in its late phase is not the least interested in this diachronicity and opposes it in the name of a *sublimity of the new*.”<sup>4</sup>

Modernism in Indian art was a manifestation against the socio-cultural, bureaucratic and intellectual regimentation of colonial rule and a desire for new stylistic explorations and departures. Much of the early narratives on modern Indian art had been written and contextualized through artists and their individual artistic style and triumphs, much like in the West. However, unlike the trends in the Western discipline, social and institutional facilitators of modern Indian art did not occupy an equivalent discourse in Indian art history.

The thesis argues that nineteenth and twentieth century art institutions in India were correspondingly a crucial site of manifesting artistic trends and aesthetic directions in the

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<sup>4</sup>Geeta Kapur. *When was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural practices in India?* Tulika Books, 2000. p 298; Author’s emphasis.

country, significantly impacting cultural shifts. The objective of this thesis is to position art pedagogy not just as a facilitator of artistic growth and practice but as an intellectual process in itself. It attempts to throw light on how different schools of art shaped distinctive artistic characteristics. And as the region that is known to have produced the earliest manifestations of intellectual and cultural modernity in colonial India, and the earliest modern art movements, Bengal provides a unique scope for a comparative study between the colonial institutions of art pedagogy and the nationalist departures and its alternatives. Within Bengal, I have narrowed the scope to a detailed study of two main art education institutions, focusing on the formative histories of the Government School of Art, Calcutta and Kala Bhavan at Visva- Bharati, Santiniketan.

Tapati Guha-Thakurta observed, “The transition from the phase of sterile westernization to that of creative nationalism in Indian art remains in a need of a more critical enquiry. Such linear models of history leave very little room for studying either the complexities and diversities of the changes generated by Western contacts, or the specific nature and weight of nationalist preoccupations in art.”<sup>5</sup> The thesis emerges out of this critical and complex juncture of ideological overlaps and artistic departures at the turn of the twentieth century in Bengal, which, to a large extent, were shaped and nurtured through pedagogic reorientations in art practice. It argues that twentieth century modernisms in Indian art cannot be exclusively determined by tropes of artistic individualism or stylistic genealogy, but also needs critical engagement with the emerging institutional configurations of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, which defined ‘art’ as a new field of study and practice, and radically redefined the identity of the artist and the nature of artistic professions. This new domain of ‘art’ was born largely through the displacement of the varied complexes of home-grown artistic

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<sup>5</sup> Tapati Guha Thakurta, *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c.1850-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. p. 5

traditions across all regions of the subcontinent, some of which were marked out as ‘decorative arts and crafts’ (in sharp contra-distinction from ‘fine arts’) and targeted for revival and promotion under colonial tutelage in the new art schools that came to be set up in British Indian presidencies and princely states since the mid-nineteenth century. The application of a set of South Kensington modules of art and design training as the foundation for Indian art pedagogy paved the way for the formation of new canonical identities for Indian art and craft, as well as for the modern Indian artist and craftsman alongside, over the period covered by this thesis. The genres instilled in the subcontinent’s modern art history and practice through the colonial art schools – like still life, life study, free-hand drawing, geometrical drawing, technical and ornamental design, lithography, engraving and modelling – permanently formed a standardized and routine foundation of art education in India. The European nomenclatures for the categories of ‘fine’, ‘industrial’ and ‘decorative’ arts, introduced through the phenomenon of the ‘world exhibitions’, expanded the field of collection, circulation and classification of regional artistic cultures and their objects of production, segregating ‘art’ from ‘craft’ traditions, and differentiating the many variations in each of these categories on the basis of materials and methods, heredities and skills. What these trends involved were not just the creation of new epistemic entities and systems that regulated these skills and practices through the institution of the schools of art. These also gave birth to the parallel institution of the museum in colonial India, as an essential appendage of the art schools and their craft workshop units, and laid the grounds for the new discipline of art history, where the main battles would be fought between the colonial and nationalist interpretations of Indian art.

This research started with the intention of mapping a pan-Indian account of art institutional orientations and avenues of art historical knowledge that grew under colonial directives, to come to a more specific argument on the academic modules of art teaching that came to be firmly entrenched in the Government School of Art, Calcutta, vis-à-vis the alternative

pedagogic devices adopted in Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan. The aim was to locate the institutional polarities of these two key art schools of nineteenth and twentieth century Bengal through which the discipline of art history and the eclectic forms of modernism in Indian art percolated. Surveying the field in the first two years of this research however proved that even a background all-India survey of nineteenth century art schools in India would be too cumbersome, and that these two art schools in Bengal alone provides a rich gamut of data through which the research questions can be addressed. Therefore, to grasp the critical history and the impact of art institutions on the evolving practices of modern art, the thesis concentrated essentially on Bengal. It has also partly done away with the initial ideas of tracking the emergence of art history as a teaching subject and the making of museums within the art schools. This is largely because art and architectural history as a subject, while it first began to emerge as a part of the postgraduate department of Ancient Indian History and Culture at Calcutta University soon after the department came into being in 1912, remained outside the curricular scope of the art schools of the region at that time. None of the art schools, until mid-twentieth century, considered art history as a module in their taught curriculum. And finally, my intention of scrutinizing the analogous purview of art schools and art museums in Bengal was contextually tweaked to consider the ways museum collections came to reflect and enhance the teaching thrusts of the art schools. Museums that are aligned to the Government School of Art, Calcutta and Kala Bhavan, reveal binary histories and methodologies of collection and knowledge development. The range of the art collection in the Indian Museum that existed in close conjunction with the Government School of Art, Calcutta, and in the Nandan Museum at Kala Bhavan reflect the pedagogic trajectories adopted by the institution to influence the direction more of art practice than of art history. As the thesis intends to analyse the binaries of art educational tropes, regulated skill sets and professional aspirations of the two institutions, the research closely followed the art education policies and the curriculum, through which

foundational and changing pedagogic tendencies of these two art schools can be surveyed. The art pedagogic system that came into place in the colonial era has not been entirely undone in government-supported art institutions, even after seventy five years of Independence. The history of art education in Bengal of the period under survey – from the high noon of empire in the mid nineteenth century to the cusp of Independence in the mid twentieth - provides a fertile ground for exploring this anomaly. It allows us an understanding, on the one hand, of the persistence and prestige of Academic curricular training in the modern art profession outside the framework of colonization and decolonization; and, on the other hand, of the different pulls and pushes outside this curricular framework that enabled the shaping of new nationalist and modernist dispensations in modern art practice during the first decades of the twentieth century. Two main art educational institutions - in Calcutta and Santiniketan – become the obvious choices of study here. The research, as already stated, delves into the histories of the Government School of Art, Calcutta and Kala Bhavan, Visva-Bharati – analyzing their individual pedagogic ambit, their interconnection with the art collection in the museums with which they were linked, the distinct cultural and intellectual preconditions that impacted the education policies and aims of the two institutions, the evolving configuration of the curriculum, and artistic binaries and crossroads which emerged between the two art institutions. Following the life of these two key art institutions and its allied stakeholders, this research intends to put together a connected history of art pedagogy in Bengal until 1951, after which both the institutions embarked on a different phase of their absorption within the college and university education systems of post-Independence India.

To locate the complex overlaps of artistic tendencies, maturing aesthetic inclinations, the intellectual hierarchies and the pedagogic binaries between these two art institutions, the research asks certain key questions. How has the formative phase of these art schools nurtured new artistic trends and shifts in art practice? How did colonial art education policy establish

the fundamental devices of art instruction for India? How was the colonial scheme of ‘fine arts’ introduced in Indian art pedagogy and how far have the Indian art systems subscribed to British classifications? To what capacity did the art schools and art collections in museums become a site for the inculcation of art historical knowledge? In what ways did the curriculum of colonial art schools in India make a lasting impact on the method and material driven training in Indian art institutions? Through these questions, the research intends to explore the genealogies and shifting thrusts of modern art training in the context of the larger political and socio-cultural changes that were taking place in Bengal during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As the research emerges from the current urgencies of re-contextualizing the direction of art pedagogy in the twenty-first century, the thesis also questions – with a purpose of pushing conventional artistic boundaries for art students – the ways in which museums and art colleges negotiate their authoritative relevance in cross-disciplinary artistic practices.

Irit Rogoff sums up this dichotomy, as she observes –

“Our initial question concerned whether an idea of an ‘academy’ (as a moment of learning within the safe space of an academic institution) was a metaphor for a moment of speculation, expansion, and reflexivity without the constant demand of proven results. If this was a space of experimentation and exploration, then how might we extract these vital principles and apply them to the rest of our lives? How might we also perhaps apply them to our institutions? Born of a belief that the institutions we inhabit can potentially be so much more than they are, these questions ask how the museum, the university, the art school can surpass their current functions?”<sup>6</sup>

Drawing a cue from Rogoff’s argument of institutional capacities negotiating with artistic ambitions of the present time, the underlying objective of this thesis is to locate the scope of art pedagogic directions adapted in Bengal, and to see how these may provide a critical point of reference towards the expanding field of engagement in ‘pedagogy as a method’ and ‘pedagogy as a site’ for modern and contemporary art histories.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Irit Rogoff, “Turning”, *E-Flux Journal*, November 2008. p. 2

<sup>7</sup> The Asia Art Archive has been extensively engaging with mapping and developing a methodology and theory of art pedagogy in South and South East Asia. See ‘Art Schools of Asia’ (closed door online seminar series)

## Literature and Field Review

The thesis navigates through a broad range of scholarship in South Asian art history, cultural history, colonial and postcolonial theories, pedagogic history of undivided India, and its art institutions and art collection histories. One of the key books which forms the foundation for this thesis, is Tapati Guha-Thakurta's *The Making of a New Indian Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920* (1992), which locates the lineage of art history and art practice in India within a larger, more complex context of the socio-cultural history of Bengal in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Guha-Thakurta identifies and positions the various stakeholders -like artists, artisans, art students, art administrators, patrons, critics, and others - within the evolving social structure of the region, recasting them beyond the scope of existing art history writing of the time when the book appeared. The book categorically demonstrates the modes through which artistic practices, skills, commercial prospects as well as artistic classifications were westernised in India during the period; and then establishes the complex overlapping agencies of the nationalist turn, with the emerging new languages of modern Indian art during the early twentieth century. The genealogy of modern Indian art history cannot be corroborated without locating the colonial institutional and artistic trajectories set by the British Raj in India, and this book is one of the earliest examples of critically engaging with that complex field of study.

The second chapter in Guha-Thakurta's book, "The Art-School artists in Calcutta" provides a compact perspective on the working of Government Art School, Calcutta, which lends itself to multiple social, cultural, scholarly and professional interventions, beyond defining the artistic

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October 2021 to June 2022, Asia Art Archive. They also had a longstanding collaboration with the Paul Mellon Centre through 'London, Asia' project, which tested the pedagogic possibilities in Asia, which were challenged by the existing constructs of British Art. Other noteworthy initiations expanding the field of critical scholarship on art pedagogy are A.C.A.D.E.M.Y (2005-6, Hamburg Kunstverein, MuHka Antwerp VanAbbe, Eindhoven); 'unitednationsplaza' (2006-07, Berlin); Bauhaus Imaginista (2016- Ongoing). These interventions have been discussed in the next Literature and Field Review section.

pedigree of a new social group and generations of artists. Although its incursion into the history of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, is not its central theme, this seminal work became the foundation and the nucleus for this research. It directly influenced my thesis in its range of archival research, contributed to the rationale of my research theme, and most importantly shapes some of the thesis' core arguments.

The other seminal work, which has substantially informed this thesis, is Partha Mitter's *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850 – 1922* (1994), which also kicked off its story from the 1850 mark and is set more centrally in the backdrop of colonial art education in India. Mitter broadens the frame of his study as he engages with diverse regional histories of art institutional, cultural, ideological and public sphere developments, beyond Bengal. Like Guha-Thakurta's book, Mitter too dedicates an entire chapter to art education in the country, but he does more, by charting the progression of art schools in Madras, Calcutta, Bombay and Lahore, connecting all the four regions, which became the main centres of colonial art and industrial education in nineteenth century India. Both of these works tracked the broader social history of art, analysing colonial interventions in the subcontinent's diverse cultural identity through a homogenised network of art institutions. Both these books have brought forward a diverse range of primary data and analytical observations which have positioned art schools and their histories as a critical site of negotiation in India's artistic direction and cultural regeneration. While drawing on their methods and arguments, this thesis makes its main departure from Guha-Thakurta and Mitter's work in that it focuses entirely on the pedagogic trajectories that art schools in Bengal had facilitated. It argues that pedagogic genealogy and art institutional classifications have equally contributed to the making of modernism in Indian art, as has the predominant narrative of artists, artistic styles and movements.

Surveying the field of art pedagogy in India demands a recurrent definition of the cultural disciplines which were taking shape during the second half of the nineteenth century and early



twentieth century. The position of craft as a practice that is clearly distinct from that of art, or the aptitude of an artisan as separate from that of an artist, has been at the centre of a large new area of scholarship. This inter-disciplinary relationship between art and craft is traced through the length of this thesis, through the differing structures of teaching, training, commissions and collective practices of the Government Art School, Calcutta and Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan, using their changing curriculum as a key platform of analysis. Abigail McGowan's *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India* (2009), which significantly broadens the field of study on the colonial project of propagating craft industry in India, was of immense aid in charting this history. Beginning with the Great Exhibition of 1851, McGowan weaves a comprehensive history of craft and the scope of its practices under the new schemes of colonial classification. She shows how -

“scholarship on crafts in the colonial period has focused either on the colonial art policies or on the changing styles within particular industries. From the policy side, many historians emphasise the role of the state in promoting traditional styles, depicting efforts in the government art schools, publications and displays as a traditional coating that masked the transformative goals of the modernising Indian state. Crafts here often appear as a side issue to other, more central topics.”<sup>8</sup>

McGowan argues that propagation of craft however was of central primacy to the British administration as it was to the Indian stakeholders, as it apparently offered industrial prospects along with restoration of traditional forms as well as economic stability. The entire art education policy of the British Indian government was consequently formulated around the revival and regeneration of local craft forms. By closely investigating this process, McGowan's study categorically establishes 'craft' not just as a discipline in negotiation with colonial art pedagogy in India, but as a larger industrial and social cause.

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<sup>8</sup>Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. p.9

Another key trajectory which leveraged colonial art pedagogy in India, and aligned its purpose with that of art institutional growth, was the institution of the ‘World Exhibitions’, with the founding event of the Great Exhibition of 1851 becoming an artistic and material crossroad between India and Britain. With this exhibition as its critical backdrop, Arindam Dutta in his book *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of its Global Reproducibility* (2007) locates the primary project of the colonisers, the “aesthetic education for the masses”,<sup>9</sup> through multiple institutional agencies. He turns his attention centrally to the formation of art educational institutions like the Department of Science and Arts and the South Kensington Museum (later, the Victoria and Albert Museum) in London that would be driven by a specific industrial art and design-oriented pedagogy, aimed at aiding both the economic as well as aesthetic revival of art industries in Britain. This pedagogic archetype which found its place in India through the agencies of the art schools, and their British superintendents and teachers, created a passage for the circulation and collection of art and artefacts from India. More than artistic influences, these exchanges are shown to have been largely propagated through policy driven mandates of the British administration.

Arindan Datta’s work has its precursor in an early (still unpublished) Ph.D. thesis of Mahrukh Keki Tarapor, titled *Art and Empire: The Discovery of India in Art and Literature* (1977), which is one of the earliest studies of the interconnected art institutional history between India and England. Her research too marks the establishment of South Kensington Museum and the Department of Science and Arts as the key metropolitan institutions, which offered a preamble for colonial art pedagogy in India. Following in its trail, Dutta’s more complex interdisciplinary account of this aspect of cultural colonialism in the remaking of the Indian craft economy and

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<sup>9</sup>Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*. New York : Routledge, 2007 pp. 4-5

industry fortifies the position of art institutions in India as a key player in modern south Asian art history.

Outside these theoretical frameworks and their focus on the colonial craft establishment in India, my thesis has another main point of reference in Benode Behari Mukherjee's pioneering incursion into the history of art education in India, in his booklet *Adhunik Shilpa Shishha* ("Modern Art Pedagogy", 1984). It was one of the small books which first introduced me to the field of art pedagogic history in Bengal, when I was an art student myself at Kala Bhavan. It steered the questions which I started asking about institutional purpose and the 'method and material' specialisation format of art education across most institutions. *Adhunik Shilpa Shiksha* covers largely the same time-frame and institutions of my study, as it moves through the nineteenth century art education programme in colonial India, the distinct pedagogic phases of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, the interventions of E. B. Havell and Abanindranath Tagore, the formation of the Indian Society of Oriental Art (ISOA), the interconnection of Kala Bhavan with the new frameworks of teaching at ISOA, finally laying out an episodic narration of the teaching structures in Kala Bhavan as he experienced and observed them first-hand. While this book serves more as a memoir for the history of art education in Bengal, my thesis uses the flow of its narrative to critically question the institutional legacies and pedagogic rituals of the formative years of Government School of Art and Kala Bhavan, which have not been written about to this day.

A similar pedagogic institutional history in India has been assimilated by Sovon Som through his book *Shilpa Shiksha O Aupaniveshik Bharat* ("Art Education in Colonial India", 1998). The book offers a larger view of the evolving institutional systems and their purpose in India, beginning with the function and prospect of artist guilds in India and Europe as the first section of the book. The following section elaborates the initiation and evolution of various art schools in India from 1839 to 1947. And the final section accounts for the different artistic trajectories

charted in Bengal through the formations of institutions such as the Bichitra Sabha and Kala Bhavan. Though the timeline and the anecdotes of the book extensively cover the field of study, the lack of research references and analytical scrutiny restricts its value as a point of reference for this research.

An emerging vital area of scholarship that has formed the conceptual backbone of my research is one that has been devoted to the detailed study of individual art institutions in South Asia. There have been several dissertations which have expansively studied the history of regional art institutions of pre-Independence India and their roles in establishing a definite direction of art pedagogy within the cultural diversity of the subcontinent. Deepali Dewan's Ph.D. dissertation, *Crafting Knowledge and Knowledge of Crafts: Art Education, Colonialism and the Madras School of Arts in Nineteenth Century South Asia* (2001), is a decisive work in the field of the incipient art institutional history of the subcontinent. Her dissertation has located the formative tendencies and objectives of colonial art institutional structures, through a case study on the first art school in India – the Madras School of Arts and its craft revival project, within the purview of an emerging metropolis like Madras.

Another eminent centre of the colonial art educational network of the subcontinent was the Mayo School of Art in Lahore which was established in 1875, replicating the South Kensington archetype of design and industrial art education. Nadeem Omar Tarar has long been invested in consolidating the history of this institution, which has been consolidated through his recently published book, *The Colonial and National Formations of the National College of Arts, Lahore, c. 1870 – 1960* (2022). Tarar's work lays out similar colonial tropes of exhibition history, object circulation, museum arrangement and pedagogical regulations, which would advance the art and industrial project of the British government in the subcontinent. Though the implementation of colonial art education in different regions of the Indian subcontinent were driven through similar education policies, each of these art schools in Madras, Bombay,

Lahore and Calcutta offered diverse pedagogic interventions. Hence, a comprehensive and critical study on the history and pedagogy of each of these regional institutions provide a broader perspective into the complex lineages of modernity of Indian art and craft.

Art historical narratives of the maturing of modern Indian art have been largely based on the network of institutions that emerged in the Presidencies and Provinces of the expanding colonial state in India in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But there is work that now highlights the way princely states in India occupied a vital share in the history of art collection, circulation and patronage in South Asian art history. Priya Maholay-Jaradi, in her book *Fashioning a National Art: Baroda's Royal Collection and Art Institutions 1875-1924* (2016) collates a valuable history through the illustrious collections of Sayajirao Gaekwad III of Baroda and his institutional projects of promoting craft industries and commissioning modern artists. Maholay-Jaradi argues that the aspiration of an “inclusive national art”<sup>10</sup> was well underway before the artistic revival established by the Bengal School, through Maharaja Gaekwad's experiments with “European, vernacular and transnational aesthetics”<sup>11</sup>. To tap into sources of European painting genres, the J.J. School of Art in Bombay produced a pool of art students mastering the western academic portraiture standards, whose art works were circulated and integrated into the royal collection. Art school trained artists enjoyed an elite social status and could assert authority over other indigenous artisans in the provinces. Maholay-Jaradi turns to artist-figures such as Samuel Fyzee Rahman, in his move from the J.J. School of Arts to his position as an art advisor to Maharaja Gaekwad and his engagement with the Baroda Museum. The royal museum became an authoritative site in Baroda for the training of ‘native artists’ as a part of the Baroda state's systematic strategy towards regional modernisation.

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<sup>10</sup>Priya Maholay- Jaradii, *Fashioning a National Art – Baroda's Royal Collection and Art Institutions (1875 – 1924)* Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 62

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

Similar interconnections and pedagogic exchanges with the J.J. School of Art have also been traced by Shukla Vinayak Sawant in her Ph.D. thesis, *Imaging Land, Imagining Landscape: Painting in Colonial India 1793-1947* (2015). She studied the genre of landscape painting in India and the various impacts that colonial art education and policies had on the shifting concept of land and landscapes in the country. The focus of the work is on the princely states of Kolhapur and Aundh in Western India, and extended to the provinces of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. She accurately argues that, though landscape painting was a much revered and recurrent genre across the timeline of ancient Indian art traditions, the colonial pedagogic strategies in India positioned the genres of portrait and figurative painting to be of greater eminence. One of the key intentions in her dissertation was to counter this pre-eminence by ferreting out the forgotten histories of many landscape painters in Western India and pursuing the development of this genre through the central institution of the J.J. School of Art of Bombay, and its flow of students and teachers into the networks of courts, commissions and art careers of these peripheral regions of the Bombay Presidency. A work like that of Shukla Sawant opens up a new focus on the region - it interrupts the presumptions of a homogenised and standardised history of colonial art education in India, by looking at the way a metropolitan institution like the J.J. School of Art could feed into a wide region, set off varying patterns of subjects and styles, enable livelihoods and professions in art outside the known circuit, and create distinct regional formations of modern art.

Locating art schools as the key sites of disseminating regional modernity has also been a key proposition of Santosh Kumar Sakhinala in his recently submitted Ph.D. thesis, *Teaching Patterns: Art Institutions and Pedagogy in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Hyderabad*. Choosing his key institution as the Central School of Art and Craft in Hyderabad, which was established in 1940 and was outside the colonial government's directive, Sakhinala traces the genealogy of art education and the careers of artists which were shaped through art institutional mandates of

this region. His line of enquiry specifically questions the institutional process through which an art student transforms into an ‘artist’ and mediates the negotiation between these two agents. He locates the disparate political and cultural position of the princely state of Hyderabad in contrast to other emerging urban centres and art institutions in twentieth century India, and analyses its complex genealogy of art pedagogy and modernity.

Another very recent M.Phil. thesis submitted at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta also makes a strong case for the dominant role of art institutions in shaping the modern art profession and modernist art endeavours in Calcutta. Brishti Modak through her dissertation *Art at a Time of Crisis and Transition: The Pedagogy and Practice of Modern Art in Calcutta, 1930s-1960s* (2021), looks at the place of pedagogy, practice and professions in the emerging idiom of modernisms in the art of the city during the turbulent decades of War, Famine and Partition. Working against the existing historiography of modern Indian art, with its attention on a specific line-up of artists in the region and period, Modak shifts the focus of her study from the political responses of the artists in Calcutta to the socio-political impact of these years on art pedagogy, practice and art institutional spaces in the city. While Calcutta was gradually emerging from the cocoon of the Bengal School, Delhi and Bombay were emerging as the new sites of modernist vocabulary in Indian art since the 1940s. Modak studies the “aspirations” and “struggles” of artists in Calcutta and institutional conflicts from 1930s to 1960s, through the central institutional site of the Government School of Art, Calcutta and two of its alumni – Gobardhan Ash and Nikhil Biswas. Her detailed account of the inner workings of the institution and its changing interrelations with the student community and associated stakeholders, provide an unusual perspective on the crisis of modernity in the art practices and its allied networks in Calcutta.

Beyond this range of literature in the field of art pedagogy and art institutional histories, there is also an emerging amplitude of dialogue and critical interventions on the subject taking shape

across the borders. A.C.A.D.E.M.Y. is one such early example of a collective project initiated in 2005, between Siemens Arts Program, Kunstverein in Hamburg, the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College in London, the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (MuHKA), and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. This project prompted a series of exhibitions, publications, lectures, workshops and symposiums that tested the pedagogic potential of art institutions for its society. Each of these modules raised fundamental questions on – what is the role of the museum beyond its established canonical values; can art schools act not only as a tool for implementing the goals of pedagogy, but also become a site in one’s own biography,<sup>12</sup> etc. On similar lines of critical intervention, a project called *unitednationsplaza* was conceptualised as a temporary art school in Berlin, in response to the cancellation of Manifesta VI.<sup>13</sup> The central theme for this edition of Manifesta was to form a temporary art school which would propose a trans-disciplinary postgraduate programme to initiate dialogues on cross-regional idioms and modules of art pedagogy. To cite a few more recent and ongoing projects on the praxis of art pedagogy and interventions in art institutional history – *Bauhaus Imaginista*, Paul Mellon Centre’s *London, Asia* research project, and Asia Art Archive’s *Art School of Asia* and *Pedagogy as Practice* are important examples, which thoroughly survey the field of study along with its variable agencies and stakeholders. These projects have activated art schools as a critical site of art historical engagement and broadened the position of curriculum as an operative proponent of distinct artistic standings. This thesis in its scope of consolidating art institutional histories and tracing their curriculum, intends to lay the ground for art pedagogy as a site for art historical study, in the way it exists for art practice.

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<sup>12</sup> Catrin Lorch, (Trns) Nicholas Grindell. *Academy*. Frieze Magazine -Reviews 2007  
<https://www.frieze.com/article/academy>

<sup>13</sup> Manifesta is the European Biennale of Contemporary Art which was founded in 1994 by art historian Hedwig Fijen. The sixth and the cancelled edition of this biennale in 2006 was meant to be held at Cyprus. The event was cancelled due to alleged breach of contract between the Municipality of Nicosia the biennale organisation.



## Research Methodology

The timeline of the thesis spans the first hundred years of art pedagogic history in Bengal. However, the research traces the preconditions of these pedagogic interventions of the East India Company and eventually the British Raj in India, by beginning with a discussion on English Education Act of 1835 and the Education Despatch of 1854. Though the formations of art schools in India were through private initiatives in the mid-nineteenth century, all these art schools were taken in under the government's education program over the second half of the nineteenth century. Therefore, following the lineage of the government's education policies has been central in the mapping of colonial art education in the country. As the research tracks the maturation of art pedagogy and art institutional history in Bengal, it has adopted a simple chronological structure for laying out the narrative.

As the thesis charts the histories of the two art schools – the Government School of Art, Calcutta, from the time it first came up as the School of Industrial Arts in 1854; and Kala Bhavan, from its pre-history in the Santiniketan Ashram phase into its new institutional foundation in 1919 – the research structure too maintains the distinctions between their unfolding histories and the different timeframes over which they evolved. The nature of the data that has been sourced or archival material that has been surveyed for these institutions also reflects this distinctness. The thesis takes shape through seven chapters. The first sixty odd years of the Government School of Art's evolution till the 1920s, has been arranged in the first three chapters of the dissertation. The following three chapters adapt a similar framework of establishing the turn in art education philosophy in Bengal through the aegis of Rabindranath Tagore and the formation of Kala Bhavan in Santiniketan. The final concluding chapter brings

together the interconnected histories between these two art institutions and the allied agencies in the region, from the 1930s to the 1950s.

The portion of the research on the colonial art education project, which ties together British art institutional histories, museum and exhibition histories, the art school in Calcutta and the Indian Museum, was dependent on primary data accessed through National Library and the West Bengal State Archives, the CSSSC archive as well as Rasa Gallery archive in Kolkata, along with the British Library, National Art Library and Victoria & Albert Museum and Archive in London. Some of the central sources of information have been the Annual and Quinquennial Reports of the Department of Public Instruction, under which came all the schemes of technical, craft and art education, the Annual Reports of the Indian Museum, the Department of Science and Arts (DSA) annual reports and collection catalogues, Judicial & Public department meeting minutes, House of Commons session minutes, special papers and lectures, government notices and correspondence, private correspondences, image archives and draft manuscripts. Together, these enabled a wide-ranging study of this complex institutional configuration within which the Government School of Art in Calcutta functioned.

However, as evident from the scope of literature survey, official sources and administrative reports on the institutional formation of Kala Bhavan are meagre. The pedagogic life and activities of this institution have been largely addressed through individual artistic and intellectual figures of eminence, which the institution produced during its first four decades. That historiography has established people as the main markers of its history, and has prioritised individual artists above a larger inclusive ideology of a community that was formed through Kala Bhavan. R Siva Kumar's essay in the exhibition catalogue *Santiniketan: The Making of Contextual Modernism* (1997), is a crucial text in the study on Kala Bhavan's artistic movement. It situates the artistic and pedagogic scope of the institution through individual artistic careers of Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee and

Ramkinkar Baij. This thesis argues, that over and above these remarkable individuals, the pedagogy, aesthetics and artistic ideology that came to be known as ‘Santiniketan movement’,<sup>14</sup> was largely a consequence of interdisciplinary collective practices, unconventional artistic tools, and interpersonal relationships among the faculty, peers and students adopted through its curriculum – and that the history of Kala Bhavan should be comprehended through the lens of this participatory pedagogy.<sup>15</sup> The investigation for this segment of the thesis has been dependent largely on personal memoirs, private correspondences, interviews substantiated through official records and reports, newspaper reports and articles, and some archival documents. This range of sources have been accessed from the Rabindra Bhavan Archives, the Kala Bhavan and the Nandan Museum archives, private papers, and private collection of some of the former faculties of the institution, with some stray material on Rabindranath and Kala Bhavan also found in the British Library.

The premise of my research also evolved out of a form of auto-ethnography – out of my own experience as a student of fine arts at Kala Bhavan and my constant questioning of the relationship between pedagogy and practice, and of the gap between artistic aspirations/ambitions and their realizations. At a time when all of Santiniketan’s cultural, intellectual and institutional paradigms are being drastically dismantled and regulated, it becomes crucial to revisit the formative phase of institution-making and trace the kinds of freedoms and liberties that it made room for, outside the sphere of institutional rules and regulations. In bringing the more regulated and controlled structures of Academic training and class room exercises in the Government School of Art of the same period (1920s, 30s and 40s) face to face with the alternative experimental structures of training and learning that Kala

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<sup>14</sup>R. Siva Kumar, *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism*. National Gallery of Modern Art, 1997.

<sup>15</sup>Paulo Freire argued the importance of ‘active participation’ between peers, where sharing of knowledge is a collaborative process, rather than the ‘banking’ model that deposits education. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary (ed.) New York: Continuum, 2000, p 72

Bhavan developed, the thesis wishes to complicate what these tropes of discipline and regulation, on the one hand, and freedom and flexibility, on the other, meant on the ground. Through the central theme of pedagogic methods and institutional activities, it wishes to bring together the working of these two art schools in a framework of comparison and contrast and look at the ways in which each of these institutions determined the scope and directions of modern art practice in early twentieth century Bengal.

### Chapter Summary

Tracking a chronological trail of education policies, curriculum formation and institutional development in India, **Chapter One** lays out the institutional pre-conditions of art pedagogy in Bengal. The chapter begins at the juncture of 1850, a decade which marked the consequential commencement of the direct rule of the Crown and its seizure of complete power from the East India Company, as a consequence of the Sepoy Mutiny. As one of the objectives of this thesis is to analyse the decisive intentions and methodology of the colonial project of art education, it has been vital to lay out the groundwork of the foundational ideas of the colonial education structure in India. Section I of this chapter analyses two key educational policy mandates in the Empire's history, which set the context for colonial art education to take shape in India – the Education Act of 1835 and the Education Despatch of 1854. It argues that there is a critical analogy between the imposition of the authority of English as a medium of education in India and the colonial discourse on the improvement of artistic taste and traditions of craftsmanship that propelled the foundations of the art schools in India, displacing the indigenous artistic heredities of the country.<sup>16</sup> Section II engages with Alexander Hunter's lecture on the eve of establishing the first formal art teaching initiative in India, in the Madras presidency in 1850;

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<sup>16</sup> Discussions in this section refers to Partha Mitter's *Much Maligned Monsters*; and Gauri Visvanathan's *Masks of Conquest*.

and Section III foregrounds the pedagogic trajectory of the 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations in giving shape to the curriculum of the Department of Science and Arts in South Kensington, London, in the following year. These sequential episodes demonstrate that art education didactically became a distinct discipline of instruction in the country along with the general education structure, strategically facilitating the British objective of “the intellectual improvement of the people of India.”<sup>17</sup>

**Chapter Two** then begins to map the formative history of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, from its inception in 1854, through Principal H. H. Locke’s engagement with the institution which concluded with his death in 1884. The chapter is divided in five sections, which categorically study the formation of the School of Industrial Art and the resolutions taken by the Society for the Promotion of Industrial Arts in Calcutta; the transfer of the school to the British Crown and H.H. Locke’s extensive curriculum planning, through the first two sections. The chapter then narrows its focus in Section III, on the commission works secured by the school, which included projects like decoration of the Chancel of St. Peter’s Church in Fort William; drawing and illustrations of Rajendralala Mitra’s seminal work *Antiquities of Orissa*, Annada Prasad Bagchi’s illustrations for Dr. J. Fayrer’s book *The Thanatophidia of India*, to highlight a few. Section IV studies the inaugural moments of the establishment of the first Government Art Gallery in affiliation with the art school, with Viceroy Lord Richard Northbrook’s commissioned collection of copies of European paintings to enhance the artistic tastes of the students and their professional training in the ‘fine arts’. Parallel to the attention dedicated to industrial and applied art in his curriculum, H.H. Locke gradually made more space for western notion of ‘fine arts’ in the art school. This chapter then wraps up with the schemes of integrating this art collection of the Government Art Gallery with the Indian

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<sup>17</sup>Charles Grant’s *Observation on the state of Society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain with respect to morals; and on the means of improving it*. Written chiefly in the year 1792; dated August 12, 1797. Selection from Educational Records 1781-1839. H Sharp, CSI., C.I.E. Bureau of Education in India, Calcutta 1920.

Museum, establishing a direct pedagogic contact between the two institutions, with the Calcutta International Exhibition held in the winter of 1883-84 forming a main bridge in bringing together the new departments in the Indian Museum and the art collections in the Government School of Art, Calcutta.

**Chapter Three** begins at a point of multiple shifts in the Government School of Art, Calcutta's institutional history and pedagogic direction, which were prompted by the reorganisation of education policies in the 1880s and 90s. The 1894 Lahore Art Conference questioned the relevance of the art school in India as state-funded institutions. This gave rise to multiple reformative measures, which could justify the funding of the schools and enhance their economic and professional viability. The resolution of the conference recommended a much-needed boost to the Indian industrial quotient of the pedagogic scheme. During this reorganisation, W.H. Jobbins took over the reins of the Government School of Art in Calcutta, from 1886 to 1895, during which time the school of art shifted from its Garanhata premises in Chitpur in north Calcutta to its current location in Chowringhee.<sup>18</sup> Section III, IV and V of this chapter then studies, in depth, the curricular and teaching strategies of E.B. Havell, Abanindranath Tagore and Percy Brown in reorganising the pedagogic orientation of the art school from 1890s to 1920s. E.B. Havell rearranged the curriculum and the art collection in the Indian Museum with a focus on oriental aesthetics in design and Indian art traditions and helped fuel national sentiments among teachers and a certain section of students. This fervour was further fuelled by Abanindranath Tagore's entry into the school as a teacher and Vice-Principal, and the changes that he brought about in the ambit of art practice, in the status of artists and in the opportunity for Indian art teachers of the region. The chapter then follows the trajectory of the Government School of Art under Percy Brown until the 1920s, when the scope of art institutional activities expanded well outside the margins of the institution, with the

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<sup>18</sup> Department of Public Instruction, Annual Report, 1894

establishment of other art schools in the city like the Indian College of Art and Draughtsmanship, Indian Society of Oriental Art, The Jubilee Art Academy and Indian Academy of Art.

At this point, the thesis reaches the timeline which marked the rise of a counter pedagogic scheme at Kala Bhavan.

**Chapter Four** shifts sites from Calcutta to Santiniketan, which witnessed the momentous foundation of a new art educational system in Bengal during the 1920s. This chapter outlines the ideological trajectories through which Rabindranath Tagore arrived at his alternative vision of an open international university to establish Visva-Bharati. The nationalist uprising in Bengal, which seeped through the walls of a colonial establishment like the Government School of Art, Calcutta, left its mark on a larger transformation of the field of art pedagogy outside its folds. The foundations of nationalist identity were marked through the cultural milestones which Abanindranath Tagore and Rabindranath Tagore spearheaded through their own medium and method. While Abanindranath's *Bharatmata* and its visual, philosophical and intellectual legacy directly stimulated a reform of artistic perceptions in Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore's Swadeshi songs, singularly gave voice to the movement. However, through the lineage of these institutional histories, the thesis scrutinizes the shift in ideologies which Rabindranath Tagore configured through his vision of Visva-Bharati. The chapter is divided into two broad sections. Section I discuss the nuances of Rabindranath's doing and undoing of nationalism, alongside his philosophical standing on orientalism, channelized through the idea of universal brotherhood which eventually took a tangible form through Visva-Bharati. Section II then lays out the formative history of Visva-Bharati, which is crucial in understanding the journey of art education in Santiniketan from an ashram to a residential pedagogic institution. To arrive at the foundation of Kala Bhavan and to understand the methodologies through which

the institution countered colonialism, it is imperative to bring into context the foundational goals and trajectories of Visva-Bharati which was established, parallel to Kala Bhavan.

**Chapter Five** then lays out a chronological, curricular and infrastructural development of Kala Bhavan from its inception in 1901 as ‘Kala Bibhag’ of the Santiniketan ashram to its formal inauguration as Kala Bhavan in 1919. This schematic account of the institution continues till 1951, when Nandalal Bose retires from his position as Principal of the institution. A key objective of this thesis has been to write a more nuanced and complete history of Kala Bhavan through the first three decades of its functioning. This chapter provides a chronological outline of the shaping of its forms of training and its pedagogic principles, the forming of its community of artists and students, and the evolving campus and the locale, which became a site of cultural regeneration in Bengal. The pedagogic contributions of Surendranath Kar, Asit Kumar Haldar, Stella Kramrisch, Dhirendrakrishna Dev Burman, Pratima Devi, Andre Karpelles, Gauri Bhanja, Lisa Von Pott, Benode Behari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij, and their likes, have been studied in this chapter to locate the early history of Kala Bhavan, in comparison to what exists so far.

**Chapter Six** is a close analytical study of the projects which Nandalal and his lineage of students devised, with the active support of Rabindranath. Until now, the artistic, cultural and pedagogical pursuits of Kala Bhavan have been largely studied through individual artistic accomplishments and the positioning of artists and their styles has been the core aspect of art history and modern art movements. However, this thesis argues that the ambit of modernism which Kala Bhavan propelled cannot be written only through a line-up of artists and art works. Kala Bhavan’s history and its modernity has to be pieced together through a larger account of community participation, collective art projects and experimental pedagogic methodologies, which developed a sustainable and forward-looking model of modern artistic practice in India. The model of art pedagogy which developed in Kala Bhavan was based on a constantly



evolving and fluid curriculum. The formative phase of Kala Bhavan started without a structured curriculum and developed over time, including pedagogical projects which responded to the immediate surroundings, shaping a distinct language of visual and cultural aesthetics in Bengal. This chapter arranges and analyses the various methodologies, class work, community work, cross disciplinary work, and art collection methods which challenged the preeminent institutional canons.

**Chapter Seven** ties together the pedagogic binaries of the Government School of Art, Calcutta and Kala Bhavan, Visva-Bharati, through the history of institutional interconnections between them which can be observed since the 1930s. The dissertation until now has studied the contrasting pedagogic and ideological positions of the two institutions. However, with a gradual maturing and expansion of the artistic milieu in Calcutta, the fraternity here, like its counterpart in Santiniketan, came to increasingly mark its own artistic and national identity. Abanindranath Tagore's resignation from the art school in 1915 steered a debate within the British parliament on whether European principals should be withdrawn from art schools in India which would help economise the government's expenditure, and reorganise the institutions "as a genuine school of native Indian Art and thus discontinue the effort to inculcate Western methods of art into Oriental art students."<sup>19</sup> During this administrative reconsideration, Percy Brown was already officiating as the principal of the art school in Calcutta. However, after Brown's retirement from the school in 1927, the Government sanctioned Mukul Chandra Dey as the first Indian Principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta. This moment can be marked as a major turn in the gradual decolonization of the institution, as members of the Indian art fraternity began to take charge of its field of training and practice. Concurrently, since the early twentieth century, several other institutional initiatives by artists in Bengal had

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<sup>19</sup>Parliamentary Notice Session 1915. Form No. 7 Judicial & Public Department. December 1, 1915. This episode has been discussed at length in Chapter Three of the dissertation.

been underway, which were expanding the space for independent artistic interventions in Calcutta. The exhibition of Bauhaus artists along with artists in Bengal, organised by the Society of Oriental Arts in 1922, the establishment of the Academy of Fine Arts in 1933, the opening of the Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art in Calcutta University in 1938 as the first public art museum within a university in India and also a singular initiative to establish art historical scholarship within that institution emerged with Mukul Dey's proposal of a National Art Museum in Bengal in 1936. All these developments affirm that art in Bengal was functioning beyond the ambit of the 'Bengal School' identity. In analysing the arrival of 'modernism' in Bengal art, it is therefore critical to position its artistic "triumphs" within the context of institutional interventions, which then provide a socio-cultural perspective of 'art' as a process vis-à-vis 'art' as a field of study with its *a priori* canon of artists and artworks.

**Foundational Ideas:**

**Colonial Education and Art Education in Mid-Nineteenth Century India**

“... suppose that the Pacha of Egypt, a country once superior in knowledge to the nations of Europe, but now sunk far below them, were to appropriate a sum for the purpose of ‘reviving and promoting literature and encouraging learned natives of Egypt’, would anybody infer that he meant the youth of his *pachalic* to give years to the study of hieroglyphics, to search into all the doctrines disguised under the fable of Osiris and to ascertain with all possible accuracy the ritual with which cats and onions were anciently adored? Would he be justly charged in inconsistency, if, instead of employing his young subjects in deciphering obelisks, he were (sic) to order them to be instructed in the English and French languages, and to all the sciences and to which those languages are the chief keys.”<sup>1</sup>

- Thomas B Macaulay, Minutes on Education in India

**Section I**

**English Medium and Colonial Education Policies**

The thesis begins at the juncture of the 1850s, a decade which marked a consequential commencement of a new phase of British governance in India, in which the British Crown seized complete power from the East India Company, as a consequence of the Sepoy Mutiny. The history of art education and the art institutional narrative in India also begins from this decade. As this thesis examines the first hundred years of modern Indian art education, the chapter traces the inaugural moments of the educational encounters between the colonizers and the colonised, and maps the key moments in history which effectively shaped the nature of the institutional paradigm of art practice in India. As one of the objectives of this thesis is to

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas B Macaulay, *Minutes on Education in India*. Written in the year 1835, 1836 & 1837 collected from the records in the Department of Public Instruction by H. Woodrow, Inspector of Schools. Calcutta. 1962

categorically analyse the decisive intentions and methodology of the colonial project of art education, it is vital to lay out the groundwork of foundational ideas from which the colonial education structure in India emerged.

The education project of the East India Company in India started with the establishment of the Calcutta Madrassa in 1781, followed by the Sanskrit college in Varanasi in 1791, and the Fort William College, an institution for Oriental studies in Calcutta, in 1800. The establishment of Asiatic Society in 1784 by William Jones further advanced the 'oriental' inquiry of the West. Over the early nineteenth century, the Serampore Missionary Press substantially contributed to the circulation of translated books in multiple South Asian vernacular languages across the country. Taking into consideration the educational milieu set forward by the Company between late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it is crucial to account for the institutional displacement of the vernaculars and the entry of the English language as a tool to educate and colonise the masses in India. Two major educational policies were initiated in India during the East India Company's rule in the country - the English Education Act of 1835 and the Education Despatch of 1854. Though the idea of introducing English as the medium of communication and education in India, had been slowly incepted, first by Charles Grant in 1790s,<sup>2</sup> it was Thomas B Macaulay's active campaign that led to the Education Act of 1835. Charles Grant, chairman of the East India Company noted in his observation that "There are two ways of making this communication: the one is by the medium of language of those countries; the other is by the medium of our own"<sup>3</sup>. To defend the choice of language to be of

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<sup>2</sup> Extract from Charles Grant's *Observations on the state of society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain*, particularly with respect to morals; and on the means of improving it. Written chiefly in the year 1792; dated August 16, 1797. (Doc 21; page 81) Selection from Educational Records (Part I) 1781-1839. H Sharp, C.S.I., C.I.E. Bureau of Education in India. Calcutta, 1920

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Charles Grant was the director of the East India Company, intermittently from 1794 to 1828. The above quote comes in context of the following quote, which reveals the root of colonial education enterprise in India. "The true cure of darkness is the introduction of light. The Hindoos err, because they are ignorant; and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their disorders; and this remedy is proposed from a full conviction that if judiciously

their own, Grant explained that, though in expected circumstances when a foreigner instructs his native subjects, it is usually communicated in the vernacular tongue to assert maximum communication, in case of the British India colonies, English was not an unknown language in the country, as the British have had already settled among their subjects and ‘possessed’ them.<sup>4</sup>

Briefly setting this scenario on the advent of English as a medium of education in India at the beginning of the thesis serves two objectives. Firstly, it allows the positioning of art education and the formation of a new artistic discipline parallel to the formation of all other branches of taught subjects, within the purview of modern education and the institutional system in India. Secondly, the medium of English, beyond the scope of being a language for administrative and pedagogic communication, is drawn as a metaphor for the South Kensington art education model or colonial art education project in India. The language was instilled as a social and cultural index which would regulate the aesthetic and epistemological merit of the Indian population. To put this argument in perspective, the first section of this chapter engages with the Education Act of 1835 and Education Despatch of 1854 – two key developments in the history of the Empire’s education policies in India. This will set the ground for analysing the early years of colonial art education trenching in India with Alexander Hunter’s lecture on the eve of establishing the first formal art teaching initiative in India, in the Madras presidency in 1850 in the next section ; and lead into the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations which was organised in 1851 that eventually gave shape to the curriculum of the Department of Science and Arts in South Kensington, London, in the following year, in the last sectionI. These sequential episodes demonstrate that art education didactically became a distinct stream of instruction in the country along with the general education structure, and strategically facilitated the British objective of “the intellectual improvement of the people of

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and patiently applied it would have great and happy effects upon them, effects honourable and advantageous for us.”

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

this country (India)”<sup>5</sup>. More notably, art education in the colony established London as an emblematic centre of the cultural repository of the world.

The timeline of the research which begins in 1850, moves across the decade during which the country witnessed the Education Despatch of 1854, the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, and the Government of India Act of 1858, transferring control of the Government of India from the East India Company to the British Crown. Here, Lord Macaulay’s Minute on Education in India prompted the core ideals behind the India Education Act of 1835 passed by Lord William Bentinck and acted as preconditions for the 1854 Despatch. At the beginning of the chapter, an excerpt from Macaulay’s minutes, on the subject of cultural and pedagogic regeneration, projected the scheme of English language and European knowledge proliferation as a more logical scheme of progress through the example of Egypt.<sup>6</sup> This sums up the central thrust behind the education project that was executed in India during the nineteenth century. As a comparative example to the case of educational programme for India, Macaulay’s argument rests on the rationale that only restoration and revival of traditional knowledge forms does not adequately justify the ‘allocated fund’ and the aim of ‘intellectual improvement’ of the country, and that progress is realised through new forms of knowledge. However, there was resistance and opposition from within, as evident in the debates within the Committee of Public Instructions, where one of the members, Henry Thoby Princep, in his long response note to Macaulay’s Minute, argued that –

“An analogy is drawn between the present State of India and that of Europe at the time of the revival of letters. The cultivation of English is likened to the study of Latin and Greek in those days and the grand results that have followed are held out as an example to be imitated hereby inculcating English in order that a *Bengalee* and *Hindee* literature may grow up as perfect as that we now have in England. This however is not a true analogy – Latin and Greek were to the nations of Europe what Arabic and Persian are to the Mooslims and Sanskrit to the Hindoos of the present population of Hindoostan and if a native literature is to be created it must be through the improvements of which

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<sup>5</sup> Macaulay, *Minutes on Education*.

<sup>6</sup> Though Egypt was not part of the British Empire, it was occupied by the British forces from 1882 until 1956.

these are capable. To the great body of the people of India English is as strange as Arabic was to the knights of the dark ages. It is not the language of the erudite of the clergy and of the men of letters as Latin always was in Europe and as Arabic and Persian are extensively in Asia".<sup>7</sup>

In the context of legislative application of the charter and prolonged debate, Elmer H. Cutts observes, "the overwhelming majority of the witnesses argued that the British curriculum taught in the English language was vital to the reduction in the cost of governing India, to the elevation of Indian moral, and intellectual standards, to the safety of British Rule".<sup>8</sup> The initiation of English as a medium of education in India, represents itself as a metaphor to the larger project of transforming the entire socio-cultural moorings of the country permanently. Lord Bentinck's Resolution of the Act, issued on March 7th, 1835, stated four crucial points of education reform in India, which aggressively cemented western pedagogic methodologies on the functioning of educational institutions in the country<sup>9</sup> i) the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India was the primary objective of the Governor-General in Council and was intended to improve English mode of education only; ii) the entire

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<sup>7</sup> Note by H.T. Prinsep, dated 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1835. Selection from Educational Records (Part I) 1781-1839. H Sharp, C.S.I., C.I.E. Bureau of Education in India. Calcutta, 1920. The argument and exchanges between Macaulay and Prinsep during the establishment of the education Act of 1835, is historically and culturally a crucial point of reference in understanding the working intentions of the colonial government in India. It demonstrates how the government was conspicuously encouraging and advancing their administrative policies in India more on the foundations of investment and beneficial returns, and lesser on the progress of the country. These documents further elaborated the arguments on the allocation and appropriate use of fund for educational development, on the purpose and objectives of Madrasas and Sanskrit colleges; and whether English is the only medium through which the British government could accomplish its duty to elevate the intellectual aptitude of the people of India.

<sup>8</sup> Elmer H. Cutts. "The Background of Macaulay's Minute." *The American Historical Review*, 58, no. 4 (1953): 824-53. p 830

<sup>9</sup> Selection from Educational Records (Part I) 1781-1839. H Sharp, C.S.I., C.I.E. Bureau of Education in India. Calcutta, 1920. According to H Sharp, the Commissioner of, he notes in the Selection of Educational Records (Part I) that in 1823, the East India Company embarked on the project of mass education in India that indicated the growing conflict between the Orientalists and the Anglicists in determining the more desired form of knowledge enhancement in the country. On the state of society of among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain, C Grant observes, 'The true cure of darkness is the introduction of light. The *Hindoos* err, because they are ignorant; and their errors have never been fairly laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their disorders; and this remedy is proposed from a full conviction that if judiciously and patiently applied, it would have great and happy effects upon them, effects honourable and advantageous for us. There are two ways of making this communication: the one is, by the medium of the language of those countries; the other is by the medium of our own.'

fund allocated for the purpose of education in India, was to be spent on English education, henceforth; iii) a portion of the fund that was previously used for print and publishing Oriental literatures, was discontinued thereafter; and iv) the Council did not abolish the centres of regional or oriental learning from the country, but it no longer provided funds to the students who wish to pursue education in oriental scholarship.

These proposed reforms categorically positioned English language at the centre-stage of institutional schemes and aimed to establish British intellectual dominance over existing Indian cultural practices. Macaulay in his Minute made his infamous draconian claims regarding the comparative inferiority of Sanskrit and Arabic literature to that of European body of works.

“I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia”.<sup>10</sup>

Agenda-driven fallacious recommendations made by Macaulay found their validation through an equally abhorrent sanction from W.C. Bentinck, the Governor General of the British East India Company, who gave his “entire concurrence to the sentiments expressed in this Minute”.<sup>11</sup> Elmer Cutts observed that “Macaulay’s standing in the British intellectual and political circles made his advocacy of English language education for Indian students enrolled

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<sup>10</sup> Macaulay’s Minutes, 1935, He goes on to add in his record that – “The intrinsic superiority of western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the oriental plan of education. It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I certainly never met with any Orientalists who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanskrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans become absolutely immeasurable. It is I believe no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory school in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same” p 3

<sup>11</sup> Ibid



in government supported colleges and universities sufficient justification for Bentinck's adoption of that program immediately after Macaulay's treatise appeared in print".<sup>12</sup> Based on confounding observations and gross displacement of indigenous structures of learning, colonial education was established in India. However, the 1854 Education Despatch showed a certain restorative intent towards the linguistic negotiations of the country. It read:

"It is neither our aim nor desire to substitute the English language for the vernacular dialects of the country... It is indispensable therefore that in any general system of education the study of them should be assiduously attended to... In any general system of education, the English language should be taught where there is a demand for it; but such instruction should always be combined with a careful attention to the study of the vernacular language of the district...".<sup>13</sup>

This perennial debate and negotiation of the occidental over the oriental has found its domineering position across the large ambit of postcolonial theory. This negotiation of the resisting oriental identity over the occidental exclusivity has also been predominant when it comes to the history of art pedagogy and modernity in Indian art.

Francis G. Hutchins explains the gradual shift in British views on Indian society after the 1857 Mutiny, as he points out, "The Mutiny's greatest direct effect was in arousing popular support in England for British rule of India, which was expressed in the demand for Crown rule. In an odd and almost accidental fashion, the abolition of the Company was a rejection of the promise of Indian self-government."<sup>14</sup> Hutchins, through his book, contends that central to the new phase of empire was the "ideology of permanence"<sup>15</sup> and ambition set forth by the rulers to reform the social classes in India. He asserts that Macaulay's Minute on Education "signalled

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<sup>12</sup> Elmer H. Cutts. "The Background of Macaulay's Minute." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1953, pp. 824–853. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1842459](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1842459). Accessed 20 Aug. 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Education Despatch of 1854 Para 13&14, p 9

<sup>14</sup> Francis G. Hutchins. *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* Princeton University Press, 1967. pp 86-87.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p xii

a major triumph for reform”<sup>16</sup> in permanently establishing the medium of institutional education in India. Looking more closely into the impact of the 1835 Education Act and the 1854 Education Despatch on the institutional scope of English as a medium of study, Gauri Viswanathan argues through her book, “that no serious account of its (the English language’s) growth and development can afford to ignore the imperial mission of educating and civilising colonial subjects in the literature and thought of England, a mission that in the long run served to strengthen Western cultural hegemony in enormously complex ways.”<sup>17</sup> However, such observations have been challenged by Parimala V. Rao, Rosinka Chaudhuri and others, who argue that only one of Macaulay’s Education Minutes among over hundred other Education minutes written by other British official’s cannot determine the “macro-history of colonial education policy” in India.<sup>18</sup> Rao’s work maps out a comprehensive history of pedagogic methods prevalent in various regional presidencies in India, pointing out that the micro-data on indigenous educational practices and realities through which people in India came to terms with the British system of education in India allows modern education history in India to expand beyond the blot of Macaulay’s Minutes. Though this thesis is not specifically entering the changing gamut of views on Macaulay’s position in this history, it is however drawing resemblances between ideological, administrative and methodological standing of English education with that of Academic art education in India.<sup>19</sup>

The purpose of this opening section was to set the preconditions through which modern art education was envisioned in India. Here it is crucial to elucidate that the domain of ‘modern

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p 20

<sup>17</sup> Gauri Viswanathan. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and the British Rule in India*. Faber & Faber, London 1989. P 2

<sup>18</sup> Parimala V Rao. *Beyond Macaulay: Education in India 1780 – 1860*. Routledge, 2020

<sup>19</sup> For more on the debates of English Education in India, Education Policies and Macaulay’s role in Education History, see – Rosinka Chaudhuri, “Macaulay’s Magic Hat” (full reference needed); David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of Modern Indian Mind* (1979) and *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The dynamics of Indian Modernisation* (1969); Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (1998) (full references needed)

art education' does not qualify as an equivalent to 'modern art' in India. It was not the objective of the British government to set up a form of art education and an institutional infrastructure in India, that would foster artistic or creative progress in India; rather, its main intention was to promote traditional craft skills and create a new artisanal skill tank in the country which would generate industrial and commercial development. The 'modernity' in art education refers to the new system of education and institutions, introduced in India in the mid-nineteenth century, and differs drastically from the intellectual basis of pictorial styles of 'modernisms' in Indian art. And the insertion of 'English' as a medium plays a literal, as well as metaphorical role in this argument of the genealogical displacement of cultural history in India. As English became the administrative and classroom language in the key art institutions, art journals and other forms of books and publications, with British officials at the helm of institutions as well as principle authors on the taught subjects, English artistic visions and methodologies too commanded prominence in the art curriculum until the end of the nineteenth century in India.

## **Section II**

### **Alexander Hunter and the Journal of Art, Science and Manufacture**

In the discourse of art education and professional art practices in India, which evolved since the mid-nineteenth century, *The Indian Journal of Art, Science and Manufacture* (henceforth referred as IJASM) became a mouthpiece of Dr. Alexander Hunter, gradually encompassing the precinct of colonial art education in the country.<sup>20</sup> Hunter, primarily a resident surgeon of the Madras Presidency, was also the founder and the first principal of the Madras School of Arts (now known as the Government College of Art, Chennai), established on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1850.

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<sup>20</sup> Dr. Alexander Hunter was a surgeon of the East India Company, residing and practicing in the Madras presidency. He had previously received training in art at the Trustees Academy in Edinburgh alongside his medical education which he followed up with his studies in Paris.

Though the foremost attempts of establishing art schools in India were made by Charles Mallet in Pune in 1789, followed by Dr. Frederic Corbyn's Mechanics Institute in Calcutta in 1839, the Madras School of Art gained a more permanent foothold, prompting the education policies of the British government in India. The Education Despatch of 1854, specifically mentions Hunter's art school in Madras, citing it as an archetype for school of industry and design in India.<sup>21</sup> The testimony also mentions a report from Mr. Richard Redgrave attached to the document in discussion, amply testifying the 'progress' of the Madras art school, and holding great value in estimating and planning future similar institutions in India.<sup>22</sup> Though the current thesis will not delve into the history of the Madras art school, a brief summary of the potential framework that developed in the early years of the institution and IJASM will underline the initial tendencies of the British administration towards institutionalising art education in India.

It was through IJASM that Hunter propagated his objectives and strategies towards the necessity of establishing elementary western art, ornamental art and useful art education in India. In the introductory essay, 'Lectures on Art Science and Manufactures – delivered on the opening of the School of Arts'<sup>23</sup> in Madras, Hunter discusses the parameters of success and result-oriented methods of art teaching associating the European artistic methodologies with the beneficial aspects of Schools of Design in London, Edinburgh and Paris. Hunter draws attention to the circumstance in the West, where most pupils would join an art school, would desire instant gratification or fame and also a remuneration and were therefore drawn more towards portrait or landscape painting, soon after learning elementary courses of drawing such as foliage study, scrolls, geometrical forms and patterns. This tendency, in his view, was

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<sup>21</sup> Para 81. Despatch from the Court of Directors of the East India Company, to the Governor General of India in Council of the subject of the Education of the people of India. – (No.49, dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 1954) henceforth will be referred as Education Despatch of 1854.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Redgrave was an English painter and one of the key figures behind the reformation of art education in Britain and the making of South Kensington Museum. His consequential contribution in shaping British and art education in Bengal will be discussed ahead.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander Hunter. 1<sup>st</sup> May 1850. IJASM, Madras. pp. 1-3

passive learning and application of design fundamentals. He argues that painting and sculpture being the highest stage of artistic credibility should be the final stage of a pupil's art education; and art students should be redirected to the elementary learnings of visual reproductions as a larger thrust for their tutelage.<sup>24</sup> This perception explains why the pedagogic direction of the school was focused on the applied and functional aspect of art.

However, ironically, in the first half of this lecture, Hunter categorically establishes the European examples in art history as the superior precedence that should define the template of art education. He argues that "The best and the purest taste has unquestionably evinced in the Greek statues."<sup>25</sup> While he evaluates the Roman school's "considerable merit in some departments of sculpture", he believed that "the excellences were of low order and consisted more in elaborate finish", as opposed to Michelangelo's identification of this 'defect' in Roman canonical pursuits and evolving his "exaggerated, but bold original style". Hunter assertively positions the western classical idiom through the Greek school of sculpture of 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. as the prototype for the pedagogic model for 19<sup>th</sup> century art institutions. He then broadly mentions the flourishing art historical significance of the Byzantine and Egyptian cultures, irrespective of their "coarse and uncouth finish", that lacked "pretention to taste or accuracy of representation." In his opinion "the sculptures of the Hindu are decidedly superior to either of these schools, both as regards (sic) mechanical execution and taste."<sup>26</sup> This portion of Hunter's lecture demonstrates an unduly cursory and sweeping opinion about world art history that provoked him to initiate schools of art in the Indian subcontinent. This excerpt also indicates the germination of cultural discrimination, standardisation of artistic pursuits and lack of resourceful vision which created the elementary core of colonial art education in India.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Hunter elaborates on the superiority of the sculptural traditions in future lectures, also published through IJASM

In his monthly address to the students of Madras School, Hunter elaborated on the western lineage of the progression of art as a measure of desired excellence in artistic skills. It is demonstrated through his inaugural lecture of the art school, titled ‘On the Defects of Indian Art’ and the re-publication of Sir Joshua Reynolds’ lecture in the event of the opening of Royal Academy in 1769, which were recorded and propagated through the IJASM volumes. The purpose of the journal, he announced, was “partly as an assistance to the pupils, and as a guide to those of my young female friends or up country subscribers who may wish to learn something of the arts.”<sup>27</sup> A glimpse into the scope of this Journal can be seen from the premise of subjects or titles published – “A new method of learning to sketch from Nature applicable also to the Copying of Drawings or Prints”, “On the use of Lead Pencil or Pen in Sketching from Nature”, “On the use of Charcoal and Chalk in Drawing and Sketching from Nature”, “On the use of Pen and Ink in Sketching from Nature and designing Subjects for illustration”, “On Modelling Foliage, Ornaments, Figures and Animals from Nature” and so on.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, though Hunter charts out the art historical significance of other civilisations to decoy the necessary improvement for Indian art practices, the Journal had no aims of generating any art historical or research-driven value to the practice of art in the country.

Hunter notes the modules of art training that he intends to offer at the Madras School of Arts – i) Clay modelling, porcelain pastes, life casting, chiselling marble and alabaster under the training in Sculpture; ii) Elementary branches of pencil and pen drawing as “the basis of all art whether useful or ornamental”; iii) water colour, distemper and oil painting; iv) wood engraving, lithography, etching and copper plate engraving (**Fig 1.1**). This broad categorical breakdown of method and material enters the core educational programme of fine arts in India. The standardization of the base curriculum is noticeable in almost all later government aided

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, Inaugural lecture, p 176

<sup>28</sup> IJASM, Vol I, No 1 – 7

art institutions in Calcutta, Bombay and Lahore with certain regional negotiations and institutional ambitions channelled through South Kensington and the colonial government's art education policies. However, at the outset of these schools, the aim was to promote industrial and commercial skill set among the people of India and develop a cohort of artisans that would provide a steady flow of objects for trade in art wares and craft products, and images for illustrations and copy work. Hunter, substantiated the value of this format of education and the prospect for such education in Southeast Asia, by asserting,

“The rapid improvements which are now being made in the sister arts of painting, engraving, and decoration of every kind with their infinitely varied applications to sciences, manufactures and domestic elegance and utility, can be attributed, I think, in a great measure, to the cheap and elegantly illustrated literature of the day aided by the superior mental attainments of our artists who are not content with being mere imitators or copyists, as in case of India, China, Japan and other semi-barbarous countries.”<sup>29</sup>

The initial faculty formation of the Madras Art School commenced with “Mr. J. Grants, who has been long known as an artist in this presidency, Mr. J. J. Fonseca, a young artist of great promise and Mr. M. Chesterfield, who is well acquainted with the use of plaster of Paris and is a very neat handed and intelligent potter.”<sup>30</sup> This faculty, specifically equipped in western skillset and commercial prospects of art making, was venturing into transforming amateur dabbling in art to a vocational prospect. Hunter, in the inaugural address, asserts that “Fine arts have now become so intimately associated with the useful, domestic and economic art, that it is difficult to classify them correctly... The branches which were originally classed as fine arts were sculpture, painting, architecture, pottery, music, and dancing. The list now includes many discoveries of our own time.”<sup>31</sup> Conforming to the canonical assertion of method and material as a paradigm of fine arts, Hunter establishes the scope of progress in the field by listing the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, Inaugural lecture p 176

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p 177

<sup>31</sup> Ibid; the shifting ambit of Fine Arts and its reformation in the Indian context is a theme that have been discussed and analyzed across the thesis chapters.

following within the category - chiselling of statues, bust, medallions in marble, stone or alabaster; modelling in clay, porcelain paste or wax; photography, calotype, daguerreotype etc.; design and printing patterns for textile fabrics. Each of these skills to be taught align themselves with the emerging direction of material history over intellectual history in the discipline (**Fig 1.2-1.4**). By rounding up various but disparate art and craft making segments, Hunter conceived of an art education structure which would neither yield artistic impetus nor define the craft and industrial aptitude of the region. In his inaugural lecture of the Madras Art School, Hunter declared, “It is never too soon to begin a good work... as the grand exhibition of Prince Albert’s for 1851, will give us some objects to work for, I shall now proceed to show what might be done in India to improve the arts or manufactures of the country.”<sup>32</sup>

Despite the aspiration, the works produced at the Madras School of Art did not gather much visibility in the Great Exhibition of 1851. However, the ambition found its manifesting position in the 1854 Despatch, where Alexander Hunter’s initiative led Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy to facilitate the setting up of a similar institution in Bombay which gained attention.<sup>33</sup> These ‘Art and Industrial’ schools were categorised under ‘Special Instruction’ institutions in the Annual General Reports of Public Instruction, along with Law, Medicine, Engineering, or Survey schools. Resonating with the scope of the kind of art instruction configured by Alexander Hunter, the Education Despatch provided early signs of perceiving the course of art education as a practical requirement. The despatch records, “In connection with these two classes of institutions (Thompson College of Civil Engineering at Roorkee and Medical College in Calcutta and Bombay mentioned in the two previous para 79 & 80 of the despatch) which are of an essentially practical character, the schools of industry and design have been set on foot from time to time in different parts of India... Such institutions, as these (Madras School of

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> The art school in Bombay was established in 1857 and has been known as Sir J.J. School of Arts, since.



Art and J J School of art) will in the end be self-supporting; but we are ready to assist in their establishment by grants in aid for the supply of models and other assistance”.<sup>34</sup> Therefore the nature of the work produced by students in the initial stage of the school, as documented and circulated through IJASM, demonstrate technical skill development in elementary drawings - like drawing head, hand, eyes, trees, architecture, costumes, and copy from sculptures (**Fig 1.5**). Apart from publishing instructive articles about the technical know-how and elementary gradations of applied art, and Reynolds’ ‘discourse’ lectures at the Royal Academy of Art in London, IJASM also published periodical progress reports of the Madras school. The multiple directions of the publication mirror the numerous purposes which the school was attempting to address.

This early account of the Madras School of Arts functions as a prelude to the chaotic beginning of art education in India. Fine Arts, Industrial arts and Design are multiple disciplines which were imported to India through the medium of English, as an amalgamated (thought not cross-disciplinary) form of instruction. This amalgamation grasped the core objective of the government of improving the sense of aesthetics and artistic application of the people in India, and it manifested in various ways in the four key colonial art schools that were set up in the country – at Madras, Bombay and Calcutta in the 1850s, and at Lahore in 1878. –

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<sup>34</sup> Education Despatch 1854, Para 79, 80, 81, p 34; Para 80 that mentions the Roorkee engineering college emphasize the importance of practical expertise as the public works dept. is gradually expanding in the country. It is in this context that schools of industry and design is considered in the education dispatch, as a probable extension towards skill development.

### Section III

#### **Formation of Art Curriculum: The Great Exhibition of 1851, Department of Science and Arts and the South Kensington Museum, London**

The intention of citing the role of the Great Exhibition and the Department of Science and Arts (henceforth, DSA) limits itself to the purpose of setting a prelude to the history of colonial art education in India. It brings to the fore a comparable system of art instructions that was put into action for largely industrial and technical purposes, with the main intention of training craftsmen, draftsmen, copyists and engravers. The cultural, institutional and industrial impact of the Great Exhibition and the formative history of the DSA and the South Kensington Museum has emerged as a major field of study across the disciplines of art and cultural history, museum studies, and design studies in the UK and the USA. . Without repeating the established history of these three institutions, this section will draw on this literature only to lay out the interconnections which led to the formation of a distinct space of art education for India.

The institutional trajectory of classifying Indian art and artefacts was essentially the consequence of Britain's museum development and its cultural ethnographic projects, since the early nineteenth century. The first ever museum of Indian art and craft objects, as well as objects of natural history, of geological and agricultural significance, - was established with the India Museum at London in 1801 (**Fig 1.6**). J. Forbes Watson clarified the objective scope of the museum - "The India Museum will afford the most perfect representation of the various aspects of India, and that it will be arranged in the manner most convenient for reference, study, and research, if it succeeds in presenting separately to each class of visitors – the student, the scientific man, the merchant, the manufacturer, and the artist - that class of articles and that

kind of information in the country itself.”<sup>35</sup> The categorical breakdown of reference users in a museum, on the one hand, and the establishment of a larger scholarly as well as mercantile thrust for museum collections, on the other – led to a pedagogic lineage for the way Indian collections went on display in Britain and the way they came to be configured within the scheme of museums and their respective departments. Kavita Singh observes “When the ‘arts’ of India were referred to in the nineteenth century the term usually meant ‘industrial arts’, the living crafts skills that were so admired in Europe, and which were seen to present economic opportunities for both India and Britain.”<sup>36</sup>

In England, the ‘Fine Art’ classification was attached to a museum’s collection when the institutions would hold paintings by “Rubens, Reynolds, George Morland, Collier, T.B. Lawrence etc.,”<sup>37</sup> as ‘Fine Arts’ was constituted as a field solely within a Western canon. The hierarchy between the ‘Fine Arts’ and the ‘Industrial Arts’, the first assigned primarily to Western civilization, and the latter upheld as the main sphere of excellence in a country like India, came to firmly ingrained and perpetuated within the emerging schemes of art instruction in the colony. This hierarchy has been a recurrent point of contention within the circle of artists, art-students and art teachers in India since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; and correspondingly for generations of art historians in the field of South-Asian art and cultural history. These overlapping directions of art education in India, was further augmented by the after-effects of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations in 1851 (henceforth referred as the Great Exhibition), and the formation of the Department of Science

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<sup>35</sup> J. Forbes Watson was a Scottish physician and was appointed as the assistant surgeon in the Bombay Army Medical Service in 1850. On his return to London, he was nominated as the Director of the India Museum in 1958. See “On the Establishment in Connection with the India Museum and Library of an Indian Institute For Lecture, Enquiry and Teaching – Its Influence on the Promotion of Oriental Studies in England, on the Progress of Higher Education among the natives of India and on the Training of Candidates for the Civil Service of India”. WM H. Allen & Co., 13 Waterloo Place, London 1875

<sup>36</sup> Kavita Singh, “Museums and the Making of the Indian Art Historical Canon” published in *Towards a New Art History- Studies in Indian Art*, (ed.) Shivaji K. Panikkar, Parul Dave & Deeptha Achar. D.K. Printworld, New Delhi.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p 339

and Arts (DSA) in London which influenced pedagogic discourses in the network of south Asian art history, colonial institutional history and museum studies. This field of enquiry has been well scrutinized over time by a growing line up of scholars, among them, Arindam Dutta, Saloni Mathur, Tim Barringer, Deborah Swallow, Bernard S. Cohen, Partha Mitter and Tapati Guha Thakurta.<sup>38</sup> These two differentiated categories of art tutelage, indistinct though they were in their classifications, travelled from England to the Indian art schools, entered the core of their functioning through multiple curriculum rearrangements, and were visible across the Government School of Art, Calcutta's evolution. Therefore the research here maps the inherited route via which the Great Exhibition influenced the disciplinary demarcation of 'industrial arts' vis-à-vis 'fine arts', through collection, classification and curriculum formation in art schools, for its own country as well as for India. Trade being the foremost plan of engagement of the East India Company with its colony, all bureaucratic policies developed during the era aimed at consolidating commercial resources in the country. The official catalogue of the Great Exhibition of 1851 presents itself as a comprehensive account of the material histories of Britain's colonies across the globe. In the introduction to the East Indies section of the catalogue, the account describes –

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<sup>38</sup> See Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of its Global Reproducibility*. Routledge, 2006; Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display*. University of California Press, 2007; *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museums in South Asia* (Co-ed.) Kavita Singh & Saloni Mathur) Routledge, 2015; *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, (Co-ed.) Tim Barringer & Tom Flynn, Routledge 1997; Deborah Swallow, 'The India Museum and the British-Indian textile trade in the late nineteenth century', *Textile History*, 30 (1), 1999; Swallow, 'The Victoria & Albert Museum and its Asian Collections', in Louis Mezin (ed.), *The Heritage of the East India Companies in European Museums and Public Collections*, Cahiers de la Compagnie des Indes, no 5/6, Port Louis, 2000; Swallow, 'Production and control in the Indian garment export industry' in *From Craft to Industry: the Ethnography of Proto-industrial Cloth Production*, E N Goody ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010; Swallow, *The Arts of India: 1550–1900*"(ed. with John Guy), London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1990; Bernard S. Cohen, *Colonialism And Its Forms of Knowledge: The British In India*. Princeton University Press, 1997. Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters* 1977, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977; Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*. Cambridge University Press, 1994; Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal*, Cambridge University Press, 1992; Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*", Columbia University Press, and Permanent Black, 2004.

“Its present inhabitants continue to venerate sciences which they only know by name, and practice arts of which they know not the principles; and this with a skill not only remarkable for the early period at which it attained perfection, but also for the manner in which it has remained stationary for so many ages. But when Commerce was in its infancy, or dealt only in the most precious commodities, these arts could not have been practiced unless India had contained within itself all the raw materials which art could convert into useful articles or elegant ornaments.”<sup>39</sup>

The principal concern that arise from this assertion was the surplus of wide-ranging raw material and skilled labour, whose combined commercial possibilities created immense trading prospects for England. There were two broad categories of objects that travelled from India for the exhibition – Raw Material/Produce and Manufactured Objects. Under the Raw Material section, the exhibition displayed mineral products, metals and ores, non-metallic mineral products, chemical and pharmaceutical products, medicinal substances, agricultural produce, vegetable substance used in manufactures, every variety of oil, dyes and colour substances, timber, animal substances ranging from wool, silk, pearl, bark, horn, ivory, etc. Under Manufactured Objects section, the catalogue records machinery, engineering and architectural contrivances, arms, agricultural and horticultural machines, musical instruments; cotton, woollen, silk and velvet manufactures, objects made out of leather, fur, etc., articles made with paper, tapestry, regional garments, cutlery, vessels, hardware, jewellery, furniture, upholstery, games and toys, etc. (**Fig 1.7**) This is of course a summarised version of the exhaustive record of resources, to demonstrate the kind of intensive collecting that was performed to put India’s exotic material culture on display. In the case of ‘Fine Arts’, the prominent group of objects

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<sup>39</sup> British Possessions in Asia, India- Ceylon, Official and Illustrated catalogue of the Great Exhibition, 1851 p 857

were sculpture or models and also drawings of figures that represent Indians of various castes, religions, professions, such as a Bengali musician playing on the trumpet, women of Bengal carrying water, potter, chowkidar, blacksmith, musoolman sepoy. This range of ethnographic labelling becomes comparable to the visual representation of Indian trades, castes and occupations in the genre of Company Paintings; also counted were enamelled objects, calligraphy and engraving on gem stones (**Fig 1.8-1.9**)<sup>40</sup>. The catalogue report in its concluding remarks on fine arts claimed -

“The fine arts have hardly attained that excellence in India as to require much notice, except as connected with the objects within the limitations of the exhibition. Painting has never attained to any excellence, though the natives are admirable delineators of some objects as of natural history which they can copy to a hair, without however any attention to perspective. The paintings on tale which are exhibited are interesting as exhibiting trades and costumes. Their sculpture, though employed in the representations of their gods and goddesses has never succeeded in giving good views of the human figure; and yet they would seem capable of effecting much, for the models of the figures of the various castes are very successful in the variety of expression which they impart and their success is great in the carving of some animals... Their stone, wood and ivory carving might even be considered as coming within this section of fine arts, from the beauty of the patterns and the elegance of effect which is produced.”<sup>41</sup>

With complete disdain towards India’s several painting traditions - like manuscript painting, Mughal and Rajput miniature paintings and also the mural painting history of the country - the threshold of ‘fine arts’ in India was set on terms that were entirely based on a Eurocentric bias. Bernard Cohen observes, “The objects through which this relationship was constructed were found, discovered, collected and classified as part of a larger European project to decipher the history of India... defined as an authoritative and effective fashion, how the value and meaning

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<sup>40</sup> Similar grouping of objects under the Section of “Modern Fine Arts” was also catalogued for the ‘London Exhibition of 1862’ – classes under architectural models, paintings and Drawings in water colour and oil, Ivory, Stone, metal and sandalwood artefacts essentially collected from princely courts; Geological maps and Atlases as specimens for Etchings and engravings. For details see ‘Official Classified and Descriptive Catalogue of the contributions from India – London Exhibition of 1862’ forwarded through the central committee for Bengal, by A. M. Dowleans. Published by Savielle and Cranenburgh, Calcutta 1862,

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p 937

of the objects produced or found in India were determined.”<sup>42</sup> Partha Mitter’s compelling book, *Much Maligned Monsters*, locates this ignorant bias of the European explorers and missionaries towards the early history of Indian art, and more specifically Hindu art. Mitter explains, “both European visitors to India and those who remained behind were generally agreed on one thing: The great difficulty of coming to terms with Hindu Art...The period from the middle of the thirteenth century to the end of seventeenth century may be regarded as the formative phase in the reception of Indian Art.”<sup>43</sup> During this massive timeframe, the projected perception of Indian culture, society and art were carried to the West by travellers like Marco Polo and Christian missionaries.

Hence, the Indian collection of objects and artefacts which gathered much attention in the Great Exhibition for its ornamental craft skills, proved to be felicitous towards reforming the waning conditions of the Schools of Design in London. The DSA was formed in 1852 principally with a view to placing the new Schools of Design on a more satisfactory industrial footing. Henry Cole, the General Superintendent of the school, clarified in his ‘Introductory Lecture’ that the ultimate decisive factor in ‘taste development’ of a community rests with the consumer and not the artisan or manufacture. He further claimed that, “The improvement of manufactures is therefore altogether dependent upon the public sense of the necessity of it, and the public ability to judge between what is good and what is bad in art.”<sup>44</sup> And therefore to give effect to the observation, the project of art education for all classes, not restricted to artisans, was established through the DSA. As Arindam Dutta summarises, “DSA’s mandate was to introduce superior design and artisanal sensibilities”.<sup>45</sup> Binding these two aims together, the DSA formulated its

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<sup>42</sup> Bernard S. Cohn. “The transformation of Objects into artefacts, Antiquities, and Art in Nineteenth century India” *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*. 1996. P. 77

<sup>43</sup> Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, p 2

<sup>44</sup> Henry Cole, “On the Facilities afforded to all classes of the community for obtaining education in Art” Address of the Superintendents of the Department of Practical Art, delivered at the Marlborough House. 24 November, 1852. p. 12

<sup>45</sup> Arindam Dutta. *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*. Routledge, 2007. p.2

course of art instruction around elementary knowledge in technical aspects of art, which could essentially be moulded according to desired demands of the ornamental; and not individual intellectual expressions. And this predestined route of British art education was sustained through preservation of ornamental design specimens, classical examples of architectural and figure models and other Indian artefacts from the Great Exhibition, which would later form the South Kensington Museum collection. (**Fig 1.10**). The collection opened to public as the Museum of Manufactures in 1852 at the Marlborough House, but soon shifted to the Somerset House during the same year.<sup>46</sup> The growing collection of the museum finally shifted to its current location in 1855 and was renamed South Kensington Museum. In 1899, the museum was publicly declared as the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Architect Digby Wyatt in his fêted compilation of the ‘Industrial Arts of the Nineteenth Century’ draws up a list of worthiest specimens produced by every nation at the Great Exhibition. He categorised chosen objects from across Europe and some other countries in the West under Sculpture, Metal Work, Textiles, Porcelain Glass and Earthenware, Architectural Decoration, Furniture, Wood and Ivory Carving – only ‘Objects from India’ was made into a separate section in the extensively illustrated catalogue. Among one hundred and sixty objects selected as the best specimens, twenty three artefacts from India were showcased in the catalogue. Among these objects from India, a large portion comprised of embroidered patterns on textile, for example Kincob pattern (**Fig 1.9**), embroidered boot-front from Scindian manufacture, white silk embroidery on black net from Dacca, Bullian Patterns, etc. Other objects selected from India were painted lacquer work from Lahore, crystal vases and jewellery, decorative metal work on Arms, illuminated manuscripts and the ‘Ivory Throne’ gifted by the

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<sup>46</sup> John Physick, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: the History of its Building*, 1982. p. 16-18



Raja of Travancore, etc. .<sup>47</sup> Owen Jones in the *Catalogue of the Museum of Ornamental Art* that was set up under the aegis of the DSA remarked,

“In examining the collection of articles purchased from the Great Exhibition, for the purpose of the Department of Practical Art, the attention of the student and enquiring visitors was particularly directed to the ‘Indian Portion’, the most important, both from the variety and beauty of the articles themselves and as furnishing most valuable hints for arriving at a true knowledge of those principles which should regulate the employment both of ornamental and colour in Decorative Art.”<sup>48</sup>

As expressed by Cole in his lecture, the first report of the Department of Science and Arts, published in 1854, reiterated, “In order to prepare for the reform of the Schools of Design for which the department was especially constituted, it was felt that the first step was to establish the means by which local exertion might be able to obtain elementary instruction.”<sup>49</sup> The Art Superintendent Richard Redgrave (**Fig 1.10**) laid out the composition of the curriculum to be followed by the school in his introductory lecture – “Schools for the attainment of technical skill are necessary; a Library, wherein Art must be a predominant feature; a Museum of the rarest works of art and manufactures; and lectures by various professors, on subjects connected with the special direction of art in its future application to manufactures.”<sup>50</sup> The module of instruction in the school was arranged under four heads – Drawing, Painting, Modelling and Composition. These four classes were further subdivided into twenty-two stages which

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<sup>47</sup> Wyatt, M. Digby, *The Industrial Arts of the Nineteenth Century – A Series of Illustrations of the Choicest Specimens Produced by Every Nation at the Great Exhibition of Works of Industry, 1851*, Day and Son Lithographers to the Queen, London, 1851

<sup>48</sup> *Catalogue of the Museum of Ornamental Art* (sixth edition), Marlborough House, Pall Mall, Department of Science and Art, Board of Trade, London, March 1854, Owen Jones, Observations on the collection of Indian Examples, May 1852, p 94

<sup>49</sup> First Report of the Department of Science and Arts, Para 45 *Schools of Art subsidized by Parliamentary Grants, late School of Design*, p xxxiii

<sup>50</sup> Richard Redgrave and Henry Cole, *Addresses of the Superintendents of the Department of Practical Art*, delivered at the Theatre at Marlborough House, Published by Authority, Chapman and Hall, London 1853. The lecture delivered by Cole was titled “On the Facilities afforded to all classes of the community for obtaining education in Art” on November 24, 1852; The Lecture delivered by Redgrave was titled “On the method employed for imparting education in Art to all classes” delivered on November 27, 1852, p 58; Prof. Partha Mitter mentions twenty-three stages in his account of ‘Framing the Syllabus’ in his book *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850 – 1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, London 1994, p. 34

categorically defined subject scope for art students to explore their skill set thoroughly – namely Ornament, Figure and Flowers (Appendix 1).<sup>51</sup> Almost a century later, Mildred Archer made his observation on the British influences on art by the Indians, admitting that -

“However charitably we may regard these pictures of hook-swinging and processions, Taj Mahal, washer men, or table servants, we cannot assign to them great artistic merit. It is the lack of sensibility, the absence of artistic taste, which is their chief characteristic... Although inspired by a passion amounting almost to mania, (elementary drawing and sketching) was usually a mere mechanical compliance with certain rigid rules. It resulted not from education in art but from instruction in a fashion (Fig 1.11 a, b).”<sup>52</sup>

Largely devoid of emotive or mood rendering aspects of artistic stimulation, the British art pedagogy in India remained invested in the practical aspect of trade accomplishments and proliferation of object and material cultures. The emphasis on academic drawing skills proved to be a generic leveller for Indian artists, but the dichotomy between fine arts and commercial art practices and the denigration of the subcontinent’s ‘fine art’ traditions continued to frame the art education policies in India and would prevail over the first fifty odd years of the Government School of Art, Calcutta.

Owen Jones concludes his observation on the Indian examples with the observation “The temporary exhibition of the Indian and other Eastern Collection in the Great Exhibition, was a boon to all those European artists who had an opportunity of studying them, and let us trust that the foresight of the Government, which has secured to us a portion of those collections as permanent objects of study, will lead to still higher results.”<sup>53</sup> These lines from the introductory essay of the Catalogue of the Museum of Ornamental Arts, cements the perspective of the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p58; See Appendix 1 for the complete curriculum structure of the Department of Science and Arts.

<sup>52</sup> Mildred and W. G. Archer. *Indian painting for the British, 1770-1880; an essay by Mildred and W.G. Archer.* Oxford University Press, London, 1955, p. 108

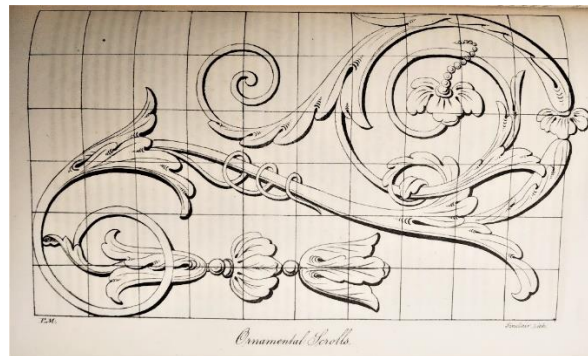
<sup>53</sup> Owen Jones, *Catalogue of the Museum of Ornamental Art at Marlborough House, Pall Mall*, Board of Trade-Department of Science and Arts, London 1852 p. 117

colonial government's project of collecting Indian craft specimens and building industrial pedagogic prospects from it; and establishes a model system of art circulation from the maker to exhibition, forwarded by museum collection and public consumption, and onwards to the formation of an institutional curriculum which completed the network loop, sustained by supply and demand in the commercial scope of the profession. Furthermore, the scanty account of Indian artistic bequest according to the colonial estimation, reflected heavily on the pedagogic curriculum, which subjugated the components of fine arts through western methods and models of training, while the Indian aspects of ornamental skills were propagated through the industrial design modules of the curriculum, until the very end of nineteenth century in Bengal.

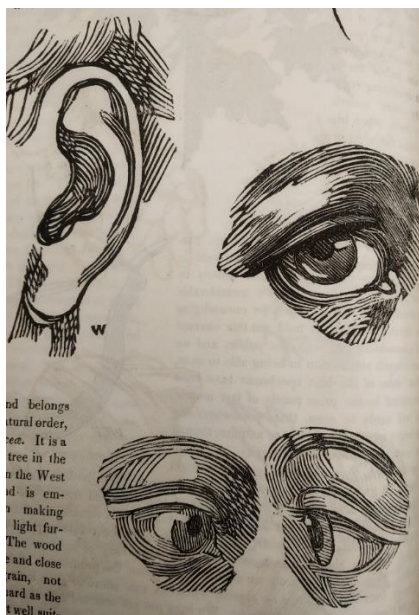
Parts of the profits from the Great Exhibition were distributed by the Commissioner of the Exhibition for educational purposes. That donation funded the creation of Department of Science and Art (DSA) and the South Kensington Museum, which in current date has been reformed as the Royal College of Art and the Victoria & Albert Museum, respectively (**Fig 1.15**). Apart from the profit money, what directly boosted the creation of these institutions, were the art and craft objects that were at display in the Great Exhibition. The annual report of DSA, categorically prescribes the methodology and principles of specified skills in Indian craft making, which should be adapted and observed in their training school. It further records that “the objects of the Museum are three-fold. Some specimen are included which, as the collection increases are intended to illustrate the history of various manufactures, some for extreme skill of manufacturers or workmanship, whilst others are intended to present to the manufacturer and to the public choice example of what science and art have accomplished in manufactures of all kinds, and this not so much with a view of the works being copied or imitated, as to show the perfection and beauty in art are not matters of caprice or dependent upon the fancy of the beholder any more than perfection and beauty in nature.” As the colonial

knowledge for understanding the cultural specimens from India broadened through the perspective of craft specimens and its ornamental skill acquiring abilities, industrial minded reformers sought enterprising opportunities in maximising resource and skill, as an institutional project. The remarks quoted above gives us a concise view of early British opinion about art and education in India.

To enter the institutional and art pedagogic history of Bengal, it is vital to take into consideration and put into perspective the connected histories and developments that took place during the high noon of colonialism in India. The English Education Act of 1835 and the Education Despatch of 1854,- followed by the establishment of the Madras School of Arts in 1850 which was the first prominent art school in India and a bedrock of the imported British art education model, positioned London as the nerve centre for art historical and pedagogic dominance over India in the mid-nineteenth century. What powerfully aided this process was the conglomeration of world resources and artefacts through the agencies of exhibition, trade, and museum collections. We have learned until now that the Indian objects of interest, specifically the ones collected during the Great Exhibition, served only as a visual resource pool for Design schools across England, instead of expanding the basis of its education to critical research on the practices. Therefore, objects of Indian art and artefacts which travelled to England during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, were essentially collected for their surface quality and exoticness, instead of its cultural connotations, which when redirected through British pedagogic objectives and methodologies towards India, resulted in education that endorsed instruction devoid of local cultural moorings.



**Figure 1.1** – ‘Ornamental Scrolls’ Art student’s drawing at the Madras School of Art, published in and Sourced from - the IJSM Vol 1, No 1-7



**Figure 1.2** – Examples of Wood Engraving done by the students of the Madras School of Art, and published in and Sourced from - IJSM Vol 1, No 1-7



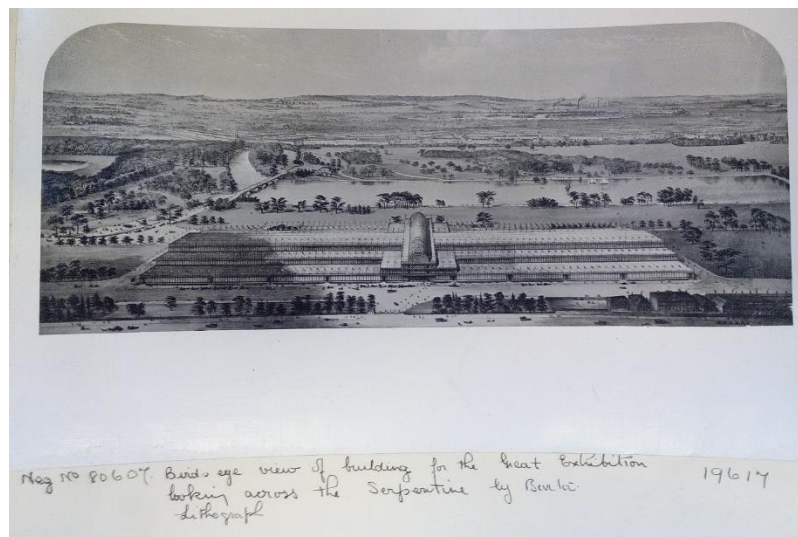
**Figure 1.3** – Sketch of a Tree (Oak) by the students of the Madras School of Art, and published in and Sourced from – IJSM. Vol 1, No 1-7, p 643. 1850-52



**Figure 1.4** - Examples of figures and architectural illustrations produced by the students (signed P.S and IJJ and IID) of Madras School of Art, and published in and Sourced from – IJSM. Vol 1, No 1-7



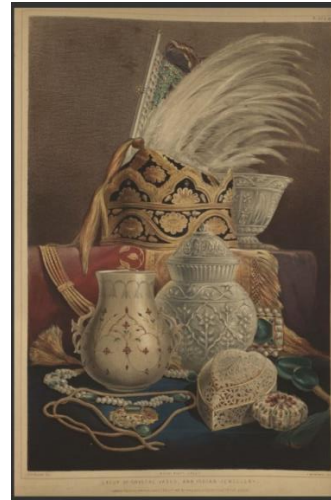
**Figure 1.5** – Example of copy work illustration (signed by W. Johns) published in and Sourced from - IJSM Vol 1, No 1-7



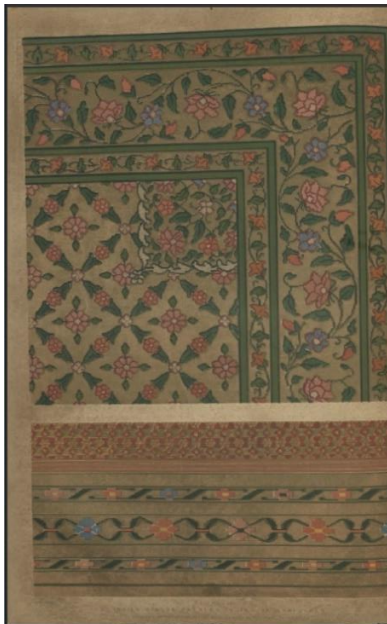
**Figure 1.6** - Bird's eye view of the building (Crystal Palace) for the Great Exhibition looking across the serpentine. By Burton Lithograph. Negative no. 80607. Image Courtesy: Victoria & Albert Museum Archive, London



**Figure 1.7** – Indian Court at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Lithograph by Joseph Nash from 'Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851', pub. Dickinson Brothers, 1854. Image Collection & Source - Victoria & Albert Museum Archive



**Figure 1.8** – Ornamental Objects from India displayed at the Fine Arts Court – The Great Exhibition of 1851. Illustration published in and Sourced from - "Crystal Palace and Its Contents – An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations.



**Figure 1.9** – Indian Kincob Patterns woven at Ahmedabad and Benares. Published as Plate XXIV in and Sourced from - The Industrial Arts of the Nineteenth Century – Series of Illustrations of the Choicest Specimens Produced by Every Nation at the Great Exhibition of Works of Industry, 1851. Compiled by M. Digby Wyatt.



**Figure 1.10** – Henry Cole and Richard Redgrave in the Garden at Gore House, London. Photograph by Charles Thurston Thompson. 1854. Image ID 2006AR9056. Image Source – V& A Museum-Images. <https://www.vandaimages.com/2006AR9056-Sir-Henry-Cole-and-Richard-Redgrave-in-the-garden.html>



**Figure 1.11 – a** “An Indian Artist copying European Portrait” Painting on Mica, Tanjore, About 1875 (Collection Mrs. C. Grant); Image Source: “Indian painting for the British, 1770-1880” by Mildred and W.G. Archer. Oxford University Press, London 1955



**Figure 1.11 - b** “Eastern Parrot on a Spray”. Water Colour by Shaykh Zyan –al-Din, Calcutta. About 1777. Impey Collection.. Image Source: “Indian painting for the British, 1770-1880” by Mildred and W.G. Archer. Oxford University Press, London 1955



## **Art Pedagogy and the Colonial Classroom: The Formative History of the Government School of Art, Calcutta 1854-1884**

### **Section I**

#### **The School of Industrial Art and the Society for the Promotion of Industrial Arts, Calcutta 1854 – 1864**

The earliest traceable history of ‘western’ art schools in India can be marked with Sir Charles Malet’s Poona School that operated between 1747 and 1795; followed by Calcutta Lyceum which propagated arts and science through lectures, exhibitions and an art school; and the establishment of the Calcutta Mechanics’ Institution and the School of Art by Frederic Corbyn on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 1839, as recorded by Prof. Partha Mitter.<sup>1</sup> However most of these schools did not stand the test of time due to the lack of specialised direction, on which the successive enterprises of colonial Indian art institutions would be built upon in the subsequent years. Charles Mallet was a high-ranking officer of the East India Company and the first Baronet. He is known for his early research and documentation of Ellora cave sculptures, in collaboration with James Manley and one of his students, Gangaram.<sup>2</sup> Forming a team with these artists, Malet established the Poona School with the vision of developing a studio space for European

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<sup>1</sup> Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850 – 1922 Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994

<sup>2</sup> Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*. Clarendon Press, 1977. pp. 179-181

artists travelling to India and who could be assisted by local Indian artists. The school did not persist long after James Manley's demise. Following the rise of Mechanics institutions in London, Calcutta Mechanics' Institute and School of Art was introduced in the city. Though there is a lack of considerable documentation on the vision and workings of this institute, it is surmised that a cross disciplinary prospect of a mechanic institute with an art school built into it created confusion instead of curiosity among students in Bengal.<sup>3</sup> As evident from the extent of existing records on the earliest attempts of establishing art schools in India, it is apparent that a sustainable structure to establish 'art' as a function-oriented training was only configured after the 1850s.

Lieut. Col. H. Goodwyn, a Company engineer, delivered a lecture on March 2, 1854, to the Bethune Society on 'Union of Science, Industry and Arts', with the intent of establishing the School of Industrial Arts in Calcutta. He invoked Prince Albert's opinion and vision on the industrial and cultural prospects of the Great Exhibition at the beginning of his lecture, which positioned the objective and purpose of the school, ceremoniously establishing the pedagogical direction of art training in Calcutta. Goodwyn asks,

"What steps are her (India's) sons taking towards the realization of any of the benefits so largely resulting to other nations from their participation in the world's wondrous exhibition of 1851? A foundation was laid by the display of rich and costly produce, but where the edifice, without which the foundation is but as the fabric of a dream."<sup>4</sup>

Prince Albert in his speech focused on the "laws by which the Almighty governs his creation" and spoke not on the "Unity of Mankind which breaks down the limits and levels the peculiar characteristics of the different nations of the earth, but rather a Unity, the result and product of those very national varieties and antagonistic qualities" which should be made more accessible

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<sup>3</sup> Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*; Sovon Som, *Art Education in Colonial India*.

<sup>4</sup> Goodwyn, Lieut. Col. H., *A Lecture on the Union of Science, Industry and Arts with a View to the formation of a School of Industrial Art & Design*. Thacker Spink & Co, Calcutta 1854, p 5

in keeping with the evolving nature of the modern world where distances between nations and cultures are minimising while modes of communication are maximising.<sup>5</sup> This philosophical recognition of science, industry and arts during this decade found a didactic reorganisation in England, with European administrators in India following suit. Goodwyn, in his lecture, categorically describes *Science* as that “Which discovers the laws of power, motion and transformation, the agents which human ingenuity brings to bear on the products of Nature”; *Industry* as that “which applies these agents, these raw materials which the earth yields... but which becomes valuable only by knowledge”; and *Art* as that “which teaches us the immutable laws of beauty and symmetry and gives to the productions of industry forms in elegant accordance with them.”<sup>6</sup>

This was the first successful instance when the amalgamation of science and art was administered as an education project, for the benefit of the commercial and the administrative interests of the British Indian Empire. This also cemented the position of the Great Exhibition not only as a crucial turning point in rearranging applied art education methods and objectives in England which were already going through an acute crisis in artistic regeneration, but also as the catalyst for expanding that industrial and artistic workforce in the colonies. An invested group of Indians and Europeans formed the managing committee which included Hodgson Pratt and Rajendralala Mitra as the first secretaries of the Society. Other influential Indian members of the committee were Dr. Suryakumar Goodeve Chakravorty, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Ram Chandra Mitra and Pratap Chandra Singh.<sup>7</sup> On 16<sup>th</sup> August 1854, the School of Industrial Arts was established in Garanhata, Chitpur, in a house offered by Raja Pratap Chandra Singh and his brother Iswar Chandra Singh.<sup>8</sup> However, by the end of that year, the school moved to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, excerpts from Prince Albert’s long quote used in Goodwyn’s lecture.

<sup>6</sup> Goodwyn, Lieut. Col. H., *A Lecture on the Union of Science, Industry and Arts with a View to the formation of a School of Industrial Art & Design*.

<sup>7</sup>, Jogesh Chandra Bagal, *History of Government College of Art and Craft*, 1966

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

a larger premise in Seal's College in Colootala, which allowed adequate infrastructure in order to induct larger strength of students.

F.J. Cockburn, the succeeding honorary Secretary of the Society, laid out the primary objective of the School of Industrial Art, Calcutta –

“Firstly – To the development of faculties of Invention and Originality  
Secondly – To supply skilled draughtsmen, designers and engravers to meet the great and increasing demand for such in this country.  
Thirdly – To provide a varied and useful means of subsistence to a portion of an increasing population.  
Fourthly – To promote taste and refinement in the application of Art, among upper classes.  
Fifthly – Enable the society to supply works of art to the community at moderate prices.”<sup>9</sup>

As charted out, the primary objective of this private art school in Calcutta, as was observed in case of Bombay and Madras art schools, was to train draughtsmen who could meet the generated demand in industrial expansion and to preserve craft traditions in the country.

The driving thrust of this Industrial school's curriculum was broadly drawn from the DSA module (**Appendix I**) and also echoed Hunter's curriculum for the Madras school of Art. However, beyond the prospect of instruction in industrial modes of art, The School of Industrial Arts also extended their pedagogic intention, in contrast to other emerging art institutions in the country, to fostering interest and 'refined taste' in art among the 'upper classes' of the society in Bengal. This advocacy made room for the engagement of illustrious Indian patrons with the institution, as well as propagated new modes of collecting and commissioning 'Art'. To implement the curriculum, students were divided into two broad sections of Junior and Senior classes. Students in the Junior class were required to complete a programme of Elementary Drawing lessons, the intensity and duration of which were decided by the teachers of the school according to individual aptitude and perseverance of the students. Having

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<sup>9</sup> *Rules of the Society for the Promotion of the Industrial Art*, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1856

satisfactorily completed this stage of training, the students would then be inducted into the Senior section of the school that provided training in Modelling and Moulding, Engraving and Lithography, and Higher Drawing and Painting or “any other (modules) which may be subsequently established”.<sup>10</sup> (Fig 2.1) Mr M. Rigaud was appointed as the teacher for clay modelling, in an honorary capacity, and Mr M Agyer as the school’s painting teacher. The school started with forty-five and fifty students in the respective departments. In 1855, T.F. Fowler joined the institution to teach engraving, etching and lithography to the students. On the advice of the managing committee, elementary drawing was made the foundational course of the school during this year, followed by instruction in sculpture, printing technologies and higher form of painting as specialised knowledge, as described by F. J. Cockburns curriculum structure.<sup>11</sup> Photography was added as a subject of instruction during 1857 and in 1859. J. C. Bagal records the inclusion of Pottery as the seventh subject of the art school.<sup>12</sup> The class hours were prescribed to be for at least two hours every day for all stages of students.

This compelling orientation of drawing, painting, modelling, sculpture and print-making techniques as the foundational curriculum for the art school in Calcutta noticeably subdued the emphasis on craft training and ornamental design in comparison to other art schools in India during their formative phase. Deepali Dewan records in her thesis, that “The curriculum in the first year of the Madras School of Arts’ existence consisted primarily of drawing lessons from illustrations of human figures or landscape or animal scenery”<sup>13</sup> while “students in the industrial section learned and developed techniques in metal work, cast-making with plaster of Paris, brick making, pottery manufacture and printing based on local technique with local

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<sup>10</sup> *Rules of the Society*, p. 6

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 7-8

<sup>12</sup> Bagal. pp. 3-4

<sup>13</sup> Deepali Dewan, *Crafting Knowledge and the Knowledge of Crafts: Art Education, Colonialism and the Madras School of Art in Nineteenth Century South Asia*, Unpublished dissertation, 2001. pp. 56-57

resources.”<sup>14</sup> The pedagogic thrust of the J. J. School of Art shows an emphasis on architectural instruction which would cater to urban commission work for the art school. According to Partha Mitter, “Between 1858-60, Bombay’s foundation course emulated that of the British Council of Education, which recommended training the eye and the hand to ‘understand and represent with firmness and refinement, first abstract and geometrical shapes, and then the varied hundred forms of nature, passing through the intermediate stage of architectural ornament.”<sup>15</sup> Ornamental, geometrical, figure and perspective drawing along with training in antique casting, engraving and decorative sculpture were then added to the curriculum of the school from 1867 onwards. And in case of Mayo School of Industrial Art, Nadhra Shahbaz Khan records that the officiating director of Public Instructions in Punjab clearly declared that “Our School of Art (Lahore) is to be emphatically an industrial one. We do not wish to imitate the ceramics vases of Madras or the foliated capitals of Bombay, but to draw our experience rather from the royal workshops of the Mughals, from the best native specimens of Art and Industry in modern India.”<sup>16</sup> (Fig 2.2) These trajectories of the colonial art schools in India, apart from the one in Calcutta, though divergent in their curricular patterns, bind them to the craft revival project and to an industry of the British administration. The School of Industrial Art in Calcutta attempted to adopt a broader vision of taste and aesthetic development of the region, where instruction in craft features as one among multiple elements in their art education.

As this school started as a private enterprise, Society memberships were formed through donations to the school. The fund corpus also included class fee from the students at rupee one per month for the Junior Section and two rupees per month for the Senior Section. This ‘Rule’ book also categorically designated the scope of taking external commercial orders for

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, p. 42

<sup>16</sup> Nadhra Shahbaz Khan, “Industrial Art Education in Colonial Punjab: Kiplings Pedagogy and Hereditary Craftsmen”, chapter published in *John Lockwood Kipling: Arts & Crafts in the Punjab and London*. p. 471

engraving, lithography, etc. Students from the Senior Section who would show considerable skill would be recruited as apprentices, working under the teachers to deliver the orders. A portion of the earnings would be paid to the teacher and the apprentice, and the profits from these commercial projects would then be credited to the Society fund.<sup>17</sup> Bagal records that the students of the engraving class illustrated orders for David Lester Richardson's book *On Flowers and Flower Gardens*. However the nature of illustrations for the book is relatively elemental and miniscule, and the publication does not specifically record the contribution of the School of Industrial Arts, but can be considered as the earliest surviving example of a commercial project executed by the school.<sup>18</sup> However, irrespective of the earnings from commission works and tuition fees, the fund to regulate, expand and maintain the classes increasingly proved insufficient for the school.

The Society could secure an annual grant from the Government for a brief period, which facilitated the Society to organise an exhibition of the art works prepared by the students, setting a precedence for annual art exhibitions as a longstanding academic programme for art schools. However, the explosion of Sepoy Mutiny brought with it administrative and financial uncertainties that ultimately prompted the managing committee of the school and the Department of Public Instruction to appeal to the government for a complete take-over of the school. Sir Cecil Beadon, who was the Lt.-Governor of Bengal from 1862 to 1866 and also an active promoter of the school, initiated the transfer of powers and the school committee wrote

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<sup>17</sup> *Rules of the Society*, p 8

<sup>18</sup> David Lester Richardson was an officer of the East India Company. He was also a poet, periodical writer and proprietor of literary journal *London Weekly Review*; and editor for seven volumes of *Bengal Annual*, six volumes of *Calcutta Literary Gazette*, and twelve volumes of the *Calcutta Magazine*. He was also elected the Professor of Literature in Hindu College and promoted as the Principal of the institution in 1839. Apart from *On Flowers and Flower Gardens*, Richardson also published books like *Ocean, Sketches and Other Poems* (Calcutta, 1833), *Literary Leaves* (Calcutta, 1835), *Selections from the British Poets, from the time of Chaucer to the Present Day, with Biographical and Critical Notices* (Calcutta, 1840), *The Anglo-Indian Passage* (London, 1845), *History of the Black Hole of Calcutta* (1856), and many more. *Flowers and Flower Gardens* with Appendix of Practical Instructions and Useful Information respecting the Anglo-Indian Flower Garden was published in 1855 by D'Rozario & Co, Tank Square, Calcutta.

to Dr. Richard Redgrave (R. A.) in 1864 to select a suitable candidate for the role of principal at the Government Art School of Calcutta. Redgrave holding the positions of Superintendent (1852) the South Kensington Museum (later Victoria & Albert Museum) and inspector-general for Art at the Government School of Design in London (later, Royal College of Art), was a driving force behind the reformation of art education in England. He selected Henry Hover Locke, artistically trained at South Kensington, as the first designated principal of the Calcutta art school.<sup>19</sup>

## **Section II**

### **The Beginning of Government School of Art, Calcutta, and H.H. Locke's Curriculum**

The authority of the British East India Company was officially transferred to the British Crown, which instituted the rule of the British government in India in 1858 after the Sepoy Mutiny. Overlapping with this handover was also the future of art education in Bengal, which the government formally took over during 1862-63, and brought under the control of the Department of Public Instruction. Honorary Secretary of the school committee, Mr. H.F. Blanford, provided the government with a detailed report of the school's performance and glitches, further explaining the need for an infrastructural and funding upgrade.<sup>20</sup> In 1863-64, the Government approved a sanction to give Rs. 700 every month towards the remuneration of the appointed Principal for the school.<sup>21</sup> This was provisionally agreed to, with the understanding that "no further expense should be incurred until a qualified person to take

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<sup>19</sup> Bagal, pp. 4-5

<sup>20</sup> Government School of Art, Calcutta General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency 1862-63, p24

<sup>21</sup> Report on Public Instruction, 1863-64, p 62



charge of the Institution has been obtained from England, and has been here long enough to study local wants and circumstances and to make specific proposals for the improvement of the Institution.”<sup>22</sup> Such a person arrived in 1864 as H.H. Locke took over as its first principal and the art school came to be known as the Government School of Art, Calcutta. (**Fig 2.3**)

Later during the year, Locke submitted an elaborate plan and vision to the government for the Calcutta School of Art. Keeping in place the essential subject division structure of the School of Industrial Arts, Locke designed a more elaborate and detailed syllabus for the training programme (**Appendix II**).<sup>23</sup> Broadly echoing the previous curriculum of the School of Industrial Arts, Calcutta, which included drawing, painting, modelling, design for manufacturers, lithography, wood engraving, and photography, Locke added detailed modules that were to be taught to the students.<sup>24</sup> Instructions on practical geometry with the help of instruments and freehand outline drawing from flat copy work formed the foundation of the Elementary Drawing module. Advanced learning in the same course was expanded with ornamental flower, foliage, human and animal drawings, training in light and shade on forms, cast studies and nature study. In the scope of geometrical drawing lessons, Locke established specialised training in Architectural and Mechanical portrayal methods. Painting lessons were broken down to the basics of brush and pigment work in water colour, oil and tempera from flat examples for the elementary course; and painting from nature directly with the same mediums for advanced painting course. Western methods of picture composition were also taught in this module. Instruction was also given for casting and moulding, with the subject premise remaining the same as for painting and drawing. Locke’s curriculum showed a definitive direction towards the enterprising purpose of the school. Elementary design,

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Refer to Appendix 2 for the Curriculum planned by H. H. Locke for the Government School of Art, Calcutta.

<sup>24</sup> Government School of Art, Calcutta General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency 1865-66, *Appendix A*, pp. 531 – 541

technical design, lithography and wood engraving were together projected as a concentration training domain of the school. A study of the ornamental elements, arrangement of form and colour in ornamental design, study of various historical ornamental styles featured in the school's programme; along with printing and weaving techniques, glass and pottery work, mural painting and mosaic. In 1884 the curriculum was further expanded with the addition of wood-carving and repoussé metalwork. The ascendancy of the DSA curriculum can be evidently observed in Locke's curriculum planning. However more significantly, this intensification of pedagogic plan also now concretely shifted the thrust of art education from casual to vocational prospects.

This list of extensive training opportunities was not uniformly applicable for all students who entered the school. These specialised knowledge structures were designed according to "the nature of occupation" for which the student wished to apply himself. Therefore the specialised departments of the art school were named as - Course for Architects, Course for Mechanical and Engineering Draughtsmen, Course for General Draughtsmen, Course for Designers, Course for Lithographers, and Course for Wood-engravers.<sup>25</sup> The average time to satisfactorily complete the course was settled between two to five years. This systematic establishment of method and material instruction through the art school, had two far reaching social and intellectual consequences – firstly, it marked the shift from regional inherited artistic skills to technical professional skills for the industry; secondly, it established the primary function of the art school as the place for training in technical skills of draughtsmanship rather than the training of artists. Locke's curriculum rearrangement and the result it yielded, was marked out in the annual report of the school which stated that the progress in the modelling, wood engraving and the lithograph department had been most satisfactory and this growth would finally undo the reputation of Calcutta as a city where "an illustrated book cannot be

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

produced.<sup>26</sup> In a report from 1867, Locke also claims that no wood engraving, even of average quality, can be obtained anywhere else in Calcutta, except from the School of Art.<sup>27</sup> The *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* of the year 1865 show two lithograph illustrations by Kristohury Dass, an student of the art school (**Fig 2.4 a, b**).<sup>28</sup> Though most of the illustrations published in the journal were under the name of H.M. Smith (SGO, Calcutta), the two plates show the range of the student's work of that period in the art school. To support his claims, Locke cited the Annual Report of the Council of the Asiatic Society of that year, where the board notes –

“their obligation to the Government School of Art to which they are indebted for a series of models (meteorites)... produced with fidelity which they believe will be highly appreciated by the European Museums ... They cannot too highly appreciate the advantages offered by the School of Art both in enabling the Society to procure accurate and artistic models... and also in furnishing illustrations for their publications of an excellence and accuracy of execution hitherto but rarely obtainable in Calcutta.”

This accreditation proved to be a huge boost to the purpose and reputation of the art school in the city; and its ambition of matching up to the standards of British art students and schools. Locke writes in the 1864-65 report that, while planning this extensive skill oriented curriculum, he was also aware of the fact that, “there is but a small chance of appreciation of the labours of the Art-workman if the purchaser be so uneducated as to be unable to discriminate between good art and bad, or even between good and mediocre work.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore in order to optimise the manifestation of resources, training and skill sets, Locke also provided a “General Course” which would train students in basic drawing skills and knowledge, which would cater to casual needs and not as means of livelihood. This class was set to meet only on Saturdays for two hours. However, it did not gain much popularity.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p538

<sup>27</sup> Annual Report, 1867-68, p 612

<sup>28</sup> *Journal of the Asiatic Society Bengal*, Vol XXXIV Part II, Plate 6 & 9

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 536

Photography though having found a place in the 1865 curriculum of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, did not advance as an essential component of the art school training; and it was finally removed from the course during 1869-70, as Mr. Garrick, the Head Master and also the photography teacher left the school, bringing an end to his long association with the institution.<sup>30</sup> Locke was of the opinion that camera as a medium allowed students to acquire power over subjects in a short period of time in comparison to the other forms of skill development in art. Therefore, a student is more tempted to “devote themselves entirely to p  
Photography for a few months and then set up in the Bazaars as takers of carte-de-visite portraits. The extremely inferior quality of these works does not, it would seem, prevent their commanding a ready sale at prices sufficiently lucrative to their producers to account for the disposition to follow this comparatively facile art.”<sup>31</sup> Locke asserted that the aim of the school of art is for augmenting artistic skills and not facilitate lesser and hasty ambitions of ‘carte-de-visite’ forms of photography, hence the instruction in the subject will only be restricted to auxiliary needs. This idiosyncratic segregation of individual resourceful skill development over photographic outcomes, took precedence in the scheme of the Calcutta art school’s disciplinary thrusts. At about the same time in 1862-63, Madras School of Arts too integrated photography as a module in their taught curriculum. The teaching of photography took on a different dimension here, with the nature of its practice explored through outdoor study tours and photographic albums emerging out of these excursions.<sup>32</sup>

The average student strength on the register of the art school from 1865 to 1870 were recorded to have increased from twenty nine to forty eight pupils. However, it is also recorded that “the total number of students who have attended for longer or shorter periods, has also increased in

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<sup>30</sup> Annual Report, 1869-70

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 539

<sup>32</sup> Asrafi S. Bhagat, *A History of the Madras Art Movement 1950s – 2000*. p. 9

a corresponding degree of eighty”<sup>33</sup>. In February 1857, the school started awarding prizes to the students for their performance in the elementary stages of the curriculum. Kamakha Charan Ghosh was recognised for the “Best Drawing on Stone (Chalk)” and Kali Das Pal for “Best Wood Engraving” by Sir Cecil Beadon, for the academic year of 1866-67. That very year, Anundo Prosaud Bagchee (Annada Prasad Bagchi) was awarded for the “Best Study in light and shade from nature” (**Fig 2.5 a, b**). Other students to receive awards that year were – Jugobundu Das, Preonath Das, Panchanun Chatterjee, Tulsi Das Pal, Kanti Charan Ghosh and Gopal Chandra Pal This ceremonial recognition for the student’s work, in the form of awards, was started to encourage and sustain their interest in the training period and the subject deliverances. A recurring problem in the desirable progress of the school was cited as students discontinuing their entire course period. This was due to the elaborate nature of the curriculum which demanded more time, in comparison to other special training subjects. It was reported that the student strength of the school had increased to seventy two in 1871, which further increased to one sixty nine students by 1875. Thereafter, until 1885 when Principal Locke departed, the school had maintained an average of more than a hundred students (each year or every batch?).

After Mr. Garricks’s departure in 1869 from the position of lithography teacher and the Head Master, Locke appointed Mr. R.B. Lawson, Babu Annadaprasad Bagchi, Shyama Charan Srimani and Babu Gopal Chandra Pal, all ex-students of the institution, as assistant teachers for the school. Lawson and Annadaprasad Bagchi assisted Locke in the classes of ‘Elementary Linear Drawing’, ‘Higher Freehand Drawing’ and ‘Freehand drawing in light and shade’; while Shyama Charan Srimani assisted the training course in ‘Geometrical Drawing’ and Gopal Chandra Pal and Jadunath Pal in ‘Modelling’ classes. Mr. Sedgefields was appointed a full time Lithography teacher for the school during the same year. However, Locke reports that

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<sup>33</sup> Annual Report 1869-70, p. 378

during this phase in the institution's history, the course in advanced painting lacked sufficient infrastructure, and therefore its progress was not on par with the other modules of the curriculum.<sup>34</sup>

During H. H. Locke's tenure, the pedagogic thrust of the formative phase of Calcutta school of art was set to measure up to the British art schools, not only in its curriculum adherence but also in the common tendencies of the students in the country with those in England, and in their standards of the skill set desired for the sphere of art academia. At the beginning of his tenure, Locke wrote that "Bengali students are not unlike their English brethren in the Art Schools at home in their impatience to study colour before understanding light and shade, and the latter while they have yet but an imperfect knowledge of form."<sup>35</sup> The pedagogic direction that Locke established took the school decisively towards technical training in art, rather than creative development. Though one of the initial key agendas of the Empire, in the matter of art education, was to improve taste and sophistication of the natives in India, the methods applied remained narrow and bureaucratic impeding the scope for a broader cultural exchange and enhancement. Locke further proclaims that "a thorough grounding in drawing is absolutely indispensable to a proper training for any of the above pursuits, students are not permitted to attempt any of the higher or more technical studies until properly qualified..."<sup>36</sup>

This pattern of regulated methodology, defined scheme of drawing subjects, measured stages of skill, its progress and the absence of intellectual and emotional quotient in subject representation fashioned the field of Academic art in the country. Tapati Guha-Thakurta, in her book *The Making of a New Indian Art*, says that the 1874 'Fine Arts' exhibition at the Imperial Museum (Indian Museum) which showcased works by students or teachers of Calcutta and

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 383

<sup>35</sup> Annual Report 1865-66, p. 536

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Bombay schools of art were essentially “full figure, portraits and head studies, architectural drawing, specimens of lithography, wood engraving, clay models of human and animal figures”.<sup>37</sup> These thematic categories have strong resonance to that of the art works displayed at the *Fine Arts Section* of the Great Exhibition of 1851, as discussed in the previous chapter. The indigenous representation of Indians in their native cultural and professional archetypes remained as the desired sculptural and illustrative examples of fine arts from the country, for the British authorities. Though British naturalism and Greco-Roman classicism had already entered India, influencing traditional Indian artists outside the institutional scope, it did not make a thematic entry into the pedagogical configuration of the Calcutta art school until then. Guha-Thakurta accurately summarises this quandary that “even as the British acknowledged the coming of age of Indian artist and art student, the line of demarcation between the work of Europeans and Indians still remained clear and strong.”<sup>38</sup>

An analogous observation was also made by Partha Mitter, on this conflicting direction of colonial art pedagogy. He notes “the British themselves were divided over the art teaching; it was either the ‘fine arts’ as imparted by the Royal Academy or the ‘applied’ arts as taught at the DSA at South Kensington.”<sup>39</sup> This dichotomy in the aim and purpose of art education can be traced back to an official report written by H. H. Locke, during his tenure at the Calcutta Art School. He argued that the Lieutenant Governor George Campbell’s interest of projecting craft education as a prominent component in the education scheme in England will not have “precisely the same position here in India, with respect to educating the natives in artisan occupations, as the projectors of industrial schools in Europe were, and are, with reference to the artisan classes there.”<sup>40</sup> Locke further explains his argument by citing examples of

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<sup>37</sup> Tapati Guha Thakurta, *Making of a New Indian Art*, p. 47; *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Fine Arts at the Indian Museum, Calcutta*, 1874

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, p. 48

<sup>39</sup> Mitter, *Art And Nationalism in Colonial India 1850 – 1922*, p. 33

<sup>40</sup> H.H. Locke, Annual Report on Government School of Art, 1872-73, p. 704-706

admirable craftsmanship by the natives trained in workshops owned by Europeans in India which extend and occupy the scope of training schools in the country. Herein he believes that the Government School of Art in Calcutta should be free of that equation and should instead expand its influence “as a centre whence should radiate the influence of other work which might be so beneficially interwoven with the general public instruction of the province.”<sup>41</sup> With the main justification of better professional opportunities for students, as in any other field of education, the colonial art schools in India were essentially propelled by two main cultural and temporal objectives – one of reforming and reorganising the traditional crafts of the past, leading to small scale industrial prospects for the country; the other of equipping offices and other newly formed urban occupations with artistic skills, which would reinvent its relevance for the future. The former direction of pedagogy was adapted by the art schools in Madras and Lahore, while the Bombay and Calcutta art schools placed greater emphasis on the imminent prospects of art training in the country.

### **Section III**

#### **Projects & Commissions**

H. H. Locke’s curriculum strategies for the Government School of Art started to demonstrate their standing in the larger institutional and cultural network between England and India. The School was given the responsibility of decorating the Chancel of St. Peter’s Church at Fort William in 1865.<sup>42</sup> Locke, who had joined the art school as its principal the previous year, secured for the school a project of significance at the heart of British government’s edifice in

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Annual Report, 1865-67, pp. 539-540



India. The St. Peter's Church in Fort William is one of the oldest surviving churches in Calcutta, which opened for worship in 1825 (**Fig 2.6 a, b**). The entire scheme of the decoration of the church chancel was conceived by Locke and executed by the students of the art school, which included the vaulted ceiling, with the East, North and South walls in colour; the filling of the clerestory windows with stained glass (*en grisaille* with medallions and borders in colour); and the erection of a reredos.<sup>43</sup> The design of the stone framework, the tracery of the four clerestory windows and stained glass were executed by the art students of the school. The "ordinary painting *mistris*" (labours) who were given the job of painting the ceiling of the church, were made to attend a training workshop at the school to equip them with the required skills for the job.

Locke sardonically describes that,

"These men although to a certain extent skilful, are nevertheless entirely ignorant ... and incapable of anything beyond the ordinary line and corner panelling with which the walls of our Calcutta drawing rooms are covered by the yards. The most debased form of quasi-Italian, Louis Quatorze, Louis Quinze, Rococco and other inanities are the only types of decoration painting known to men who are the heirs of a system of decorative art to which European students look with respect and admiration... from which laws of decoration are now taught in our art schools. This is the extent to which up to the present time the English have improved the art of the Natives here!"<sup>44</sup>

Along with criticising the outmoded decorative styles adopted and exported by the British, he also disapproved of the lag in art educational ambitions in the country. The aspiration of training the populace in useful creative knowledge became the cornerstone of the formative phase of the art school under Locke. Though all the working drawings detailing every inch of the St. Peter's church interior were planned in the Calcutta art school, the execution of the reredos and the stained glass painting was perhaps done in England, as subtly implied by Locke

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Ibid; Louis Quinze refers to the rococo style of the furniture, decoration, and architecture of the time of Louis XV of France and Louis Quatorze refers to Louis XIV of France.

in a following report. He does not explain the circumstances which led to the change in plan; however, it can be argued that the St. Peter's church project remains a testimony of premature claiming of a successful curriculum in practical art.

Apart from the interior decoration of the State-rooms of the Government House in 1869, the Calcutta school of art did not take up any more ornamentation projects in the future on colonial public structures in Calcutta, apart from a few decoration assignments of private houses.<sup>45</sup> The history of colonial neoclassical architecture in Calcutta is marked by the building during these same years of iconic structures like the General Post Office, built between 1864-68, and the Indian Museum in 1875, as well as the Gothic influenced structure like the Calcutta High Court established in 1872, which were all designed by the official architect of the government during this Victorian era, Walter Granville. The Writer's Building, built in 1777 and designed by Thomas Lyon, had gone through several extensions and changes - the addition of the long veranda and its iconic columns, as a new façade of the structure was built in 1821; and the much-acclaimed Minerva statues and the four groups of sculptures representing Agriculture, Commerce, Justice and Science, erected on a mansard roof of the Writer's Building during 1883. The mansard roof addition was also the work of Walter Granville, while the sculptures were carved by William Frederick Woodington, an English painter and sculptor of repute. However, none of these eminent public structures, nor any other reflect any record of students' contribution from the Government School of Art in any form of decoration like stucco work, relief sculptures or wood work. Having claimed the position of the singular most prominent art institution in the region, the school and its projects during the 1870s and 80s remained largely constrained within illustrative jobs.

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<sup>45</sup> Annual Report, 1869-70, p. 387

Among the many celebrated projects of the Calcutta School of Art that H.H. Locke initiated, was the commission for drawings and illustrations for the two books, *Antiquities of Orissa* and *Buddha-Gaya: The Hermitage of Sakyamuni* by Rajendralala Mitra published in 1875 and 1878, which were executed by the students of the Calcutta School of Art. The Orissa project was commissioned by the Royal Society of Arts, London, to the Government of India in 1868, to obtain studies and casts of important architectural and art specimens from India. To put this project in to effect, a significant fund was forwarded to Rajendralala Mitra, through the Government of Bengal, to oversee the project as an archaeologist.<sup>46</sup> To introduce the process and intention of the project, Rajendralala Mitra emphasised Lord Canning's resolution on antiquities of India, "to secure an accurate description – illustrated by plans, measurements, drawings or photographs, and by copies of inscription of such remains that most deserve notice with the history of them so far as it may be traceable and a record of the traditions that are retained regarding them".<sup>47</sup> To put the aim into action, the Government of Bengal, on Mitra's recommendation, invited the Calcutta art school to prepare a series of photographs, drawings and casts from the architectural remains of Bhubaneswar.<sup>48</sup> Mitra explored and expanded on the aspect of social history of the time and the religious systems that influenced the art and architecture of the region. The resources provided by the Calcutta School of Art included most of the lithograph renditions and models of architecture and sculptures, prepared by the students of the Calcutta School of Art.<sup>49</sup> The institutional premise not only became the workshop ground for processing the extensive field study of the project, but also a training ground for some of its best students. It introduced the students at close quarters to the some of the finest example of Hindu temple architecture, sculpture and ornamental motifs, establishing the earliest

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<sup>46</sup> Rajendralala Mitra, *Antiquities of Orissa Vol I*, Orders of the Government of India, Wyman & Co, Calcutta. 1875

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Annual Report, 1969-70, p. 388

<sup>49</sup> Bagal, *The History of Government College of Art And Craft*

precedent of field study for art students in Bengal (**Fig 2.7 a, b,** ).<sup>50</sup> It was the success of the documentation project of the Orissa temples which led Principal Locke to again depute Annada Prasad Bagchi for Rajendralala Mitra's next governmental assignment to document the architectural and sculptural remains of the temple at Bodh Gaya for a monograph of similar intention, *Buddha Gaya: The Hermitage of Sakyamuni*, which was published in 1878.

Bagchi, gained considerable amount of repute while a student of the school, and after the desired execution of the Orissa project, he was inducted as an assistant teacher until 1876, followed by the position of the lithography teacher in 1879, after Mr. Sedgefield's departure; and ultimately as the headmaster of Calcutta School of Art, the following year.<sup>51</sup> The sketches and studies that he accomplished, along with his fellow students, Kalidas Pal, Rasik Chandra Basu, Ude Chanda Samanta, Chunilal Das, Muktaram Adhikari and others, during the Orissa expedition are considered to be of utmost merit and accuracy in the archaeological study of Orissa's art and architecture. This accomplishment also renewed the primacy of documenting and reviving ornamental specimens and patterns from India. To give wind to this direction, the Government of Bengal wrote to Locke, requesting for copies of drawings from the Orissa project and loan of some plaster casts of the same for three months. This interest in collection and photographic documentation by the government was meant for museums in India and outside. The list of copies of drawings requested by the government were – map of Bhubaneswar, the gateway of Mukteswar Temple, railings of Mukteswar Temple, pillars, ceiling, pillar of the Bhubaneswar Temple, pillar of Kedar Temple, plinth of the Durga temple; and the mouldings of Bhubaneswar Temple.<sup>52</sup> (**Fig 2.8 a, b**)

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<sup>50</sup> *Antiquities of Orissa*, Vol I

<sup>51</sup> Bagal, *The History of Government College of Art And Craft*. pp. 12-13

<sup>52</sup> From a Letter written by W.M. Souttar, Esq., Officiating Under- Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, to the Principal of the Government School of Art (Dated 30th March 1870, Fort William)

With this precedent, I also intend to highlight how the book *Antiquities of Orissa*, while growing out of an extensive archaeological study and becoming a seminal knowledge resource in the field, ended up reinforcing the importance of ornament and decorative design in Indian art and architecture. It also led to a reiteration of the skills of copying of the Indian art student and showcased their potential and utility as ‘copyists’ more than as artists. It is hard to surmise though what a student like Annada Prasad Baghi would have inculcated from his experience of working with Rajendralala on these temple sites, and whether he was able to imbibe a fair degree of art historical knowledge in the process of copying and replication. The collection of the copies made by the Indian Museum, too, were for the purpose of ‘copy-class’ for the art students. The work of copying became the founding core of the entire system of colonial pedagogy, with its main intention of producing skilled draftsmen, engravers, lithographers and modellers for employment in different governmental services. The key purpose of art education was to open up practical professional possibilities for students – so, even in projects such as the ones carried out at the temples of Orissa and Bodh Gaya, the didactic opportunities for a parallel training in art history were never utilized in any systematic way. The success of these commissions remained confined to exercises in accurate visual documentation, when instead it could have been a foundational moment for the entry of art history into the art school.

Tapati Guha Thakurta has amply demonstrated, in her book, *Monuments, Objects and Histories* the complex overlaps of institutional interests that came into play in the formative phase of archaeology and art history in India. She writes, compared to archaeology, “The contrasting fate of art history is also a theme waiting to be addressed: its failure to evolve as an autonomous discipline, its long-time location in museum departments rather than in the academy, its continuing status mostly as a subsection within ancient Indian history.”<sup>53</sup> Tracing the leads

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<sup>53</sup> Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India*. Columbia University Press. 2004. p. xxi

from her study, I intend to highlight this gap in the disciplinary lineage of art history, and raise the question of why it was not considered to be a crucial adjunct to the practical and technical training of the art student across the art institutions and the timeline addressed in this thesis.

Nonetheless, , the *Antiquities of Orissa* was one such pivotal documentation project carried out through the art institutional apparatus, which succeeded in expanding the curriculum prospects, beyond the ambit of copy work from western academic art examples, to witnessing first-hand knowledge in indigenous art.<sup>54</sup> The art students became key facilitators in the documentation and illustration of art objects for museums and publications. This became an important dimension in the school's art training syllabus which progressively opened up the scope of academic art training beyond the arrangement of studio practices. Rajendralala Mitra's survey of Orissa temples involving the students of the Calcutta art school, stands out significantly amongst other projects taken up by the Government School of Art, Calcutta, on three crucial grounds. Firstly, the project provided a pedagogic introduction to the history of Indian temple architecture and sculpture to the students of art for the first time; secondly, it demonstrated the credible drawing and lithography skills attained by the Government School of Art, Calcutta, and its students; and, thirdly, it established a close working connection between the Calcutta art school and the Indian Museum, even before the two institutions came to be physically and administratively connected in the 1890s. Therefore, the activities of the art school which were essentially initiated with the objective of training artisans in industrial craft skills and technical know-hows of picture production, were gradually reshaping the institute as a knowledge generating establishment of broader artistic scope.

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<sup>54</sup> Another site of art historical and archaeological significance, which gained Government's institutional recognition, followed by extensive documentation was the Ajanta Caves. Following James Fergusson's recommendation, the East India Company hired Captain Robert Gill to copy and document the murals, sculptures and the Architecture of Ajanta in 1844. Next in 1872 John Griffiths and a group of his students from the J J School of Arts took up the project of documenting this site. Between 1909 and 1911, Christiana Herringham, assisted by Dorothy Larcher and art students from Calcutta and Hyderabad continued with the copying of the murals at Ajanta.

Another rewarding project delivered during the same time by Annada Prasad Bagchi was the illustration work for Dr. J. Fayrer's book *The Thanatophidia of India*. Apart from Bagchi, another student of the school Hurrish Chunder Khan (Harish Chandra Khan), carried out the studies of the reptiles from life. Published in 1874, the strikingly realistic illustrations of snakes earned them much appreciation in the country as well as in England. Studied in water colour, this series of venomous snakes were done from living specimens as well as dead dissected anatomical specimens, preserved by the Medical College and the Indian Museum in Calcutta (Fig 2.9 a, b). The scientific accuracy along with added three-dimensional effects of the images was looked upon as a unique achievement, even for an experienced draughtsman.<sup>55</sup> Projects as these were gradually cementing the legacy of academic art in the Calcutta school of art.

#### **Section IV**

#### **The Government Art Gallery and the premium on the 'Fine Arts' of the West**

Owing to the desired progress of the art school as demonstrated through these commissioned projects and annual art exhibitions organised by the school, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, with the support of the Viceroy, Lord Richard Northbrook, established in 1876 the first dedicated art gallery in the city housed in No.164 and No. 165 Bowbazar Street, adjacent to the premises of the Calcutta Art School which was then housed in No. 166 of the same street.<sup>56</sup> Viceroy Lord Northbrook visited the art school on May 18, 1872, for the first time. He later commented, "in respect to wood engraving, lithography, painting, and drawing, executed in that school which would, I do not hesitate to say, be a credit to any institution of the same class

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<sup>55</sup> Annual Report 1870-70, p. 384

<sup>56</sup> Bagal, *The History of Government College of Art And Craft*. p. 12

in any part of England.”<sup>57</sup> Since then, Richard Temple, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, took a keen interest in the art institution and with Lord Northbrook’s contribution established the art gallery with the school. There was twofold objective towards establishing the Art Gallery, as recorded by Bagal –

“The object of the institution was to give the native youth of India an idea of men and things in Europe both present and past, not that they might learn to produce feeble imitations of European art, but rather that they might study European methods of imitation and apply them to the representation of natural scenery, architectural monuments, ethnical varieties and national costumes, in their own country”.<sup>58</sup>

Richard Temple further augmented the pedagogic significance of the initiative -

“In such a place as Calcutta, the establishment of an art gallery must be interesting from any and every point. But the interest is heightened when the gallery can be the means of daily instruction; will become a lecture-room for classes of native students; may impart additional vigour to an institution designed to elevate the taste, refine the skill and enlighten the ideas of the native youth who are learning art as the means of livelihood; and may thus serve an important educational purpose.”<sup>59</sup>

According to Temple, the art gallery space at Bowbazar was “being rapidly prepared by the Public Works Dept. for the reception of pictures”, acknowledging H. H. Locke’s repeated insistence since early 1870s that the government should expand the logistical infrastructure of the school building, so that the institution can flourish and lead the cultural milieu of the region.<sup>60</sup>

The art gallery was built on a collection of art works that was gifted by Lord Northbrook, which comprised of European examples of art, few original and largely copies, to strengthen and further refine academic aspirations of the art students and synthesise the ideals of western taste

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<sup>57</sup> Annual Report, 1871-72, p. 502

<sup>58</sup> Bagal, *The History of Government College of Art And Craft*. p. 12

<sup>59</sup> “Establishment of an Art Gallery in connection with the School of Art at Calcutta” Meeting Minutes of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, dated Feb 15, 1876.

<sup>60</sup> Annual Report 1872-73, 1873-74, 1874-75, 1875-76



and aesthetics among the native population. This collection included paintings like ‘The Marriage of the Virgin’ attributed to Rubens, ‘Saint Cecilia’ (after Domenichino), ‘Interior of a Church’ by School of Steinwick, Joshua Reynolds copy of ‘Infant Hercules Strangling Serpents’, ‘Portrait (after Velasquez) by R. Muller, ‘Romeyn De Hooghe’ by François Auguste Charodeau, and a watercolour copy after Reynolds of ‘Lord Clive and his Family’. His gift to the art gallery also included a valuable portfolio containing thirty eight engravings of the frescoes of Giotto, fifty-eight chromolithographs, twenty eight engravings of the Arundel Society, a portfolio of twenty nine water colour drawings of the Taj Mahal and other specimens of etching and engraving. The art gallery also considered collecting “plans and drawings of great engineering works in all parts of the world”<sup>61</sup> to provide a stronger foundation for the professional aptitude of the art students.

Temple notes that the rest of the art gallery collection had been built with investments “for this purpose by the Government of Bengal; many also have been promised to be lent for temporary exhibition in the gallery by the native chiefs and gentlemen, among whom may be mentioned the Maharaja of Burdwan, Raja Jotendro Mohun Tagore, Raja Hunendra Krishna, Raja Satyanund Ghosaul, the Zamindar of Paikpara and others; also copies are being made from private pictures now in Calcutta; one picture too has been presented by Mr. Palmer”.<sup>62</sup> Temple also pointed out that the government was interested in collecting, “a vivid and comprehensive representation of all that is most instructive and attractive in the extraordinary varied features of India, chiefly in regards to natural scenery, architectural remains, national costume and ethnological features”, completely disregarding Indian artistic traditions and its history. The government of Bengal had also ordered copies of works from old masters, by Signor Pompignoli of Florence, and purchased Colonel Hyde’s collection of electrotypes from ancient

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<sup>61</sup> Meeting Minutes of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, dated Feb 15, 1876

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

Greek coins, which were in the possession of the British Museum. Locke was designated to be the Keeper of the Government Art Gallery and the government sanctioned an annual grant of ten thousand rupees for the purpose of art collection.

The canons of western aesthetics and philosophy, which had by then deeply entered the cultural and artistic psyche of elite Indians, had shaped the fundamental pedagogic distinctions in academic Indian art practices. Nomenclatures like ‘still life’, ‘life study’, ‘light and shade’, ‘realism’, ‘naturalism’, ‘picturesque’, etc., entered the idiom of art in India, and we find examples of them in the class works of art students. The colonial model of academic art training was demonstrated through generations of artists and art students who entered an unaccustomed structure of cultural classification that was abruptly implanted through the pedagogic project. Notwithstanding the parochial pedagogic direction of the school, the establishment of the art gallery as an institutional, cultural and pedagogic bridge of the Government School of Art with the Indian Museum provided a strong impetus towards the reorganisation of the categories of ‘fine arts’, the ‘industrial arts’, ‘economic products’, and ‘decorative objects’ in late nineteenth century Bengal. The Indian Museum, which from the time of its inception in 1814 had dealt essentially with the Zoological, Botanical, Ethnological, Industrial and Archaeological collections, gradually expanded its scope to include an Indian arts and crafts. What we know of the art collection in the Indian museum today significantly forms the nucleus of modernism in Indian art and its history, as well as the core of Bengal’s artistic identities. The configuration of this art collection was essentially a reflection of art pedagogic developments which were unfolding at the Calcutta School of Art, since the turn of twentieth century. And the journey towards a well laid out categorical distribution and classification on Indian artefacts and crafts objects was first boosted through the Calcutta International Exhibition in 1883-84.

## Section V

### **The Calcutta International Exhibition and the Schemes of integration of the twin institutions of the Art School and the Indian Museum**

The Calcutta International Exhibition was the first grand exposition to take place in the Bengal Presidency, as well as in the city which served as the capital of India until 1911. The exhibition opened on December 4, 1883, and went on till March 10, 1884. Jules François de Sales Joubert, a French entrepreneur by birth who later migrated to Australia, initiated and organised the exhibition, following the tremendous success at Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1878 and the 1881 Perth Exhibition. Countries represented at the Calcutta International Exhibition were Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, United States of America, Japan, Switzerland, Spain, and many more; along with all the British colonies and provinces in India. This was India's own Great Exhibition (**Fig 2.10**).

This historical exhibition is a vital consideration in the thesis for a number of factors. To begin with, it was the first time the people of Calcutta witnessed the coming together of people and artefacts from across the globe along with their own countrymen from diverse regional corners, with an extensive inventory of industrial manufactures, raw products, food products, agricultural produce, specimens of ethnography, archaeology and natural history, objects of personal use like toiletries, apparels, etc. along with fine arts and liberal art examples. Though the Indian Museum collection was already open to the people of Calcutta, the opportunity of experiencing the worlds of unknown material culture and artistic diversity from across the world, along with comparable object traditions of their own, under one cohesive system and space of viewing, provided a palpable exposure to world cultures and unique territorial

identities of each. The period's discourse of knowledge production and preservation was largely facilitated by institutional collection and display practices, essentially in England and Europe. Museums as an authoritative knowledge system controlled the didactic parameters of a range of disciplines and their exhibit classifications. This altered the position of power, as the objects on display moved out of monarchical collections and into the public domain. In his much-cited essay, "The Exhibitionary Complex", Tony Bennet has argued about the role of the Great Exhibition is "democratizing the eye of power" and about the new disciplinary regime that came to operate through the culture of spectacle and spectatorship.<sup>63</sup> Placed in this larger history of the period's new exhibitionary complexes of power and knowledge-formations, the Calcutta International Exhibition created at doorway, for the region to directly manifest its cross-cultural capabilities.

The second factor which positions the Calcutta exhibition at a critical juncture within the timeline of the thesis is its negotiation with institutional bodies like the Indian Museum and Calcutta School of Art, for infrastructural support. When the exhibition opened on the grounds of the Maidan in 1883-84, stretching outwards from the new building and grounds of the Indian Museum, the school of art was still located at the Bow Bazar premises,<sup>64</sup>; and the neoclassical structure of the Indian Museum dominated the Maidan skyline. Since 1875, the Indian Museum became operational from its current premises, where only the zoological, geological and archaeological sections were organised in the museum building and the galleries opened to public on April 1, 1878.<sup>65</sup> In less than five years and within a restricted display capacity, the Indian Museum was made to accommodate the 'industrial collection' of the Calcutta International Exhibition. In 1882, the Government of India enquired from the Trustees of the

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<sup>63</sup> Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex", *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. Routledge, 1995

<sup>64</sup> First Quinquennial Report - Review of Education In Bengal 1892-93 to 1896-96, p. 13

<sup>65</sup> *The Indian Museum 1814-1914*. Published by the Trustees of Indian Museum. Printed at the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta 1914. pp. 7-8

museum, whether accommodation could be provided in the museum building for certain economic products - “The Trustees regretted their inability to accommodate such a collection, but expressed their readiness to favour an extension of the museum building for the purpose suggested”.<sup>66</sup> But before this proposal could take effect, the Calcutta International Exhibition was held, in and around the museum premises. In a Resolution issued by the Lieutenant-Governor, dated January 16, 1883, it was proposed that the exhibition should be held partly in the Indian Museum, of which, a portion will be set free for the purpose, and partly in large annexes. Arrangements were made by the Public Works Department for those temporary constructions adjoining the museum, which was formerly occupied by the offices of the Bengal Secretariat.

The main entrance to the exhibition was through a wooden foot-bridge over the Chowringhee road into the museum, opening up to the portico of the museum. This space was largely used for the opening and closing ceremony of the event and the two large galleries on the east and south side of the ground floor were vacated by the Trustees to make space for the British Courts. The permanent display of archaeology, natural history and science in the Indian Museum added to the attraction of the exhibition. (Fig 2.11) The physical involvement of the Indian Museum allowed it’s linking itself with a larger and more inclusive ambit of collection and display. In 1884, after the Exhibition concluded, the ‘Industrial’ collection which had been brought to the museum for the exhibition purpose, under the designation of Bengal Economic Museum and housed in the temporary sheds on the site (currently occupied by the art school), was merged with the Indian Museum. In 1887, the Economic and the Art Section was thus set up under direct control of the Government of Bengal and was placed under the supervision of T N Mukharji, the first assistant curator in charge of the museum. Mukharji was a key figure in compiling and sifting through the overwhelming specimens of manufactured objects from the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 9

exhibition to reassemble them for the new Economic and Art section of the Indian Museum in Calcutta. Guha-Thakurta emphasises, “*The Art Manufactures of India* stands testimony to the depth of Mukharji’s expertise and knowledge of the field, to his detailed documentation of material and techniques involved in each of the crafts... T.N. Mukharji’s Compendium takes its place beside the voluminous official catalogues of the Calcutta International exhibition of 1883-84 and the Colonial and India Exhibition of 1886.”<sup>67</sup> The establishment of the new section made the Government consider the need of additional space, which was already on the table before the Calcutta International Exhibition. The result was the construction of the wing in Sudder Street in 1882, and the opening of the galleries of the new ‘Art Section’ to the public from 1892.

This brief account on the successive expansion of the Indian Museum through the momentous event to the Calcutta International Exhibition aids two observations for the thesis. Firstly, it leads us to understanding how the gradual stratification of the ‘art section’ in the Indian museum was borne out of a process of permutation and elimination of commercial and industrial specimens, a closer focus on what were classified as art-ware objects, and Lord Northbrook’s contribution to the Bengal Art Gallery of copies of European paintings. The formation of the Indian Museum’s art section essentially grew from gradual consolidation and classification of industrial and ornamental art objects which had been gathered for the Calcutta International Exhibition, and in turn became the foundational anatomy of the institutional knowledge network for the field of Indian arts and crafts. This evolution draws an analogy with the complex growth of art and history as a disciplinary scope, which was propagated through colonial art institutions. Secondly, it leads to another significant move - the strategic relocation of the Calcutta Art school in 1892, from Bowbazar to the grounds adjacent to the premises of

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<sup>67</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta. “The Designed Object and its Imperial Histories: On T.N. Mukherjee and the Art Manufactures of India.” Forthcoming, RIHA (Journal of the International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art), Special issue on “Revisioning World Fairs”.

Indian Museum,<sup>68</sup> bringing the two institutions in direct collaboration through the unit of the new Art Section. . This attempted integration of the two units echoed the DSA and South Kensington museum alliance; the intentions in both cases were much the same, to facilitate the study of art and artefacts in the museum collection and make it a vital component in the future pedagogic strategies of the Calcutta art school.

As with all the ‘world exhibitions’, the Calcutta International Exhibition was a part of a larger trade scheme with every Indian province and foreign country classified through varied object categories like Educational and Application of Liberal Arts, Art, Health, Furniture and other Objects for the use of decoration, Fabrics including apparels and toilet requisites, Raw Products, Machinery goods, Food Products, Agriculture and Horticulture; and finally concluding with an Ethnology, Archaeology and Natural History section. The objective of most colonial exhibitions was tied to three interests – displaying authority over a subject, establishing the trends of the time, and ensuring trade in a professional manner. **(Fig 2.12)** The Calcutta International Exhibition had brought together the universe of regional, national and international manufactures within the experience of a colonial display. However, contrary to the intentions of the authorities, the exhibition failed to garner either scholarly or mainstream commercial interest in comparison to the cultural success of the Great Exhibition of 1851. ‘World Fair’ events were one of the primary methods of the British monarchy to facilitate accumulation of resources and cultural specimens from all its colonies. The question is - why is the Calcutta International Exhibition remembered as British India’s first and also the last international fair, in India? **(Fig 2.13)**

Renate Dohmen disputes Peter Hoffenberg and the British India government’s claim of triumph, and clarifies how this exhibition failed to mark Calcutta as the ‘new’ metropolis of

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<sup>68</sup> First Quinquennial Report, p. 13

staging international exhibitions.<sup>69</sup> Two crucial facets can be noted for this failure. The first, and a more political reason, was the rising animosity between Indians and Europeans due to the passing of the Ilbert Bill in 1883. This acrimony resulted in the marked absence of Europeans, whether residents or travellers, at the exhibition.<sup>70</sup> The second factor of failure was misjudged anticipation of trade impetus and mass consumer demand in Calcutta for foreign objects. Recreating and marketing the exotica of a distant land like India in the West had been at the core of commercial and cultural success of these world exhibitions. The complex imperial manoeuvres of appropriating and manufacturing crafts objects from India and juxtaposing them with European artefacts, which was at the heart of the South Kensington design pedagogy scheme, did not play out in the same way as a potential trade format for Calcutta to become a sustainable manufacture or industrial hotbed for the British Empire.

To consider the scope of the Calcutta art school in the exhibition project and the components of art represented from the city, let us look at the formation of the India and Calcutta court of the Calcutta International Exhibition. The first section in the Calcutta court was 'Fine Arts' which displayed "Models dressed in court costumes", photographs of cityscape and portraits from Bourne and Shepherd, water colours and oil paintings, lithographs, picture books from the personal collection of J. N. Mookherjee, playing cards with designs of Hindu gods and goddesses, Christmas Cards, Maps, Menu Cards, Frith's photographs series from Thacker Spink & Co, engravings, maps, and six oil coloured plaques with views of Calcutta and its neighbourhoods, from W. Newman & Co.<sup>71</sup> As opposed to the representation of the J. J. Art

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<sup>69</sup> Renate Dohmen, "A Fraught Challenge to the Status quo: The 1883-4 Calcutta International Exhibition, Conceptions of Art and Industry, and the Politics of World Fairs", in Kate Nichols, Rebecca Wade, and Gabriel Williams, (eds.) *Art versus Industry? New Perspectives on Visual and Industrial Cultures in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. pp.200-205; See Peter Hoffenberg, "Photography and Architecture at the Calcutta International Exhibition, 1883-84," in *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900*. Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> *Official Catalogue of the Calcutta International Exhibition 1883-1884*. Third Edition. Printed and published under special authority by W. Newman & Co, Dalhousie Square, Calcutta



School categorised under the section of 'Education and Application of Liberal Arts', similar consistency is not observed in case of the Government School of Art, Calcutta. The works by the students of the Calcutta art school were listed under the 'Education and Application of Liberal Arts' of the Indian Court.

Jules Schaumburg who was then the acting Principal, lists the specimens of student's work as follows - Life studies done in oil, water colour and crayon, lithography, wood engraving, metalwork, modelling, pottery, examples of textile designing, decorative specimens in tempera colours and architectural or mechanical drawings. Much success and satisfaction had been claimed from the display, as the art school had won "one gold, two silvers and three bronze medals besides three first and three second class certificates" from the exhibition committee.<sup>72</sup>

The school had also managed to sell specimens of pottery and metal repousse work and secured orders for producing duplicates for the specimens displayed. Followed by the success in the Calcutta International Exhibition, the Government School of Art, Calcutta, added wood carving and metal repoussé to the curriculum, as mentioned previously. However, it was also through the experience of the Calcutta International Exhibition, that the art school recognised the "fact which greatly handicaps the school in its competition with the workmen of those provinces in which wood carving is an ancient and established industry" and the challenges for the art students in matching up with the professionals of established craft industries outside the scope of the institution.<sup>73</sup> As established above, a large portion of the fine arts, liberal arts, decorative objects, apparels, etc. were sourced from professional manufactures and private collections for the Calcutta International Exhibition. **(Fig 2.14)**

Therefore, the question which emerges is about the germane function and aim of the pedagogic model which was strategized through the colonial art institution in Calcutta - What was the gap

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<sup>72</sup> Annual Report, 1883-84, p. 116

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

in cultural and artistic skill sets of the region, which the art school was meant to fulfil? And what was the consequence of aligning the cultural canons of the colonizers with that of the colony through the art pedagogic project?

The Government School of Art, Calcutta was established to activate the technical skill development scheme of the colonial government. Locating the extensive range of regional crafts and ethnographical diversity at the core of resource accumulation, all of India itself became the greatest raw material for the British to process to their benefit. The East India Company's project of recreating an urban social structure which would resonate with England's industrial spirit and trade expansion was being tied to human resource development. After the official establishment of the British Raj in India, these skill, infrastructure and resource expansion projects became institutionalised, establishing a permanent edifice for the nation to carry. Projecting scientific knowledge as the most progressive tool, the Crown applied a homogeneous approach with a scheme of functional education in India. Art Schools too, therefore, were placed under the special instruction division, and moulded themselves into practical and purpose-driven institutions for the evolving urban centres. However, as these art schools were all initially private establishments, the administrative organisation and application of the pedagogic drives of the government were not uniform. This gave scope to regional cultural diversities and individual aesthetic priorities in each institution, leading each of the main art schools at Madras, Calcutta, Bombay and Lahore in its distinct pedagogic directions.

Hence, in the case of the Government School of Art in Calcutta, we have seen how Henry Hover Locke brought with him his extensive experience as a teacher in the South Kensington School of Design. His elaborate rearrangement of the curriculum made space not only for ornamental and crafts based applied arts training, but also exposed art students to European modules of drawing, painting and sculpture techniques. The art school in Calcutta became a

prospective ground for “a School of Art, concerned primarily with ‘fine arts’” rather than and a “School of Arts, concerned with industrial and applied arts”, (which) lay at the centre of art-education policies in India.<sup>74</sup>

As this chapter draws to its end, it is evident that the first thirty years of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, had already established a discernibly different route of its growth as a school of ‘Fine Arts’ instead of as a school for ‘Industrial Arts’ and a site for craft revival, unlike other government aided art schools in India. Though the beginning of the art school was as ‘The School of Industrial Arts’, the institution advanced and flourished under the principalship of H. H. Locke and his extensive curriculum planning in 1864-65. Through the range of international exhibitions, student exhibitions, class work, external projects and commissions discussed through this chapter, the Government School of Art, Calcutta, and the art students in Calcutta were authoritatively recognised for their credible skills in draughtsmanship and western naturalistic painting techniques within the first ten years of its existence. Sir Richard Temple’s initiation and advocacy for the establishment of the Art Gallery with the art school cemented the institution’s future in promoting artistic careers, along with training scope for local artisans. At an art exhibition closing ceremony, he declared, “The Calcutta School is for Fine Arts and Design alone. It is of more limited scope than the other schools, but within that scope it is excellent.”<sup>75</sup>

This thesis has set out to test some fundamental questions like - how has the formative phase of art schools nurtured new artistic trends and shifts in art practice in India; and how was the western scheme of fine arts and artistic classifications introduced in Indian art pedagogy? Accordingly, this chapter demonstrates that the Government School of Art, Calcutta, was among the first colonial art schools in India which steered through the coagulation of industrial

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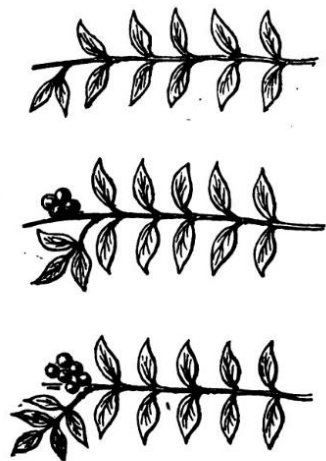
<sup>74</sup> Tapati Guha Thakurta, *The Making of a New Indian Art*, pp. 63-64

<sup>75</sup> Annual Report, 1872-72, pp. 704-706

art training and manufactures repertoire, and positioned itself as a school for art practice and training in western artistic styles and forms. Going against the grain of industrial and craft revival mandate of the education policy, Locke argued, “I do not think that we are in precisely the same position here in India with respect to educating the natives in artisan occupations, as the projectors of industrial schools in Europe were, and are, with reference to the artisan classes there.”<sup>76</sup> The distinct regional aptitude of art students in Bengal towards portrait painting, figure study, architectural or landscape studies gradually manifested in the art school’s new artistic turns and twists at the nineteenth century passed into the twentieth century, and brought with it a new wave of nationalist cultural upheavals in Calcutta.

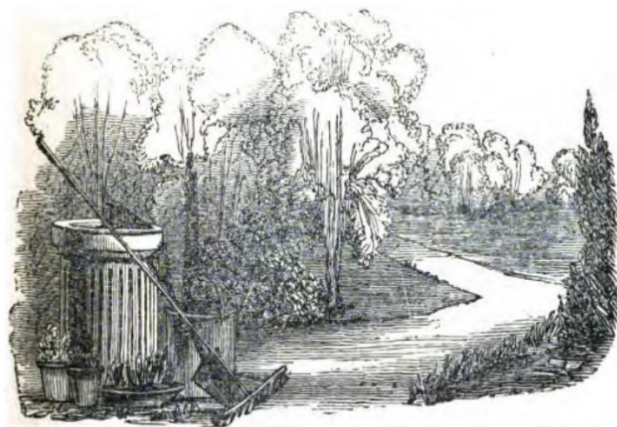
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<sup>76</sup> Ibid



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**Figure 2.1** – Drawing of a Foliage by the students of the School of Industrial Arts, Calcutta. Published in and Sourced from - David Lester Richardson's book *On Flowers and Flower Gardens*, printed and published by D'Rozario & Co. Tank Square, Calcutta.



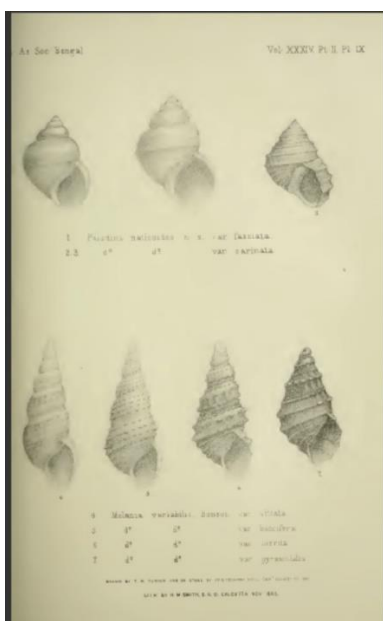
**Figure 2.2** – 'Drawing of an Anglo-Indian Garden' by the students of the School of Industrial Arts, Calcutta. Published in and Sourced from - David Lester Richardson's book *On Flowers and Flower Gardens*, printed and published by D'Rozario & Co. Tank Square, Calcutta. 1855



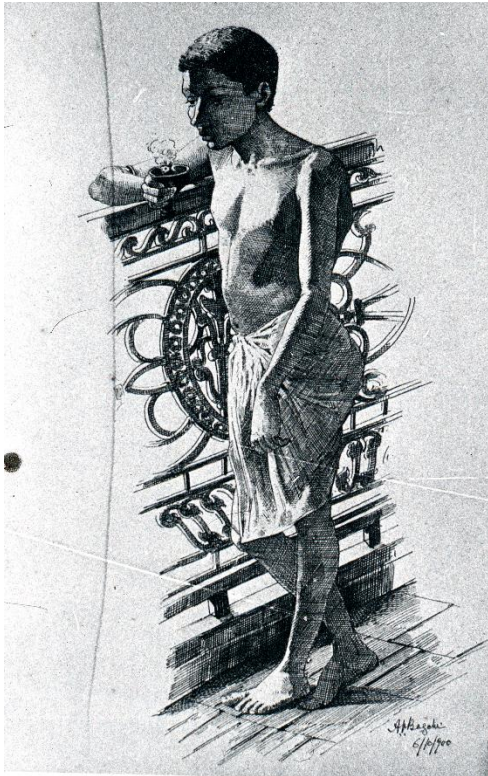
**Figure 2.3** - H H Locke, the first Principal of Government School of Art, Calcutta Lithograph, 1880s. Image Source: Bagal, *History of the Govt. College of Art & Craft*



**Figure 2.4 – a)** Illustration of a “Boulder Temple at Kyik-Hteo” Drawings on stone by Calcutta School of Art student Kristohurry Dass. (Litho by H.M. Smith SGO, Calcutta) Published in and Sourced from - *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Vol XXXIV Part II. Calcutta 1865



**Figure 2.4 –B)** “Paludinae & Melaniae” Drawing of Shells, Drawings on stone by Calcutta School of Art student Kristohurry Dass. (Litho by H.M. Smith SGO, Calcutta) Published in and Sourced from - *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Vol XXXIV Part II. Calcutta 1865



**Figure 2.5 – a)** Figure Sketches by Annada Prasad Bagchi. Pen & Ink on Paper. Collection – Govt College of Art & Crafts, Calcutta. Courtesy - Visual Archive, CSSSC



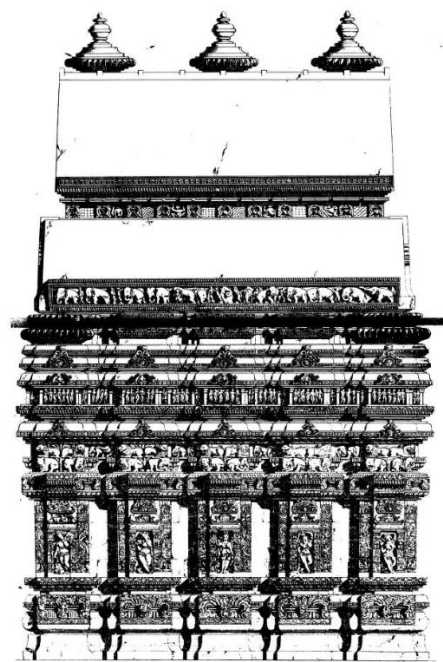
**Figure 2.5 – b)** Figure Sketches by Annada Prasad Bagchi. Pen & Ink on Paper. Courtesy - Visual Archive, CSSSC



Figure 2.6 a, b) - Interior View of St. Peter's Church, Fort William. Image: Author



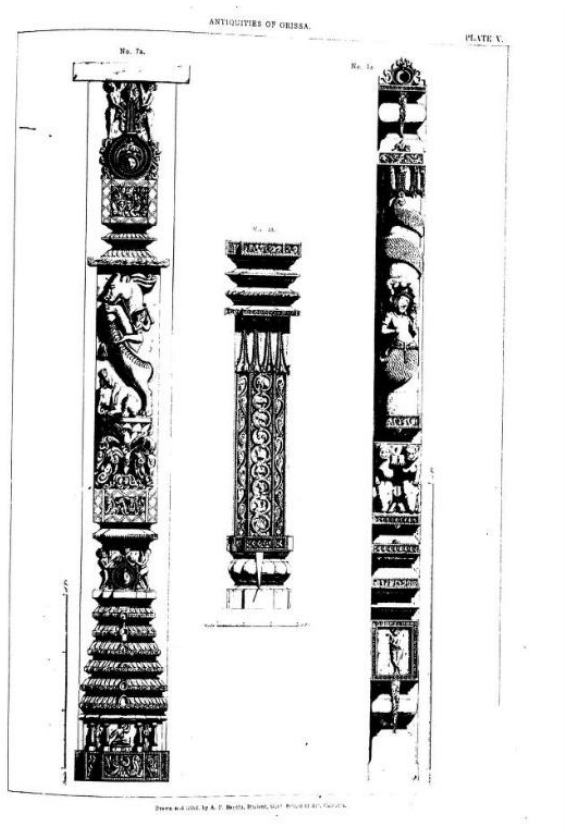
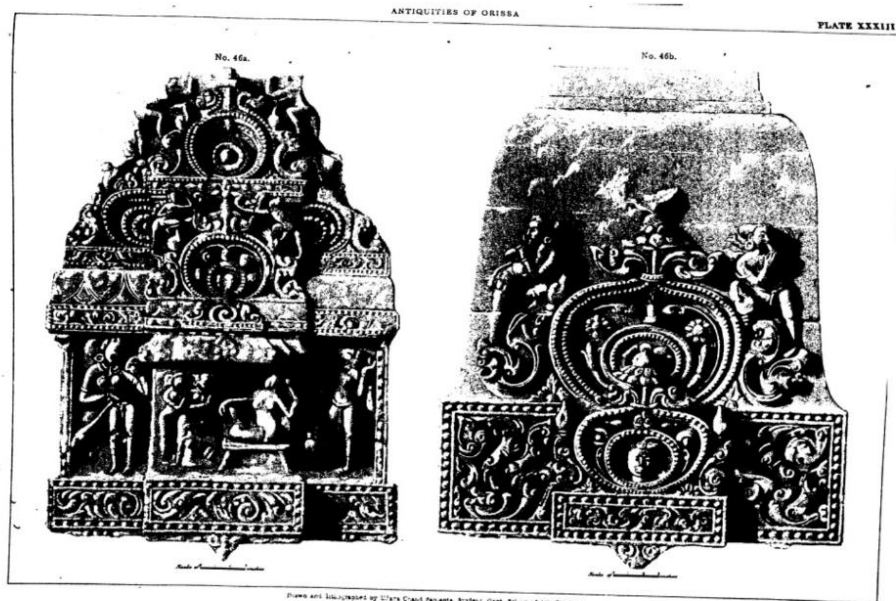
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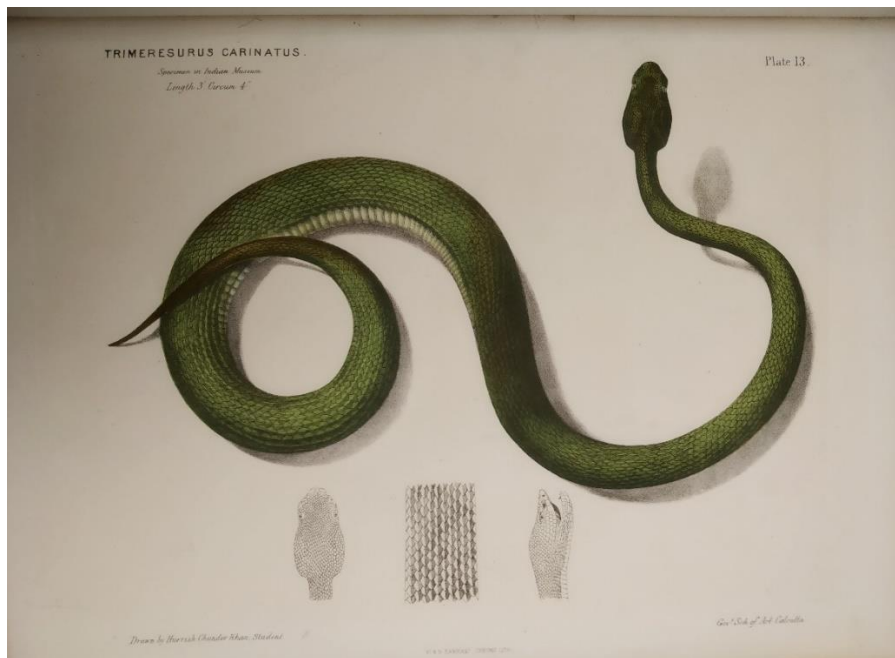
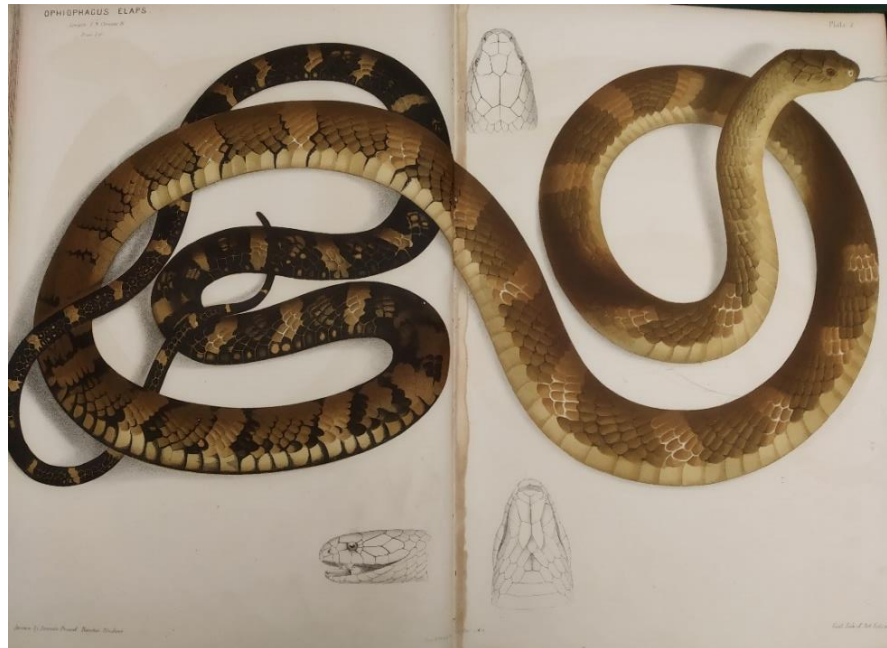
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Figure 2.7 a, b) - Lithograph by Annoda Prasad Bagchi for *Antiquities of Orissa*.  
Image Source: *Antiquities of Orissa*





**Figure 2.8 a, b)** - Lithograph by another student of the Government School of Art, Calcutta for *Antiquities of Orissa*. Image Source: *Antiquities of Orissa*



**Figure 2.9 a. b)** - Drawing by Annada Prasad Bagchi for the Illustration of Dr. J. Fayer's book *The Thanatophidia of India*. Image Source: *The Thanatophidia of India*



**Figure 2.10** - General view of the Calcutta International Exhibition, demonstrating the vast scale and display courts. The white building on the extreme right is the Indian Museum, bridged with the other courts on Maidan. 1883-84. Image Source: photographs taken by Mr. A. W. Turner, under the direction of the Government of Bengal. Printed and Published by the Survey of India Dept., Calcutta 1884



**Figure 2.11** - View of the object arrangement at the India Court of the Calcutta International Exhibition. 1883-84. Image Source: photographs taken by Mr. A. W. Turner, under the direction of the Government of Bengal. Printed and Published by the Survey of India Dept., Calcutta 1884



**Figure 2.12** - View of the Bengal Court of the Calcutta International Exhibition 1883-84. Image Source: photographs taken by Mr. A. W. Turner, under the direction of the Government of Bengal. Printed and Published by the Survey of India Dept., Calcutta 1884



**Figure 2.13** - View of the temporary exhibition sheds on Maidan for the Calcutta International Exhibition. 1883-84. Image Source: photographs taken by Mr. A. W. Turner, under the direction of the Government of Bengal. Printed and Published by the



**Figure 2.14** - View of the display arrangements in glass cabinets and boxes in the Calcutta Court of the Calcutta International Exhibition. 1883-84. Image Source: photographs taken by Mr. A. W. Turner, under the direction of the Government of Bengal. Printed and Published by the Survey of India Dept., Calcutta 1884



**Manifestations of the Oriental in the Academic:**

**The Government School of Art, Calcutta, from W.H. Jobbins to Percy Brown (1880s – 1920s)**

“English children from their babyhood commence their art education in a way with their toy books, which nowadays are a real work of art; they are thus accustomed to pictorial art from infancy, and begin at a very early age to realise the difference between the appearance and the actual facts of an object. The Bengali child has none of these advantages; as his perceptive faculties are developed, he may see a number of mythological pictures, of the usual terribly grotesque kind, and but few well drawn illustrations penetrate as far as his native village, and if left to himself, he will at a later age, express himself diagrammatically in the crudest manner, and when he commences his art studies he has in an artistic sense to be taught to see. This fact was at once impressed upon my mind. There was abundant evidence among the students in the Calcutta School of Art of singular technical ability of a mechanical kind, but a curious absence of the power of realising what was around them. They could copy as few can, could make careful and laborious drawings from casts, but were unable to draw correctly from nature the commonest object of everyday life; they were, in short absolutely dependent and it seemed as though it had never occurred to them to become in any way self-reliant.”

- W.H. Jobbins, Superintendent, Calcutta School of Art, Review from 1887 to 1894. Maintenance of Schools of Art.<sup>1</sup>

**Section I**

**Prioritising a ‘Technical’ over a ‘Fine Arts’ Education**

This chapter begins at a paradoxical juncture in the life of the Government School of Art, Calcutta. As discussed in the previous chapters, the pedagogic thrust of the art school was towards an academic curriculum of the ‘Fine Arts’ more than the compulsions of an industrial arts training that was mandated by the government. However, as this trajectory was set in motion by Henry Hover Locke, the first principal of the art school, his demise created a chance

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<sup>1</sup> Papers relating to Maintenance of Schools of Art in India as State Institutions, 1893-96. p.88

to renegotiate the pedagogic priority of the institution and reorient it towards industrial and craft manufactures.

From 1872, the Government School of Art, Calcutta, was officially recognised under the ‘Special Instruction’ category of the Department of Public Instruction, along with Law, Medicine, Civil Engineering, Madrassas and Female Education in the Bengal government’s broader education scheme.<sup>2</sup> After the Calcutta International Exhibition concluded, the art school and the art gallery were grouped together as the “Art & Industry” section of the Special Instruction group of institutions - although the Indian Museum, which functioned in an autonomous capacity, was never accounted for under the Department of Public Instruction.

With these categorical shifts taking place in the administrative realm, the Government School of Art too was passing through a wavering and uncertain phase of mentorship. During 1882, Principal Locke’s position in the administrative network within the British India Government became unstable, resulting in him going on leave for almost a year. During this entire phase of his absence, and more critically, during the school’s role in the Calcutta International Exhibition and the establishment of the new art education scheme of the government in 1884, Mr. Schaumburg supervised the workings of the Calcutta Art School. Though Locke returned to reclaim responsibility of the art school which he had meticulously built up, Locke passed away in Calcutta on December 25, 1885. Schaumburg’s sudden death as well made way for O. Ghilardi to join the Calcutta art school and for the post of Assistant Principal to be created for him in 1886.

Concurrently, during this phase, the art education scheme issued by the government in 1884 laid out these directives - “i) the maintenance in a provincial museum of a typical collection of the arts and manufactures of each province; ii) a careful enquiry into the character and

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<sup>2</sup> The other divisions of general education were Primary Instruction, Secondary Instruction and Superior Instruction first established during this phase.

circumstances of each art industry and iii) the maintenance of an Indian Art Journal in which results of enquiries were published.”<sup>3</sup> A clear emphasis on industrial, decorative and craft-based artefacts manufactured in India was given priority, and the aim of the art journal was to create a visual stock of such objects and artefacts categorised according to region and style. When Ghilardi took charge of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, as Assistant Principal from 1885 to 1887, he asserts in one of the annual reports of the school that, “If our 163 students were asked which branch of the profession they would rather cultivate, the majority of them would answer portrait painting. A decorative painter is not held in great esteem among Indians, and is considered little better than a common mechanic.”<sup>4</sup> During his brief stint, apart from the regular cast-making and lithographic projects of the school, Ghilardi initiated the Architecture class, where art students were instructed to draw from Indian architectural models, specifically from the casts of the Bhubaneswar temples done during the *Antiquities of Orissa* project of Rajendralala Mitra.

Soon after, in 1887-88, W.H. Jobbins was appointed as the next principal of the art school. Implementing these policy-driven guidelines into the art school proved to be challenging for Jobbins, which was apparent from the lack of representation of Bengal’s industrial products in the *Journal of Indian Art*, which started its publication since 1886 (The journal was renamed as *The Journal of Indian Art & Industry* in 1892; henceforth will be referred to as JIAI). Published by William Griggs, the core objective of the journal was - i) the promotion of trade in the commercial products of India, either in India itself or in foreign countries, ii) the improvement of ordinary manufactures, iii) the promotion of trade in ordinary manufactures, iv) improvement of art manufactures and v) promotion of trade in art manufactures.<sup>5</sup> The entire

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<sup>3</sup> Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Home Dept. Papers Relating to the Maintenance of Art Schools in India 1893-96

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report, 1885-86, p. 14

<sup>5</sup> Extract from the Proceedings of the Government of India, in the Dept. of Revenue and Agriculture, Calcutta, March 14, 1883. *The Journal of Indian Art*. Vol 1, No 1 – 16. Published by W. Griggs, Peckham, London



art pedagogic drive of the colonial government had always been invested in the commercial aspect of trade in objects from India, as the authorities had recognised the capacity of Indian art almost entirely through craft manufactures. The project of the JIAI was to create a rich catalogue of Indian design and craft specimens for trade fairs. And the art students of the government art schools, spread across the dominion, were meant to provide illustrations of craft objects for the art journal.

John Lockwood Kipling, the Principal of the Mayo School of Art, Lahore, and curator of the Lahore Museum, took this project as a personal undertaking to survey and build a comprehensive catalogue of Indian craft products. Therefore, the contribution of the Lahore Art School is perhaps the most prominent, across all the volumes of JIAI (**Fig 3.1 a, b**). The fundamental thrust of the curriculum of government art schools across the country reflected workshop-like training methodology. Following the publication of the journal, centres like Lahore, Punjab, Lucknow, Jaipur, Mysore and Kashmir emerged as the most sought-after supply centres of craft manufactures in the country. Bengal clearly fell short of the expected task of providing industrial art specimens for JIAI's catalogue of Indian 'art manufactures'. The long quote of Jobbins, with which this chapter begins, demonstrates his aversion for Bengal resulting largely from the absence of its crafts traditions from the JIAI.<sup>6</sup> The quote also echoes the persistent comparison of Indian artistic conditions and characters (or the lack of it) with European conditions of artistic representations. This condition of validating Indian sensibilities and aspirations in art practice by making them comparable to those of the West is a separate and larger debate not within the purview of this thesis. But it is a recurrent argument

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<sup>6</sup> Across seventeen volumes of the journal since 1886, Bengal finds its mention five times - Survey report of the "Art Industries of Bengal" published in Vol 1, 1886; "The Silk Industry of Moorshedabad" by Baboo Nitya Gopal Mukherjee published in Vol 5, 1894; "Pottery and Glassware of Bengal" by T.N. Mukherjee, published in Vol 6, 1896; "The Cotton Fabrics of Bengal" by N.N. Banerjee published in Vol 8, 1900; The New Indian School of Painting By O. C. Ganguly, published in the last (17th) volume of the Journal in 1916. Most of these listed recognition of Bengal happened after Jobbins's death and Havell's induction in the Calcutta Art School.

within the ambit of pedagogic, institutional and practise-oriented manifestation of visual art in India that persists far into the twentieth century.

Though the Government School of Art, Calcutta, remained the most important institution under the Art and Industries scheme of Bengal, five other Industrial schools were established by this time, educating seven hundred and ninety two students across the state, sourcing funds from provincial revenue, providing instruction in carpentry, sewing, tinsmith work, wickerwork, drawing and electroplating.<sup>7</sup> With a clear government mandate of augmenting industrial knowledge through these institutions, the Government School of Art, Calcutta, under principal Jobbins, witnessed increased vigour for the technical training of Indian craft traditions by rearranging the curriculum once again in July 1887. However, the pedagogic trajectories which were already embedded in the Government School of Art, Calcutta, led to a natural division of the curriculum between the Industrial or Practical Arts and the Fine Arts. A revised course of instruction was structured for each class and an annual examination in free-hand drawing, model-drawing, geometry and perspective was initiated. The category of ‘still life’ painting was added to the school’s curriculum in 1888. **(Fig 3.2)** Locke, as well as Jobbins, being trained at the DSA, South Kensington, emphasized ‘drawing skills’ as the necessary foundation for the art school’s curriculum.<sup>8</sup> Four annual scholarships were initiated by the Public Works Department for art students’ performance in Architectural and Mechanical drawing; and successful students selected for these scholarships would get a work placement in the PWD Chief Engineer’s office. The curriculum of the school was modified during this year keeping in mind the practical aspect of training which would find remunerative employment and professional incentives.

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<sup>7</sup> Annual Report, 1886-87, p 10; Ranchi Industrial school, Moorshedabad Technical School, Behrampur Technical School, Kandi Technical school, Bankura Industrial School.

<sup>8</sup> See Ami Kantawala, Paul E. Bolin and Mary Ann Stankiewicz. *Steppingstones: Pivotal Moments in Art Education History*. United States: Teachers College Press, 2021.

During this year, the Government Art Gallery purchased a set of prize drawings by the art students of South Kensington School of Art, London, which comprised of studies in oil, watercolour and sepia, pencil and crayon drawings.<sup>9</sup> Simultaneously, Ghilardi serving as the Assistant Principal, encouraged the study of decorative Indian patterns in art and architecture that could be exquisite enough to be published in the JIAI, and arranged six prizes of five rupees each for the deserving art student, as a personal investment.<sup>10</sup> And in liaison with the Calcutta Art Society, a gold and a silver medal were announced honouring H H Bara Thakur of Tipperah and Jyotendra Mohan Tagore. A grand array of awards were announced for art students of the school during this year, to spur the performance of the pupils<sup>11</sup> –

His Excellency the Viceroy Award – A silver medal for the student who at the end of the year had made the greatest progress in any of the classes under instruction.

The Hon'ble Sir Alfred Croft Award – Four Silver medals, one each for best architectural drawing, best modelling in clay or wax, best still-life study in oil or water colour and best colour portrait study from life.

The range of awards also demonstrated a surge in stakeholders of the institution and the pedagogic points of focus in the curriculum. It was also noted that the successful candidates, clearing the certificate examination or coming into limelight through the award scheme of the school, started finding prospective employment as drawing masters at Hare School, Hooghly Collegiate School, Dacca (Dhaka) Collegiate School, Survey of India department, Railway and Municipal offices and as draughtsmen in the Indian Museum. Though the school amplified the industrial training in their curriculum, success and disciplinary interest were more apparent in the drawing and painting classes. (**Fig 3.3 a, b**) It is recorded that during 1889-90, the Lithography and the Wood-Engraving classes of the Industrial section yielded satisfactory results, while the Wood Carving and Metal Chasing segment of the programme was

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<sup>9</sup> Annual Report 1887-88, p. 77

<sup>10</sup> Annual Report, 1886-87, p. 71

<sup>11</sup> Annual Report, 1888-89, p. 54

permanently shut down, due to cancellation of free-studentship and dissatisfactory performance in comparison to the other modules of the Industrial Department. At the same time, awards were won by students of the school in pen and ink drawing, clay modelling, portrait study in colour and architectural drawing, as offered under the Viceroy Award and the Alfred Croft Award.<sup>12</sup>

However, the government continued to emphasize technical education, holding up the Shibpur Engineering College and the School of Art as the “chief institutions for imparting technical education in Bengal”, where the former institution was meant to impart instruction on mechanical and manufacturing industries, train artisans and teachers for further prospects in the technical field; while the art school would command training for the field of artistic and decorative industry. It was envisioned that eventually a School of Design would be necessary in the region, once the manufacturers complete their training by these institutions, which would establish a stronger foothold in the region.<sup>13</sup> According to Alfred Croft’s report, the Director of Public Instruction in Bengal, a resolution was passed by the government of Bengal in 1892, making drawing a compulsory part of the course in all training schools as well as for entrance examinations for such institutions, “giving a strong impulse to the cause of Art education in Bengal”.<sup>14</sup> **(Fig 3.4 a, b)** It was of the administrative opinion, as recorded in the annual report of the institution, that the ‘impulse’ of art education through the widespread instruction on ‘drawing’ would create a demand for art teachers and drawing masters, as “Passed students of this school (Government School of Art, Calcutta) now rank themselves as teachers along with University graduates, and the habit of treating artists and artisans alike, which is so strong in this country, is likely to give way ere long.”<sup>15</sup> In 1892, the total strength of the art school is

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<sup>12</sup> Annual Report 1888- 90, p.73

<sup>13</sup> Annual Report 1890-91, p. 11

<sup>14</sup> Annual Report 1891-92, p. 15

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

recorded as one hundred and ninety eight. And among them “seven students of the school were employed during the year as teachers of drawing, and three as draftsmen with the Indian and Geological Museum.”<sup>16</sup> Training teachers for art and general education in the state emerged as a prospective career choice in Calcutta, by the end of nineteenth century, coinciding with Jobbin’s term as Principal of the institution.

However, the dilapidated condition of the three premises in Bowbazar, and the expanding strength of art school as well as the art gallery and its collection seemed critically inadequate during this phase. So, as a matter of urgency, the government constructed the Chowringhee campus adjoining the Indian Museum, establishing a contiguous as well as disciplinary liaison between the two institutions. The Government School of Art, Calcutta, shifted to the Chowringhee premises in 1892-93. (Fig 3.5) The Government Art Gallery moved to the same premises in 1894 and was ceremoniously opened to the public on January 25, 1895, by the Viceroy 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Elgin, Lord Bruce. However, the Superintendent of the school, W.H. Jobbins expired during this year, leaving the position of the key administrator of the institution open once again.

## **Section II**

### **The Policy Debate over Art Schools in India**

The last decade of the nineteenth century was a decisive juncture in the history of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, coinciding with the Government of India’s probe into the maintenance of Art Schools in India as State funded institutions. Alfred Croft, in the ‘Review of Education in India in 1886’, asserted that “there is not as yet in India anything like a general

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<sup>16</sup> Annual Report 1892-93, p. 12

or a systematic provision for technical instruction, such as the needs of an advanced community would seem to demand”.<sup>17</sup> Invoking Alfred Croft’s claim and the 1854 Education Despatch which aimed to provide “useful and practical knowledge” in order to multiply “literate and professional classes” in the country, Her Majesty’s Secretary of State in India, the Earl of Kimberley wrote to the Governor General of India on November 9, 1893, raising the provocative issue of whether art schools in India should continue to be supported by the State revenue funds, since government investment was meant to be channelized towards science-based industrial research and practical art forms. The agenda was compiled for further debate on the matter at the Lahore Art Conference of 1894, by the Secretary to the Govt. of India, E. C. Buck, and to be presided over by the President of the Lahore conference, Colonel T.H. Hendley.

The agenda was as follows – i) to take a comprehensive account of the “character of the work being done at the schools of art”; ii) to consider whether schools of art should continue to be maintained as State institutions; iii) to consider whether they should be “more freely and even entirely utilised as normal schools”; iv) to consider whether special training schools in special lines of trade or artware manufacture such as wood engraving, wood carving, pottery, etc., “should be separated from schools of art or, if associated with them, be distinctly branch institutions, and confined as far as possible to local centres”; v) to review the progress made according to the Scheme of 1884; and vi) to discuss whether “art collections in the museums should in anyway be regulated under the advice of the Principals of the school of art.”<sup>18</sup>

It was resolved during the conference that district level local industries, small museums and showrooms should be established which would showcase local craft traditions of the provinces.

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<sup>17</sup> Papers relating to the Maintenance of School of Art in India

<sup>18</sup> Letter dated December 29, 1893 From Secretary to the Govt. of India, Dept. of Revenue and Agriculture E. C. Buck to Colonel T.H. Hendley (No 4549 – Museums and Exhibition) Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Home Dept. Papers Relating to the Maintenance of Art Schools in India 1893-96. p. 2

This condition was partially being manifested in the case of Bengal, as the Archaeological and the Art-ware Court of the Indian Museum held a significant collection of architectural remains and varied range of artefacts. Some of the key collections from this group were – Buddhist sculptures from Sarnath, sculptures from Mathura, remains of the Bharut stupa and its railings, and objects of Metal, Wood, Ceramics, Textile, etc. from across the subcontinent. (**Fig 3.6 a, b**) However, as this range of collection was not concentrated on Bengal, the region as well as the Government School of Art remained under represented in the national scope of craft and utility-centred art education. On the question of JIAI, the conference concluded that the character of the journal - which is to extensively catalogue and publish illustrations of crafts and decorative objects mapping the diverse regions of the country - should not be altered but further enhanced. And most importantly, government institutional heads and superintendents representing art schools from across the country unanimously came to the conclusion that “Schools of Art are essential to national prosperity and that without them no scheme of technical education can be carried out. Assuming the continued efficient existence of Schools of Art, these should naturally become the agency for controlling, supervising, and regulating such extension of Art technical (sic) education as may be deemed necessary for the future”.<sup>19</sup> Principal Jobbins highlighted that in case of the Calcutta school, it was “materially” different from the art schools of other provinces as there were very few craft industries which were local to the Bengal province. Instead, the Calcutta school was said to have made a mark in meeting the local demands of the Government and private bodies through their skill in lithography, wood engraving and draughtsmanship. The committee’s resolution iterated that there was a massive demand for trained artists, and draftsmen in the country, and the arts schools have become more than crucial in providing the professional sector of the country with that workforce, while at the same time improving and preserving indigenous handicrafts of their

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 10

respective provinces.<sup>20</sup> With a technical art education plan in place and the scope of art institutions defined, the government nurtured a comparable system of craft networks among the provinces and a pedagogy which was aimed at essentially producing skilled artisans.

To briefly summarise this dual pull – the government’s mandate of utilitarian or technical art education for India, further strengthened by the resolutions taken during the Lahore art conference, and that of the art students aspirational priority towards drawing and pictorial forms of art which led to higher social status of a portrait painter or a teacher – the pedagogic range and emphasis in the Government School of Art, Calcutta, was standing at a crossroad of artistic direction that its training would yield. The government viewed ‘technical’ education of art as a more promising pedagogic direction which will result in multiple professional opportunities.

### **Section III**

#### **The Havell Era 1896 – 1905**

Ernest Binfield Havell was appointed as the Principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, in 1896. Prior to this, he was the Superintendent of the Madras School of Art, with expertise in decorative industrial arts and a training in this field in the South Kensington School. He encountered traditional decorative patterns and ‘art manufactures’ during his education in London, and it was only natural that, in the first phase of his career in India, his work largely emphasised the revival of traditional Indian crafts.<sup>21</sup> Having done a thorough survey of the craft traditions and ‘hereditary craftsmen’ across the southern part of India, during

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 9

<sup>21</sup> Deepali Dewan, *Crafting Knowledge and Knowledge of Crafts*. 2001 (unpublished thesis)



his tenure at the Madras School of Art, Havell started replacing some of the European examples of art collected in the Madras Museum, with specimens of Indian crafts. (Fig 3.7) Deepali Dewan observed that, “Havell left the Madras School of Arts to develop his views on traditions, revival and South Asian art.”<sup>22</sup>

Soon after he joined the Government School of Art, Calcutta, he rearranged the curriculum of the school, officially establishing Practical Art as Division I and Fine Arts as Division II. Besides the general classes of elementary, mechanical, and architectural drawing, lithography, wood engraving and modelling, Havell introduced a programme of decorative designs under the head of Practical Arts. This programme of Decorative designs comprised of instruction on fresco decoration, stained glass windows, lacquer work and stencilling (Fig 3.8 a, b). Benodebehari Mukherjee observed that prior to Havell, the design and craft instruction in the art school’s curriculum was devoid of the experience of functional applicability imbibed in the education programme, which would be more relevant to the Indian social context.<sup>23</sup> Havell was of the opinion that these particular skills will enhance employment opportunities for the students.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, according to the new art education resolutions taken during the Lahore conference, the school introduced reduced fees for students who were already employed in any branch of industrial art. This strategy was taken to encourage artisans of the region to enrol for a more scientific training of their craft. This also allowed Havell to continue his interest regarding modes of revival of ‘hereditary craftsmen.’

In a strategic move, the fees of the Fine Arts department was raised during this year, while continuing to apply the teaching methods of the best European academies, as Havell believed “A nearer approximation to European standards as regards technique in painting, sculpture and

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pp. 36-37

<sup>23</sup> Mandal, *Adhunik Shilpa Shiksha*, p. 120

<sup>24</sup> Annual Report, 1896-97, p. 97

leading to more remunerative work ... would gradually elevate the students' artistic ideas and raise the level of public taste for high art in Bengal."<sup>25</sup> It is observed that most of the students of the school who got employment opportunities were from Division I of the institution, as drawing teachers at government and private schools, or as mechanical architectural and general draughtsmen in the Publics Work Department. In contrast, students passing out of the Fine Arts section were moving towards a more uncertain livelihood, with portrait painting commissions as the only form of earning. It was further observed that "The precarious nature of a picture painter's profession in India, and the expense of such a student's education will always keep the number of this department small."<sup>26</sup> Contrary to the general perception of E. B. Havell, as a staunch critic of colonial art administration in India, his early career demonstrated his faithful commitment to the recommendations of the Government's art education policy. As the main concern of art education in India was not on 'intellectual insight' manifested through training in fine arts, but on the scope of employment and livelihood, Havell made the Fine Arts department less lucrative for art students, while encouraging more employment opportunities for art students in the Industrial section.

In 1889, the Fine Arts instruction of the school was limited to – drawing of a head from life, painting of a head from life, and painting of a head from cast, still life painting and full figure drawing from life.<sup>27</sup> (**Fig 3.9 a, b, c, d**) However, Havell started purchasing Indian specimens of craft and fine arts from this year onwards, in order to redefine the range of the Art Gallery's collection, just as he had done in the case of the Madras Museum. There is mention of a Tibetan copper gilt helmet for a figure of Budhha, a fine brocaded silk sari from Ahmedabad, a gold necklet, a large model for Wazir Kahn's mosque,<sup>28</sup> among the objects that were purchased to

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Annual Report 1889 – 99, p. 117

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. The Wazir Khan Mosque model was made by the students the Lahore Art School.

support the 'Industrial' collection of specimens for the school; while a volume of Mughal miniature paintings were bought to add to the exposure of 'fine arts' students.

At the turn of the century, the school recorded its highest number of students on roll at two hundred and seventy two, with two hundred and fifty five students enrolled in Division I and seventeen students in Division II. Similar to the thrust of the JIAI, Havell initiated two series of publications - the *Technical Art Series* was initiated under the Resolution of Government of India in the Revenue and Agricultural Dept., dated 5th May 1890, with similar objective of practical assortment and reproduction of the finest Indian craft examples and providing the craftsmen and art students with a utilitarian and commercial stimulus for their hand-manufactured objects (**Fig 3.10 a, b**). The other series was the *Standard Pattern Books*, which were meant to demonstrate the elementary break down of craft objects, essentially framing the stage-by-stage material processes of making into a text book format. Both these initiatives, echoing colonial educational policies, were meant to function as guide books or a manual that would encourage artisans and art students alike.

*The Calcutta Review* published an essay by Havell in 1901, where he acknowledged - "The painful fact must be admitted, that whatever the cause may be, since our rule has been established, the old art of India has been almost killed; the taste of the people, formerly led into safe paths by the traditions of Indian handicraftsmen, has been changed and corrupted while we have given nothing from our own national art to compensate India for what has been lost."<sup>29</sup> Havell's position vis-à-vis the British Indian government was clearly shifting, even as he held strong to its avowed principles of promoting India's traditional arts and crafts. His criticism of the colonial education policy across the essay and the crisis that was created in the intellectual efficacy of the region, at this point of time, hit the right chord with the artistic aspirations of

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<sup>29</sup> "Art and Education in India", *The Calcutta Review*, 1901

young Abanindranath Tagore. It is a known fact that Abanindranath was then being privately trained in western academic style of art by the Vice-Principal of the Calcutta Art School, O. Ghilardi, and C.L. Palmer, an English artist and a teacher of South Kensington School of Art. Through a letter cited in J. C. Bagal's account of the institution, Abanindranath clarifies that he does not hold any University degree<sup>30</sup> nor was he ever a formal student of the Government School of Art. However, in 1902, when his painting "The Last Hours of Shah Jahan" was awarded a silver medal at the Delhi Durbar Art Exhibition, the art school's official record reported, "Babu Abanindra Nath Tagore, a student of great original talent, was awarded....The work of this Indian painter was reproduced in *The Studio*, which is one of the leading European Art magazines."<sup>31</sup> The article for *The Studio* was written by Havell, and it reflects how he was beginning to look upon Abanindranath as an informal 'student', who would visit the art school and was being introduced by him to the new collection of Mughal miniature painting in the school's and the museum's Art Gallery. And he chose to represent him for the first time on an international platform as an art student and as an individual Indian artist who was developing an original style of painting. (**Fig 3.11**).

Correspondingly, the Art Gallery of the school was also being rearranged, considering the reformation advised during the Lahore Conference on art education. Havell classified the arrangement of the art collection of the gallery into three sections – "Art Applied to Industry", "Architecture and Architectural Decoration" and "Fine Art".<sup>32</sup> Gradually expanding the gallery collection with specimens of Indian painting and decorative objects, the gallery was radically transformed in 1904, after Havell sold the entire collection of European pictures that had been acquired at the time of Lord Northbrook's inauguration of this unit, and replaced the collection with works of medieval Indian art and craft objects. (**Fig 3.12 a, b**) The institution's official

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<sup>30</sup> J. C. Bagal, *History of the Govt. College of Art and Craft*. p. 30

<sup>31</sup> Annual Report, 1902-03, p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> Annual Report 1897-98, p. 98

statement records, “the former scheme of the gallery was found unworkable and misleading to Indian art students, and has been given up.... Under the new scheme it will be the “Art Section” of the Indian Museum under principal of the School of Art. A new gallery will be built to provide additional accommodation.”<sup>33</sup> This moment marked a turning point in Government School of Art’s pedagogic route and Indian Museum’s corresponding role in the pedagogy of modern art in Calcutta.

Havell’s position as the Principal of the art school and the Superintendent of the Government Art Gallery in the museum, provided him with the authority to re-establish the core objective of these institutions and reframe the knowledge repository for studies in Indian art history. The Indian Museum, with its plans of expansion in 1904, decided to create a dedicated Art Section, by amalgamating the Government Art Gallery and the collection of the Government Art School. Prior to this, the ‘Art’ section was absorbed within the ‘Economic and Art Section’ that emerged with the new objects coming in from the Calcutta International Exhibition. The setting apart of an independent Art Section, with the combined collection of the art school and the Indian Museum, charted a new direction in the history of both the adjacent institutions in developing an Indian ‘fine arts’ repository as a first of its kind in any colonial institution of that time.

In 1906, Havell writes a report, titled *The Philosophic Basis of Indian Fine Art and the Relation of Indian Fine Art to University Education*, which was based on the study of the recent acquisitions by the Government Art Gallery, where he asserts, “it is necessary that both the State and the University must abandon their old attitude towards art education, for, if my reasoning is sound and Indian art students need not look to Europe or European methods for

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<sup>33</sup> Annual Report, 1904-05, p. 26

the higher branches of art instruction...”.<sup>34</sup> This report strongly advocated his argument of reshaping and revising the art collection by selling the European examples of art that were donated by Lord Northbrook and purchasing diverse examples of traditional Indian art with that fund.

Till then, the only strong Indian element of British government’s art education policy had been the identification and accumulation of craft objects of Indian origin which would have industrial and commercial prospects. However, Havell’s stance of decrying the severe deterioration of India’s craft traditions and the inheritance of Indian art, due to the policy of industrial intervention by the British government, gave rise to a debate between Havell and Cecil Burns, on the impact of colonialism on Indian crafts. In 1910, Burns, who was the Principal of the J. J. School of Art from 1899 to 1918, delivered a lecture at the Royal Society of Arts, London on “The Functions of Schools of Art in India”.<sup>35</sup> He advocated that the craft practices in India as he observed during his time in India was only deteriorating and that the training through the art schools were not adequate to reach the craft production standards of the markets in the West. Therefore to ensure satisfactory progress of craft industries through the art schools in India, the education policy must promote, “the teaching in the Schools of Art may be made less antiquarian in its character, and the students, while not ignoring their past, may be brought into closer touch with Nature, and may be taught the manner in which natural forms may be applied to design.”<sup>36</sup> However, E.B. Havell contradicted this standing on the degeneration of Indian craft, as he believed, that the British pedagogic intervention was the only weak link of the craft practices in India, and that it should be allowed to retain its distinct

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<sup>34</sup> E.B. Havell. *The Philosophic Basis of Indian Fine Art and the Relation of Indian Fine Art to University Education*. (Based on the study of recent important acquisitions by the Government Art Gallery, Calcutta) February, 1906. Calcutta. p. 2

<sup>35</sup> This lecture was later published by *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 57, no. 2952, 1909, pp. 629–50.

<sup>36</sup> Burns, “The Functions of Schools of Art in India” *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 57, no. 2952, 1909, p. 637; This educational trajectory was also advocated by Rabindranath Tagore and applied by Nandalal Bose later through Kala Bhavan’s pedagogic thrust, and will be discussed through Chapter Four and Five.

artistic instincts and traditional design forms instead of recasting and standardising these local traditional practices to Western methodologies. He claimed, “The true function of Schools of Art in India was to endeavour to persuade the Education Department, the Public Works Department, and other departments, to put artistic principals into practice as thoroughly as India has always known how to do for herself.”<sup>37</sup>

Just as Havell as the Principal of the Calcutta art school was emerging at the forefront of a new turn in colonial art education and as a voice of dissent against the administration, there was a precipitous turn of events. The circumstances remain unclear as to why Havell had to go on furlough from the Calcutta art school in 1903. This temporary furlough from the art school got converted to a permanent termination from his post of the Principal of the Government School of Art by 1905-06, as he was declared “unfit for further service in India by a Medical Board.”<sup>38</sup> In approximately eight years of service to the school, Havell’s had made a lasting contribution in the Indianisation of the both the Industrial and Fine Arts curriculum of the institution. Another far-reaching contribution of Havell was his invitation to Abanindranath Tagore to join the Government School of Art, Calcutta, as its Vice Principal, before he left for London. His radical moves within the art school – of disposing of the European art collection of the Art Gallery and his appointment of an outsider like Abanindranath to the elevated position of Vice-Principal – alongside his mounting attacks on colonial industrial and commercial interests brought on him the suspicions of the art administrative lobby, and paved the context for his de facto removal from service. Yet, retrospectively, it became evident that, from his base in England he would play an even more important role as an Orientalist art historian and a passionate champion of Indian art and aesthetics on an international forum. And the space he created within the Calcutta art school by the induction of Indian art teachers like Lala Ishwari

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<sup>37</sup> E.B. Havell during discussion session followed by Burns lecture. “The Functions of Schools of Art in India” *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 57, no. 2952, 1909, p. 645

<sup>38</sup> Annual Report, 1907-08

Prasad and Abanindranath Tagore, at two very different levels, enabled the forming of the new Indian art movement (that later took on the name of the Bengal School) with the first students gathering here under Abanindranath;s tutelage.<sup>39</sup>

## Section IV

### **The Entry of Abanindranath Tagore and the Foundation of Indian Art Movement (1903 – 1915)**

“If by an art school we understand an institution for higher aesthetic culture, where people may be taught to represent their ideas independently, beautifully and truly, then it must be said that the Government School of Art in those time failed its mission. It turned out third class portrait painters and copyists, showing little or no originality in their work; and as our so-called University education fitted us only to be clerks or lawyers assistants, so this school of art with its systematic drudgery and inadequate training made us indifferent drawing teachers eager for appointments in the provincial training schools. In fact this school of art neither fulfilled the condition of a truly industrial establishment nor did it do much towards improving the fine art of the country.”

– Abanindranath Tagore, Progress of Education in Bengal – Third Quinquennial Review, 1907

Though Abanindranath joined the Calcutta School of Art as the Vice Principal in 1905, he had to officiate in the Principal’s position in his duties for almost three years during his tenure. (**Fig 3.13**) Having identified the core pedagogic problem of the art school, as quoted above, Abanindranath gave himself quite a challenge to fill the gap in inculcating the sense of aesthetics and originality in the artistic practices of the country. Echoing his own personal journey to find inspiration in erstwhile art forms and visual narratives of the country like Mughal and Persian miniatures, Abanindranath introduced classical, mythological and

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<sup>39</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta have extensively discussed this growing trend of Orientalist advocates of Indian art in “Orientalism and the new claims for Indian art: the ideas of Havell, Coomaraswamy, Okakura and Nivedita” *The Making of a New Indian Art: Artists, Aesthetics, and Nationalism in Bengal, c 18050 – 1920*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. pp. 146-184



religious stories through class lectures in the school. He asserted “to produce any good work of art, students must be thoroughly conversant with the classical lore of his country. He must have a complete knowledge of its religious and social ideals of the episodes of Indian Epics and history.”<sup>40</sup> Exiting the western academic subject framework, Abanindranath began to place of the traditions of Indian mythology and painting at the centre of the training of students in the Fine Arts section. Giving wind to this direction, Nandalal Bose joined the Calcutta school of art in 1905. , At the time of his joining, he was inducted into Iswari Prasad’s Decorative Design class, which was established by Havell. His early education, therefore, was in original composition, drawing ornamental patterns, and in working on stained glass.<sup>41</sup> Soon after Abanindranath took him under his guidance and Nandalal became his earliest direct student. The second to join their group was Suren Ganguly. The first original painting by Nandalal in the school was titled “Siddhartha and the Hurt Swan” (Siddhartha O Ahoto Hongsho) (**Fig 3.14**). Apart from stylistic implications, some of the early class works of Nandalal, executed during his second year in the school demonstrate that the art institution’s purview of a creative process was yet to be shifted from the standardised format of a ‘class work’ to an independent voice witnessed in a ‘work of art’ (**Fig 3.15 a, b**). It is also recorded in his biography that Nandalal’s classroom was the art section room of the Indian Museum.<sup>42</sup> The drive initiated by Havell of displaying a collection of Mughal miniature paintings would directly impact the imagination of the art students, gradually started coming to fruition. By this time Asit Kumar Haldar, Jamini Roy, Samarendranath Gupta, Sailendranath Dey, Hakim Muhammad Khan, K. Venkatappa, Jatindra Kumar Sen and Promod Kumar Chattapadyay joined the art school and came under the direct supervision of Abanindranath in the Fine Arts section. (**Fig 3.16**)

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<sup>40</sup> Progress of Education in Bengal – Third Quinquennial Review, 1907, p. 89

<sup>41</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal* Part I, p. 58

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

My research also found the enrolment of another student, Shibabrata Chattopadhyay in 1904, under E.B. Havell, who continued his tutelage under Abanindranath and later joined as a faculty of Calcutta Art School during Percy Brown's tenure.<sup>43</sup> Although sufficient record is not available on Shibabrata Chattopadhyay's time at the art school or his oeuvre, some examples of his portrait drawings were made available from his family collection.<sup>44</sup> (Fig 3.17 a, b, c) The pencil studies demonstrate the uniform archetype of portraiture skills that came out of the Academic training in the art school. The Academic art genre, garnered much popularity across the region and commonly across the country, primarily through the demand for portrait paintings. As discussed previously, this element of the Calcutta art school's training had been uniformly popular among art students as well as art consumers and connoisseurs, which made western Academic methods, a much coveted training, marking out the professional artist from the amateurs. Tapati Guha-Thakurta has elaborated on the careers of Academic art of 'portrait painting' as the emerging professional occupation in the region, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, providing an overview of the art school's role in creating a successful vocation for art students and the praxis of art patronage in the region.<sup>45</sup> However, not until the books appeared of Guha-Thakurta and Partha Mitter in the 1990s, did this thriving genre of Academic art find adequate representation in modern Indian art history. It is the emergence of the "Bengal Style", as opposed to the rest of the art school's programme, which found a disproportionate representation in the art history of this period. While the scholarly attention to the Bengal School marked out Abanindranath's art movement as the bearer of a new nationalism and modernity in Indian painting. The dearth of consistent data on this thriving

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<sup>43</sup> From an interview with Soumyabrata Chattopadhyay, grandson of Shibabrata Chattopadhyay.

<sup>44</sup> Shibabrata Chattopadhyay is neither mentioned in any annual reports of the Calcutta Art School, or in J C Bagal's account of the institution's history or Kamal Sarkar's compendium, *Bharater Bhaskar O Chitrashilpi* (Sculptors and Painters of India) Calcutta: Yogmaya publications, 1984. The illustrations also cannot be precisely dated due to the lack of records, but it can be approximately positioned in the early 1900s, after his joining the art school, which is recorded as Shibabrata Chattopadhyay's educational period.

<sup>45</sup> Guha-Thakurta, "The Art school Artists in Calcutta", *The Making of a New Indian Art*.

category of Academic art has limited the history of this practice as a commercial facet in the larger scheme of art history.

Abanindranath's stylistic evolution has been critically studied by many art historians in a comprehensive capacity, and is outside the direct scope of this thesis. The discussion of Abanindranath here is restricted only to his foundational role as a teacher, mentor and innovator while working at the Government Art School, Calcutta, and the pedagogic impact he had on the art students of the institution. Within the premises of the school, students under Abanindranath were closely guided towards the forming a new pictorial language which largely focused on Indian mythological narratives. This purview was further supported by lectures on Indian mythology and fables in the classroom.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, outside the periphery of the school, the call for Swadeshi nationalism was gaining grounds. Abanindranath's painting of 'Bharat Mata' was executed within the premises of the art school, and became the face of 'Swadeshi' and this new Indian art movement.

Since his association with Kakuzo Okakura in 1902, followed by Yokoyama Taikan and Hishida Shunso's arrival in Calcutta and stay at the Jorasanko household of the Tagores during 1902-3, Japanese wash technique inspired Abanindranath's imagination of a pan-Asian aesthetics. The technique found a more explicit expression in some of the paintings in his *Omar Khayyam* series. As Abanindranath's painting styles were evolving, his students too followed his direction of composing their own visuals. Nandalal's wash painting 'Shiv Sati' (**Fig 3.18**) is an example of the kind of student work that he was facilitating within the Calcutta art school. The other branches of the curriculum too saw parallel progress, particularly the instruction in fresco technique of painting. Traditional fresco painters from Jaipur were brought to Bengal for the first time as an institutional initiative to teach the Jaipur technique to the art students of

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<sup>46</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part I. p. 62

the region. What remains now essentially within the walls of the art schools are ornamentals patterns, reflecting the nature of decorative designs, which echo the William Morris method of westernisation of Indian ornamental patterns. Abanindranath too joined his students in the process. Breaking away from his desk and the intimacy of small format works, Abanindranath engaged directly with a stone surface on the walls of the art school to create his fresco painting, 'Kacha and Devayani' (Fig 3.19).

However, Abanindranath's engagement with art within the school premises was gradually blurring and blending with his art practice within his domestic space at Jorasanko, which also led to the gradual rise of new spaces of training in Indian style painting outside the domain of the Government School of Art, Calcutta. His studio, surrounded by his students, in the art school mirrored his south veranda working space at his home, among his brothers Gaganendranath Tagore and Samarendranath Tagore. An ambience of intellectual discourse around the new art movement was emerging in the city, through new art societies and salons, where critics, connoisseurs and scholars gathered along with a select core of artists – and through the new prestigious monthly miscellanies, edited by Ramananda Chatterjee, the Bengali journal, *Prabasi*, and its English analogue *The Modern Review*, both of which pioneered a new trend of colour plates of paintings in its pages to cultivate new artistic tastes amongst its readership.. The art practice of the Tagore brothers and the Southern Veranda (*Dakshiner Baranda*) took a ceremonial institutional form in 1907, through the establishment of the Indian Society of Oriental Art (henceforth, referred to as ISOA).

With a dedicated curriculum enhancing an Oriental aesthetics and promoting a study of traditional Indian painting and sculpture, ISOA devised one of the first institutional programmes, which broke out of the colonial mould of pedagogy. The society became instrumental in arranging art exhibitions and critical dialogue on art, which invigorated conditions of art work and artists, from classwork to apprenticeships. The society was largely

supported by Europeans living in Calcutta – Lord Kitchener was the first president of the society, and Mr. Norman Blount was the secretary along with Abanindranath; other members were Justice John Woodroffe, Mr. Justice Rampini, Justice Herbert Holmwood and Lord Carmichael. The early years of ISOA show the foundational network it built with the Calcutta art school, conducting the society's meetings from the premises of the art school.

The collaborative pedagogic network between the Calcutta art school, ISOA and the newly formed India Society in London was further cemented through the Ajanta expedition of Lady Herringham, during 1909-1910. Before discussing the stylistic impact of the Ajanta project, it is crucial to establish the administrative shifts and changes in aesthetic dispensation that intervened within the colonial art establishment in Calcutta.

As a mark of protest against George Birdwood's infamous devaluation of Indian Art, and to promote the history and aesthetics of art in India, Havell along with Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, T.W. Arnold, Christiana Herringham, T.W. Rolleston and William Rothenstien, formed the India Society in 1910, at his own residence in London.<sup>47</sup> The objective of the society was to propagate a more informed study of Indian art and culture, across Europe as well as in India. As a consequence, the Ajanta expedition was undertaken under Lady Herringham, and was facilitated through Gaganendranath, Samarendranath and Abanindranath's guidance and financial support.<sup>48</sup> After the publication of Major Gill's preparatory notes and illustrations of Ajanta in 1876 and John Griffith's comprehensive documentation, Lady Herringham's documentation of Ajanta frescos, became a vital source of influence in Indian art and the art history that followed.

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<sup>47</sup> The Society became 'The Royal India Society' in 1944. After Independence, it came to be known as the 'Royal India and Pakistan Society'.

<sup>48</sup> Benodebehari Mukherjee, *Adhunik Shilpa Shiksha*. p. 127; *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal* Part I. p. 148

Though not a government commissioned work, unlike the previous Ajanta projects, such as the one conducted by Griffiths and the students of the J.J. School of Art, Bombay, in the 1870s, Herringham's interest was fanned by the new ideological and intellectual championship of Indian art unfolding through the new networks between Calcutta and London. Executed between 1910 and 1914, the copying of Ajanta murals by Nandalal Bose, Samarendra Gupta and Asit Haldar, as part of a student team deputed by Abanindranath to be a part of Lady Herringham's project, left a lasting impact on the new Indian art movement in Calcutta and later in Santiniketan.

Nandalal described that the first phase of the work entailed only survey and copying of the murals (**Fig 3.20 a, b**). During this phase, Nandalal and Asit Haldar were also accompanied by an artist, Miss Davis, and Sister Nivedita. For the next round of duplication, Asit Haldar and Samarendranath Gupta travelled from Calcutta, while Miss Dorothy M. Larcher and Miss Luke joined from London and local artists, Syed Ahmad and Muhammad Fazl Ud Din joined from Aurangabad. William Rothenstein points out, "They (Herringham and the team) wisely made no attempt to register the exact condition in which they found the original paintings. But, both by their selection of subjects and by their appreciation of the beauty and significance of these, they have been able to interpret the spirit of conception and of execution in a remarkable way."<sup>49</sup> Distinct from the previous projects of copying the Ajanta murals, the Calcutta team under Herringham and the Tagore brothers emancipated the scope of the pictorial representation from the accuracy of copying to a sensory depiction of the larger artistic tradition. This change in the method of studying forms of ancient Indian art, impacted the praxis of individual artists in Bengal, and their intellectual defence of national identity through art. (**Fig 3.21 a, b, c**) Essays on Indian art and its revived aesthetics by Abanindranath Tagore, Asit

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<sup>49</sup> "The Import of the Ajanta Paintings in the History of Art", published in *Ajanta Frescoes – Lady Herringham*, by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. 1915

Haldar, Samarendranath Gupta, Ajit Kumar Chakraborty, and their likes started being published consistently through *the journals*, *Prabasi* and *Modern Review*, alongside reproductions of paintings of this group of artists, to create a discerning public for the new Indian art movement.<sup>50</sup> (Fig 3.22 a, b)

The Indian Society of Oriental Art continued its aim of disseminating the evolving aesthetics of this art movement. The Society organised regular annual exhibitions of the group of artists, identifying with their style and ideology, in various regions across the country, and outside – starting with Calcutta in 1908, 1910, 1912 and 1913; Allahabad in 1911; and Madras in 1916 and 1918. The first ISOA exhibition in Europe was held in Paris in 1914.<sup>51</sup> (Fig 3.23) The same year, the collection also travelled for the exhibition of “The New Calcutta School” at the Indian Section in the Victoria and Albert Museum. C. Stanley Clarke while introducing the catalogue of the collection, referred to the character of this emerging style of art practice as ‘The New Calcutta School’.<sup>52</sup> Clarke further affirmed, in the catalogue essay, the seminal contribution of Havell and the role of Government Art Gallery in formulating a distinct ‘Indian-ness’ and a realigned framework of art practice in India.<sup>53</sup> Along with Abanindranath, paintings by Gaganendranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Ganguly, Asit Haldar, Mukul Dey, Sailendranath Dey, Satyendranarayan Dutta, O.C. Ganguly, Surendranath Kar, Atul Krishna Mitter, Kshitindranath Mazumdar, Iswari Prasad, Rameswar Prasad, Sami-Uz-Zama, Durgesh

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<sup>50</sup> See Samarendranath Gupta “Pnach Anguler Khela”, *Prabasi* Part 1 Vol 13, 3rd Issue ( Ashar, 1320) 1913; Ajit Kumar Chakraborty “Adhunik Jooger Shilpo Shadhona” 4th Issue (Srabon, 1320) 1913; NoliniMohan Roy Chowdhury “Badami Guha (Cave)” 5th Issue (Bhadro, 1320) 1913; Abanindranath Tagore “Murti” (illustrated) Part 2 (Vol 13) 3rd Issue (Poush, 1320) 1914 ; Abanindranath Tagore “Murti” (illustrated) Part 3, 4th Issue (Magh, 1320) 1913; Asit Kumar Haldar “Bharat Shilper Onttoprokriti” (Lecture delivered at Calcutta Sahitya Sammelan)<sup>3</sup>d Issue (Ashar, 1321) 1914; Samarendranath Gupta “Mogol Ostad der Ongkito Krishtio Chitro” 4th Issue (Srabon, 1321) 1914; Sukumar Roy “Shilpe Otukti” Part I (Vol 14), 6th Issue (Ashin, 1321) 1914; Asit Kumar Haldar “Ramgarh – Pother Kotha” Part II (Vol 14), 1st Issue (Kartik, 1321) 1914; Atul Chandra Dutta “Amader jatio shilpo o sahityo shadhona kon pothey hatbey?” 4<sup>th</sup> Issue, (Magh 1321) 1915.

<sup>51</sup> Ratan Parimoo, *The Paintings of the Three Tagores*. p. 56

<sup>52</sup> Catalogue of Paintings of the New Calcutta School. (Lent by the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta) Victoria and Albert Museum- Indian Section. April and May 1914.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid* (By quoting A.K. Coomaraswamy from the Catalogue of Indian Court in The Festival of Empire Exhibition in 1911)

Chandra Singha, Sarada Charan Ukil, K. Venkatappa, and Hakim Khan were shown in the exhibition. The recognition of the art movement found its endorsement and resonance largely outside the scope of the Government Art School.

## Section V

### The Tenure of Percy Brown (1909 – 1920s)

Abanindranath was officiating as the Principal of the Government School of Art, until Percy Brown was appointed as its new Principal in 1909 - following which the school's curriculum was further rearranged in 1910. (Fig 3.24) The pedagogic programme was divided into five departments by Brown, namely – i) Elementary Department, ii) Industrial Department, iii) Draftsman's Department, iv) Teachers' Department, and v) Fine Arts Department. The Elementary Department functioned as the foundational course for the art students, and the completion of the training under this module would further allow the student to take a three year advanced course in any of the remaining departments.<sup>54</sup> The aim of the Fine Arts department was narrowed down to the teaching of "picture painting" and to "train the students as artists", with twenty five students taking the course at a time.<sup>55</sup> With the gradual development of the Fine Arts Department, through Abanindranath's vision, an integrated educational extension that the school added was the preparation of indigenous (natural) pigments, which the students of the school started using in their paintings. The focus of the Draftsman Department under Munshi Gholam Hussain was to produce fully illustrated drawings for the *Industrial Art Pattern Book*. The preponderant thrust of the school's

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<sup>54</sup> Annual Report, 1909-10

<sup>55</sup> Ibid



curriculum remained towards the Industrial Section in which Mr. Percy Brown was in-charge, while the responsibility of only the Fine Arts Section was officially given to Abanindranath Tagore. Though Abanindranath had been officiating in the principal's position between 1905 and 1909, the government asserted that –

“We (Finance Dept. Govt. of India) should have been pleased to have supported the Mr. Tagore's appointment as Principal of the School of Art if he has been fully qualified for the post. But he has himself admitted his inability to take charge of or develop the industrial side of the school while it would have been impossible to secure the services of a Vice-Principal qualified in this respect who would have been willing to work under him as Principal. We understand that Mr. Tagore himself is quite willing to accept the present proposals of the local Government.”<sup>56</sup>

It was also decreed through this letter that Abanindranath's starting salary in the art school be increased from Rs. 300 a month to Rs. 750 a month, which Tagore had asked the Government of Bengal to consider.<sup>57</sup> Between 1910 and 1915, when Abanindranath Tagore resigned from his position as the Assistant Principal of the Art School, the education policy was restructured by Percy Brown, in order to keep a balance between the growing influences of the Indian art movement outside the institutional premise. However, a certain section of the art students revolt against the Indianisation of the curriculum, from within the institution.<sup>58</sup> Brown clarified –

“The objective of the School is to guide, direct and encourage the special artistic tendencies of the people. Its work is to restrain, control and instruct the art workman in the preparation of his designs and to develop his technical skills. Its aim is to provide a wholesome art education for all classes of people and to instil into the mind of young India the good there is in the country's art.... Not the least important part of the school's work therefore consists in a resuscitation of the indigenous aesthetic sense.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Letter (No. 106 of 1909) to the Honourable Viscount Morley of Blackburn, His Majesty's Secretary of State in India from Finance Dept. (Salaries) Govt. of India (Signed by Minto, Kitchener, H. Adamson, J.O. Miller, W.L. Harvey, G.F. Wilson, S.P. Sinha) 13<sup>th</sup> May 1909, Shimla

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> A certain section of the students in the Government School of Art, Calcutta perceived Havell's Indianisation as a threat to Western mode of Academic art training that they were instructed in. It was their belief western naturalistic styles of art was the highest order of the practice. As a response, Ranada Prasad Gupta established the Jubilee Art Academy in 1905 and Hemen Majumdar along with Atul Bose and Jamini Roy opened the Indian Academy of Art.

<sup>59</sup> Fifth Quinquennial Review, Progress of Education in Bengal 1912- 16

Without asserting the art education scheme of 1884 which continued to officially propagate the industrial thrust of art pedagogy, Brown covered the position of the art school to “guide, direct and encourage the special artistic tendencies of the people” for all contending stakeholders.

This administrative manoeuvre is best manifested in Percy Brown’s rearrangement of the ‘Art Section’ of the Indian Museum. In 1911, the amalgamated collection of the Government Art Gallery and the Artware Court of the Indian Museum, took shape as the ‘Art Section’ of the Indian Museum.<sup>60</sup> The Artware section which was previously under the Economic Products wing of the Government of India, was now transferred under the direct supervision of Percy Brown. A new wing for the Art Section was built and completed on September 1, 1911, and for the next one year the rearrangement of the objects from their previous location to the new wing was carried out.<sup>61</sup> It was desired by the Government of India that the Art Section of the Museum should be ready and open to public before the royal visit of King George V and Queen Mary on 30<sup>th</sup> December of the same year.<sup>62</sup> An amount of fifty thousand was allocated by the Trustees of the museum for the glass cases and fitting equipment for the Art Section. The recorded number of Artware objects displayed were over ten thousand and the Fine Arts collection comprised of seven hundred and fourteen pictures.<sup>63</sup> The general arrangement of the collection was categorised under three groups – i) Textile, ii) Metal, Wood, Ceramics and iii) Pictures. These groups were further subdivided into multiple categories taking into consideration the material and methods of the craft group, its historical position and its region of origin. Percy Brown described this arrangement as “Grouping by Industries” which was

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<sup>60</sup> Indian Museum Centenary Volume, p 38

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p 39

<sup>62</sup> It was during this royal visit that George V declared the shift of the Empire’s capital from Calcutta to Delhi at the Delhi Durbar

<sup>63</sup> Indian Museum Centenary Volume, p 39

meant to give “special facilities to the students for their research and also enable the general public to understand readily the character of the art displayed.”<sup>64</sup>

Compiled as an introductory guide to the collection, Percy Brown’s descriptive categories demonstrated the assortment of objects which attempted to balance the diverse nature of ‘Oriental’ artefacts produced in India,<sup>65</sup> He positioned the collection and its arrangement primarily as a pedagogic tool for the art school students, defining the module as the “Study of Historic Art”. As students from various regions of the country and different religious and social backgrounds attend the Calcutta art school, they were encouraged to “study the traditional art of their country as a composite whole and thus gain a comprehensive idea of Indian Art not by its provinces, but by its historic schools.”<sup>66</sup> Principal Brown claimed that this collection was one of the finest collections of ‘oriental’ art in the world and established a system between the art school and the museum where objects were given on loan to a student, under the supervision of a school staff, if they desired to study the museum specimens.<sup>67</sup> This range of ‘Oriental’ specimens included both crafts as well as fine arts like miniatures from India, Ceylon, Nepal and Tibet. Brown emphasises that the fine arts section or the ‘picture gallery’ is the most important section as it is comprised of the “highest form of artistic expression in the Indian aesthetics ... collected from all parts of the country and fully representative of this aspect of Fine Arts in India”<sup>68</sup>, and that it pedagogically and institutionally recognises the ancient and medieval artistic traditions in India. **(Fig 3.25)**

Brown lists *Afridi* wax-cloth (which probably referred to *Batik* as Brown indicates its Javanese connection), tie-dying from Rajasthan, embroideries from Dhaka, *Phulkari* from Punjab,

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<sup>64</sup> Percy Brown. Introductory guide to the Art Section of the Indian Museum, Calcutta. December 1915

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Progress of Education in Bengal. Fifth Quinquennial Report 1912-1917s. p. 81

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Percy Brown. *Introductory guide to the Art Section of the Indian Museum*. Govt. of Bengal, Calcutta. 1916. p.

*Kinkhobs* from Surat and Benares, brocades from Murshidabad, and woven shawls from Kashmir under the Textile Group of objects. Under the Metal, Wood & Ivory Group, the class of objects listed are Metal Portraits, Metal Vessels, Metal Statuary, Enamel objects, silverware, Jewellery, Pottery, Lac and Lacquer wares, carved Ivory artefacts from Delhi, Murshidabad and Rangoon, painted and varnished wares and most prominently the Woodwork collection in which objects range from miniature sandalwood figures to full size Kathiawar wooden doors and panels. However, from these separate methods and material groupings of objects, what was curiously missing was *kantha*, which originates in Bengal but did not fall under industrial artefact; or pith or *shola* crafts, again a specimen local to Bengal.

Under the group of “Indian Pictures”, the museum collection was built of seven hundred and fourteen miniature painting specimens, portraiture and a small collection of “Modern Pictures”.<sup>69</sup> Principal Brown concedes that the range of knowledge and survey done by the government and other colonial stakeholders on the industrial variety of artefacts were disproportionate to the knowledge accumulation on painting traditions in India. And hence this comprehensive collection of Indian art needed new and different research material for art students and scholars to wholly realise its history and artistic potential. In 1917, a wide-ranging book on Indian Painting was written by Percy Brown. Breaking down the scope of the study into two methodological halves, Brown surveyed the “History of Indian Painting” and the “Description of Indian Painting”. He admits in the book that until very recently the West comfortably settled on the impression that there was no pictorial art in India though “a certain number of decoratively coloured miniatures had at different times been obtained from India, but in the museums of the West these were usually catalogued as Persian, and, sometimes as Chinese.”<sup>70</sup> As the classification of Indian ‘Fine Arts’ did not match with the definition of

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Percy Brown, *The Heritage of India Series – Indian Painting*. YMCA Publishing House, Calcutta. 1917

Western Academic Fine Arts, in western museum collections, well into this period, the bulk of Indian art and craft objects had been largely grouped as “oriental curios”. Brown breaks down his study on Indian Painting through the Early Period, Buddhist Period, Medieval Period, Mughal School, Rajput School and the Modern Schools. The timeline of the Modern schools of Indian painting was estimated from 1760s, with the advent of European artists in India and the forms of pictorial art produced henceforth. And, his concluding observation on the position of modern Indian painting until 1915 was far from positive, He wrote, “On the one hand is the new movement, which is appreciated by all except those to whom it is primarily addressed – for so far it has made a more successful appeal to the European than to the Indian. On the other hand is the work of the student of Western oil painting, whose productions find considerable favour among those of his own community.”<sup>71</sup> This artistic and ideological dichotomy was one that Brown constantly confronted as the Principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, where portrait painting remained the only popular instruction module with the students of the Fine Arts section.

After Abanindranath’s retirement, the art school no longer remained the main ground for the Indian art movement that he was spearheading. However, the responsibility of the Fine Arts department was given to the traditional Indian painter whom Havell had brought into the teaching staff of the school, Lala Ishwari Prasad, and the post of the Vice Principal was filled by a skilled Academic painter, Jamini Prokash Ganguly. During Abanindranath’s resignation, a significant dialogue evolved on the position of Indian art teachers in Indian art schools at the House of Commons. Four vital questions had been raised – first, “Whether the Secretary of the State for India adheres to the principle laid down by his predecessors that government schools of art in India exist for the promotion of Indian Art; and [second] whether the qualification of Indian teachers have been fully considered in appointments to the staffs of those schools which

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 67

come under his patronage?<sup>72</sup> To which, the office of Secretary of the State responded in the affirmative, as it is considered that Indian Art includes applied design and industrial art which promotes traditional Indian craft forms. In case of the second question, the office clarified its position on the matter that it is the Indian government which recruits for the Indian art schools and the Secretary of State only engages in the matter when local government cannot find suitable candidates for the job.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the parliament specifically asks whether the Government of India sufficiently considered the artistic achievements of Abanindranath Tagore when the position of Principal was vacant in the Calcutta art school; and whether the Government of India will equally consider the candidacy of his acclaimed students whose original paintings are now being exhibited at Victoria and Albert Museum, when teaching posts in government art schools are open in the future?<sup>74</sup> The response of the Government of India was again in the affirmative for both set of enquiries.

However, on December 1, 1915, the House of Commons enquired “whether his (Abanindranath Tagore) resignation will be made an occasion of an economy in Indian expenditure, which might be attained by withdrawing the European Principal of the school and reorganising it as a genuine school of native Indian Art and thus discontinue the effort to inculcate Western methods of art into Oriental art students.”<sup>75</sup> **(Fig 3.26)** This was a seminal recommendation by the House of Commons, which impacted a pivotal and permanent shift in the administrative and faculty configuration of the institution, in the years to come. The recommendation also proposes withdrawing “western methods or art” or ‘Academic Art’ training which had been one of the most sought-after modules of the school. But, not unsurprisingly, this was a proposal that would have no takers from the teacher or student community of the Calcutta art school.

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<sup>72</sup> Parliamentary Notice Session 1914. Question No 7, Judicial and Public Department 5 May, 1914

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, ‘Question No. 5’

<sup>75</sup> Parliamentary Notice Session 1915. Question No. 7 Judicial and Public Department. December 1, 1915.

The thesis argues that the visibility or the evolving popularity of the new modes of Indian art practices vis-à-vis the shrinking reputation of European modes of artistic practice, was not entirely an artistic process but equally an institutional and administrative doing. The curriculum components, however, remained much in sync with the colonial impetus of disciplinary instruction, as result of which the Government School of Art, Calcutta, was shifted from the Department of Education to Industries Department, in 1920. However, the school was transferred back to the Education Department under Public Instruction in Bengal in 1924 with a total student strength of three hundred and forty candidates, which essentially testified the validation of the curriculum through design-based commission works and the training in Academic art. As these House of Commons' debates were developing, Percy Brown continued to officiate as the Principal of the art school until 1927, where-after Mukul Chandra Dey was appointed as the first Indian Principal of the institution.

## **Section VI**

### **The Parallel Autonomous Initiatives of Art Education in Calcutta**

The intervention of nationalist fervour and the rise of the movement for 'Indian-style' painting within the configuration of colonial art pedagogy in the Government School of Art during the early twentieth century, met with its share of internal resistance. Havell's move of dispensing with all the European art in the Government Art Gallery, in particular, resulted in protests by a certain section of art students who prized western forms of art and its methodologies for their perceived higher artistic and professional value. Multiple art students of the Government School of Art stepped out from the art school to form art institution of their own. This final section of the

chapter briefly maps those autonomous pedagogic and artistic initiatives emerging in the city of Calcutta.

Ranada Prasad Gupta, a third-year student of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, formed the 'Jubilee Art Academy' at Baithakkhana Street of Calcutta in 1905, along with other students of similar opinion, to demonstrate resistance towards Havell's Indianisation of the 'Fine Arts' curriculum. Similar dissent was also shown by Hemen Majumdar, when he joined the Calcutta art school in 1911. Dismayed by the long-term effects of Havell's reorientation policies and his craft revival project he lamented that the scope of the Government Art School, Calcutta, as a "Fine Art Academy" was being transformed to a 'School of Design and Applied Arts' that is focused on Indian decorative traditions.<sup>76</sup> He left Government Art School to join Jubilee Art Academy in 1912. Another key proponent of the Western academic styles of portrait and figure painting in Bengal and a future Principal of the Government Art School, was Atul Bose, who also started his art training at the Jubilee School, but later, in 1918, completed his education from the Government School of Art, Calcutta.<sup>77</sup> The following year, in 1919, Hemen Majumdar, along with Atul Bose and Jamini Roy, established the Indian Academy of Art from his home in 24, Beadon Street. Hemen Majumdar published the *Indian Art Academy Journal* in 1920, followed by another illustrated journal *Shilpi* in 1929. **(Fig 3.27 a, b)** Both these publications functioned as a mouthpiece for the continuing importance of Western Academic Art and the significance of the scientific grammar and technique which became the key component of their art practice as well as of their art writing. The scope of subjects of their paintings were essentially confined to portraits, figure study, landscape and still life, which would project their Academic training and acquired dexterity in naturalism.

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<sup>76</sup> Anuradha Ghosh. *Hemen Majumdar*, Rajya Charukala Parshad, 2016.

<sup>77</sup> Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New Indian Art*, p. 319



Though the Government School of Art, Calcutta remained by far the most important art institution in the region, other art schools of various pedagogic configurations had emerged in Calcutta by the turn of the twentieth century. Manmathanath Chakraborty, a photographer of repute and also the editor of *Shilpa O Sahitya* magazine, established a private art institution called the Indian School of Art in 1896. The art school as well as the magazine strongly criticized Havell's reformatory art pedagogy which challenged the position of professional portrait painters and draughtsmen in the city. However, this is the only other art institution in Calcutta, apart from the Calcutta Art School, which has survived as a full-fledged art college into the twenty-first century, and is now known as the Indian College of Art & Draughtsmanship. Though the Indian Art School finds its mention in the Department of Public Instruction reports of the government, as it was partially aided through the Calcutta municipality, no clear record of its curriculum, staff or students of its formative period can be conclusively traced from these reports.

Another private art school called the Albert Temple of Science and School of Technical Arts was established by Girindrakumar Dutta in 1876.<sup>78</sup> Girindrakumar was a prominent figure in the Bengal's emerging circuit of illustrated publications who initiated his own pioneering caricature journal, *Basantak*, during these years. The school he set up focused on training in the applied arts and printing techniques, as the range of journals, magazines, books, pamphlets, etc. were then expanding in the city with a growing readership. In the backdrop of the emerging nationalist environment and the subsequent Swadeshi movement of the 1900s, nationalism provided the main route for the revival of cultural and intellectual identity. Naba Gopal Mitra, a nationalist and Hindu Mela organiser, established the National School as a response and resistance to colonial cultural domination.<sup>79</sup> However, the course of instruction in this school

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<sup>78</sup> Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New Indian Art*, p. 86

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* p. 123

was of a largely technical nature, echoing the colonial curriculum as observed in the Calcutta art school, which leads up to take a critical look at the nature and intentions of nationalist endeavours in this sphere of art education. Nationalism here did not amount to new modernist individualist assertions in art – rather it implied mainly a move towards self-reliance and autonomous professional opportunities and livelihoods in art – especially in the domain of publishing and starting art periodicals – outside the colonial establishment. However, lacking governmental support, few of these private art schools in Calcutta were of lasting duration, nor did they significantly alter existing pedagogic methodologies and artistic perceptions, until Bichitra Studio and then Kala Bhavan in Santiniketan was formed under the aegis of the Tagores.

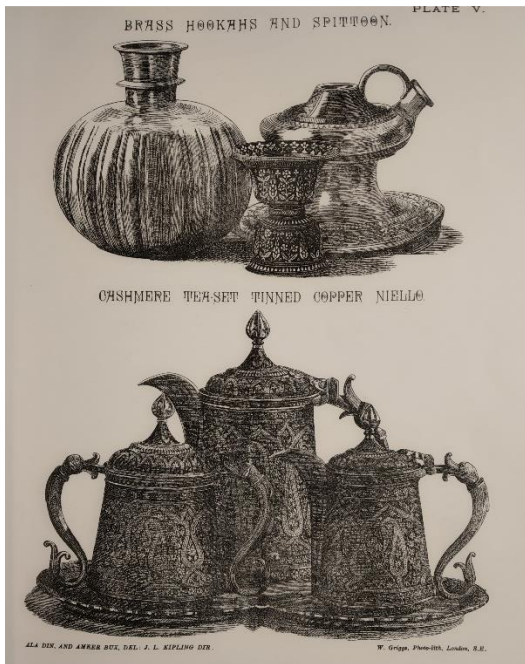
With Abanindranath's exit from the Government School of Art, the aesthetic and intellectual ambit of artistic practices and experiments shifted outside the pedagogic scope of the Calcutta art school and found its new site at the Jorashanko house of the Tagores. The 'Bichitra Studio for the Artists of the Neo-Bengal School' was borne out of a collective community spirit which Abanindranath shared with his brothers and students after he resigned from the Calcutta art school in 1915. Though the ISOA provided the main networking platform for the new Indian art movement, the essential desire of Abanindranath and Gaganendranath of sharing a physical space with a like-minded community of artists, critics, patrons and connoisseurs was fulfilled through this common studio and art club at Jorasanko. (**Fig 3.28**). When Nandalal Bose expressed his desire to live and work in the city with his fellow artists in search of livelihood, Abanindranath suggested that he make Jorasanko his studio and makeshift residence, making it an alternative semi-institutionalised space for modern art practice. The Bichitra Studio was housed in the portion of the property where Rabindranath lived (the red house at No.6, Dwarakananth Tagore Lane), as he encouraged and augmented the experiment of community studio practice, something he already nurtured to a certain stage in Santiniketan, by this time.

Nandalal Bose, Asit Haldar, and Mukul Dey were the founding members of the Bichitra Studio, and Abanindranath was the head master, while Gaganendranath was the Director. Rathindranath Tagore, as the Secretary, enthusiastically took the larger responsibility of managing the different cultural programmes of the Bichitra Studio.<sup>80</sup>

Though most the members lived in the Jorasanko house, Nandalal Bose and Suren Kar travelled from Raiganj frequently. Gradually more students, family members and artists started gathering at Bichitra. Kashinath Debal, an ex-student of Santiniketan ashram that had begun functioning from the turn of the century, was sent to London by Rabindranath to learn sculpture in 1912. On his return, he joined Bichitra, as did Mukul Dey, after his studies in Chicago under James Blanding Sloan on etching methodologies. Gradually the student strength of the studio reached thirty five and instruction in painting, sculpture and print mediums were given. There was also a second-hand printing press in Jorasanko, with which Gaganendranath Tagore used to print, and publish editions of his satire series *Adbhut Lok* (Realm of the Absurd), *Birup Bajra* (Strange Thunderbolt) and *Naba Hullol* (Reform Screams) under the aegis of Bichitra (**Fig 3.29**). Art class and studio practices were just one section of the Studio's purpose, while the other equally vital aspect was group literature discussion, theatre performances and lantern lectures. Eminent individuals like Sukumar Ray, Charu Bandopadhyay, Sourin Mukhopadhyay, Satyen Dutta, Ramananda Chatterjee, and their likes used to frequent these gatherings in the Bichitra Studio, forming a cultural epicentre in the city (**Fig 3.30**). However, though Jorasanko house continued to mould the intellectual milieu of the city, the Bichitra Studio gradually started disintegrating as members progressed onto their independent professional directions. Asit Haldar, Surendranath Kar and eventually Nandalal Bose joined Rabindranath Tagore in the making of Kala Bhavan at Santiniketan.

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<sup>80</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal* Part I, p. 354



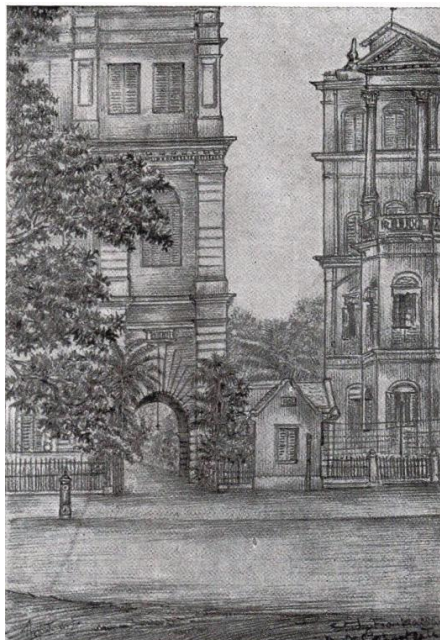
**Figure 3.1 a, b)** – Illustrations of craft specimens from Kashmir, executed by Mayo School of Art, Lahore and published under J. L. Kipling’s supervision, in the Journal of Indian Art . Image Source – Journal of Indian Art and Industries and Industries.



**Figure 3.2** – ‘Still Life’ in water colour by Sushil Chandra Sen, a student of Govt. School of Art, Calcutta. 1934. Collection – Govt. College of Art & Crafts, Calcutta. Courtesy – Visual Archives, CSSSC



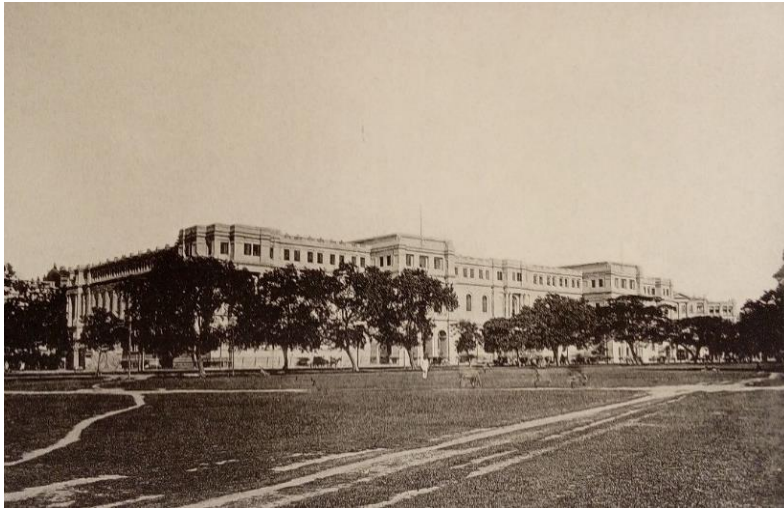
**Figure 3.3 a, b)** – Specimens of the Lithography class of the Industrial Section at the Govt. School of Art, Calcutta. Collection & Image Source – From the family collection of the Author



**Figure 3.4 a)** - Pencil drawing of the Government School of Art, Calcutta by Tripureswar Mukherjee. Published in *Our Magazine*, September 1933. Courtesy: Rasa Gallery Archive



**Figure 3.4 b)** – The building Government School of Art, Calcutta with the structure of Indian Museum behind, as published in the *Our Magazine*. Collection – Govt. College of Art & Crafts, Calcutta. Courtesy – Soujit Das.



**Figure 3.5** – Indian Museum building as seen from Maidan in 1914. Image source – *Indian Museum 1814 - 1914 Centenary Volume*. Trustees of the Indian Museum, Calcutta 1914



**Figure 3.6 a)** – The Kathiawad carved wooden porch displayed in the Art Section of the Indian Museum. Image Courtesy – Tapati Guha-Thakurta



**Figure 3.6 b)** –Reconstructed remains of the Bharut Stupa Railings in the Indian Museum. Image Source – Indian Museum Calcutta



**Figure 3.7** – Ernest Binfield Havell. Image Collection & Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva Bharati



**Figure 3.8 a, b)** – Specimens of Ornamental patterns of fresco painting on the walls of the Govt. College of Art & Crafts, Calcutta. Image Courtesy – Soujit Das.



**Figure 3.9 a)** – Portrait Study by Harri Das Paul, a student of the Government School of Art, Calcutta. Collection – Government College of Art & Craft, Calcutta. Courtesy – Visual Archives, CSSSC



**Figure 3.9 b)** – Portrait Study in Water Colour by Ambika Behari Mukherjee a student of the Government School of Art, Calcutta. Collection – Government College of Art & Craft, Calcutta. Courtesy – Visual Archives, CSSSC

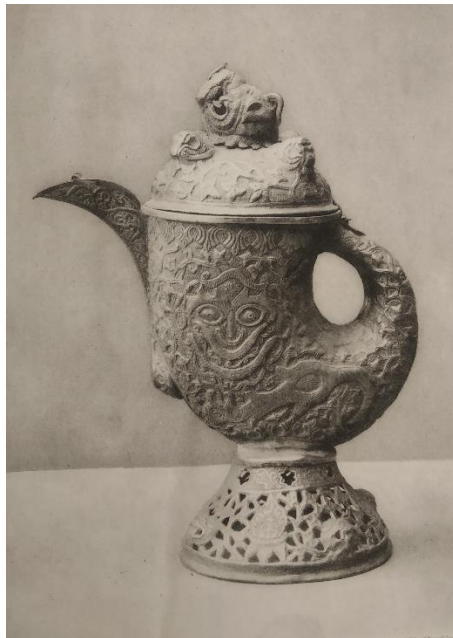
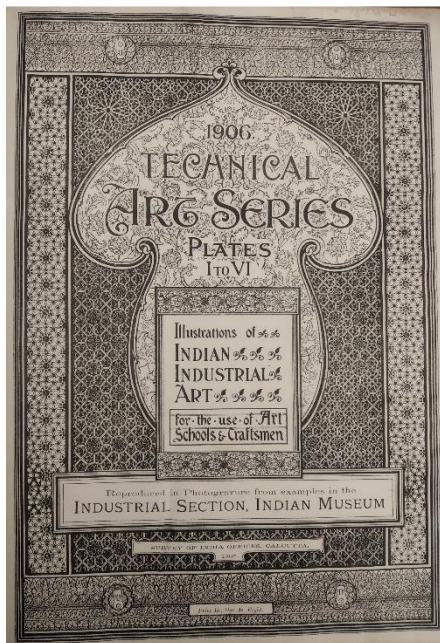




**Figure 3.9 c)** – Figure Study in Lithograph by Purnendu Prokash Bera, a student of the Government School of Art, Calcutta. Collection – Government College of Art & Craft, Calcutta. Source – Visual Archives, CSSSC



**Figure 3.9 d)** – Portrait Study in Lithograph by U. N. Mukherjee, a student of the Government School of Art, Calcutta. Collection – Government College of Art & Craft, Calcutta. Courtesy – Visual Archives, CSSSC



**Figure 3.10a)** The Cover page of the Technical Art Series published in 1906; **b)** – Photograph of a Brass Vessel published in the 1906 edition of the Technical Art Series.



**Figure 3.11** - 'The Last Hours of Shah Jahan' or the Passing of Shah Jahan' by Abanindranath Tagore, 1902. Collection – Victoria Memorial Hall. Image Source – Museums of India National Portal & Digital Repository



**Figure 3.12 a)** – ‘The Bengal Florican’ by Ustad Mansur. 17th century Mughal miniature collected by E.B. Havell for the Government Art Gallery, Calcutta. Collection & Image Source – Indian Museum. Image Source – Museums of India National Portal & Digital Repository



**Figure 3.12 b)** – ‘Yama-Yami’ Tibetan Embroidered Thangka from 18th century collected by E.B. Havell for the Government Art Gallery, Calcutta. Collection & Image Source – Indian Museum. Image Source – Museums of India National Portal & Digital Repository



**Figure 3.13** – Abanindranath Tagore working at his desk. Image collection & Source – RabindraBhavan Archive, VisvaBharati



**Figure 3.14** – ‘Siddhartha and the Hurt Swan’ by Nandalal Bose. . Image Source – Museums of India National Portal & Digital Repository



**Figure 3.15 a, b)** – Classworks of Nandalal Bose at the Government School of Art, Calcutta. Collection – Indian Museum. Image Source - . Image Source – Museums of India National Portal & Digital Repository



**Figure 3.16** – Abanindranath Tagore with his students on the porch of Government School of Art, Calcutta. Image collection & Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva Bharati



a

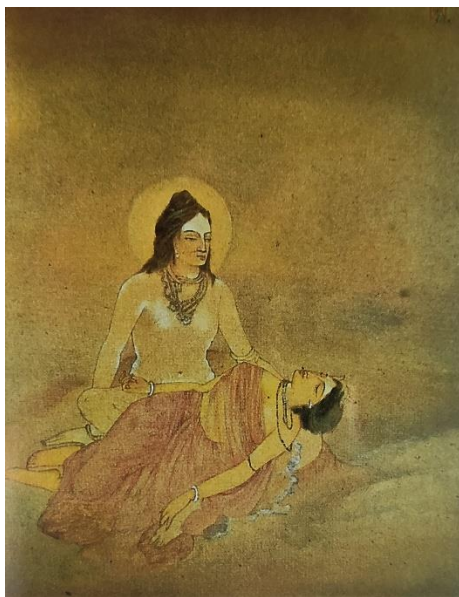


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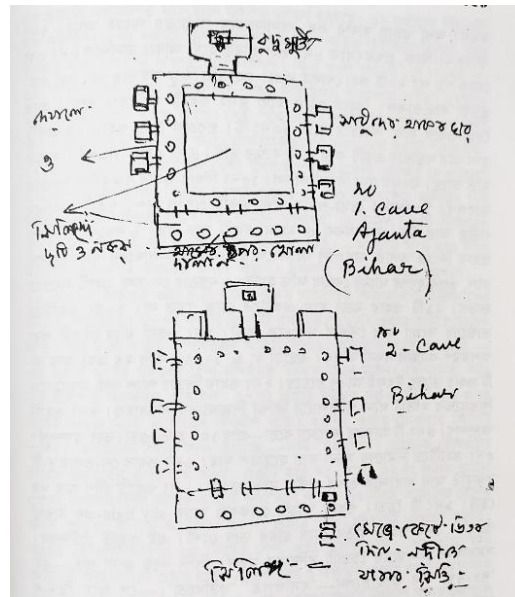
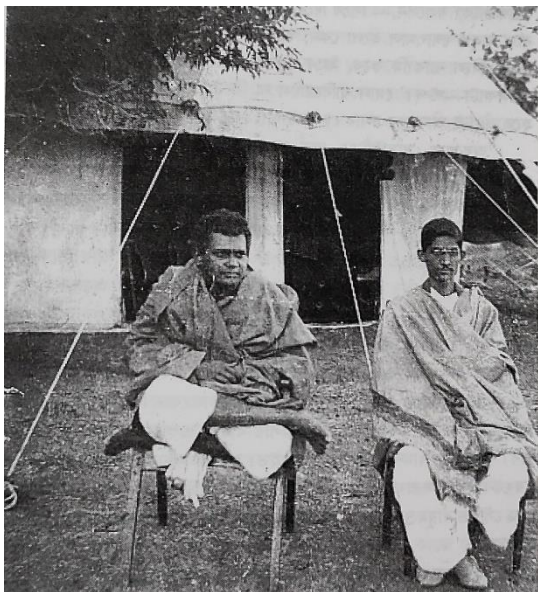
**Figure 3.17 a, b, c)** – Portrait studies in pencil by Shibabrata Chattopadhyay, a student of Government School of Art, Calcutta. Collection & Image Courtesy –Soumya Brata Chattopadhyay,, from the family collection of Shibabrata Chattopadhyay



**Figure 3.18** – ‘Shiv Sati’ by Nandalal Bose in wash technique. Image Source – *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*



**Figure 3.19** –Preliminary sketch of Kacha and Devayani by Abanindranath Tagore. Collection: Indian Museum, Kolkata Image Source: Jatan, Digital Repository – Museums of India.



**Figure 3.20 a)**–Nandalal Bose with Asit Haldar at Ajanta, 1910. **b)** – Preliminary floor plan sketch of the Cave No 1 & 2 at Ajanta by Nandalal Bose. Image Source – *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal, Part I*



a



b



c

**Figure 3.21 a)** Royal lovescene. Water Colour by Nandalal Bose

**b)** Illustration of a Prince in the royal consecration Hall. Water Colour by Asit Haldar.

**c)** Palace Scene. Water Colour by Samarendranath Gupta

Image Source – *Ajanta Frescoes*, By Lady Herringham and her assistants. With Introductory Essays by various members of the India Society. Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1915



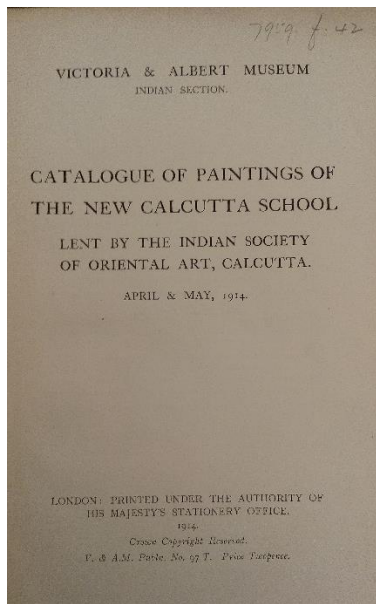
d



e

**Figure 3.22 a)** – Back View of a Seated Girl (from Nava jataka) Carbon Tracing by Miss Dorothy Larcher.  
**b)** – King, Queen and children in a Chariot (from Visvantara Jataka) Carbon Tracing by Miss Dorothy Larcher. Image Source – *Ajanta Frescoes*, By Lady Herringham and her assistants. With Introductory Essays by various members of the India Society. Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1915

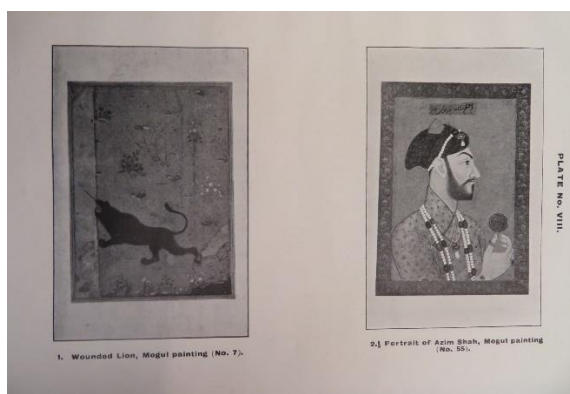




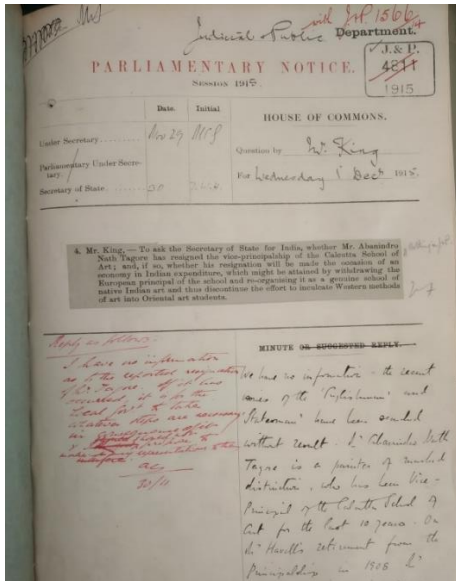
**Fig 3.23** – Title page from the catalogue of the exhibition ‘Paintings of the New Calcutta School’ at Victoria and Albert Museum, 1914. Image Source - *Catalogue of Paintings of the New Calcutta School*



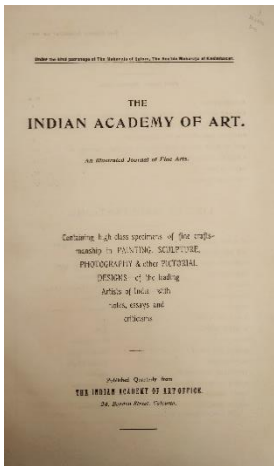
**Figure 3.24** – Principal Percy Brown with students and faculty of Government School of Art. Collection & Image Source – Soumya Brata Chattopadhyay,, from the family collection of Shibabrata Chattopadhyay



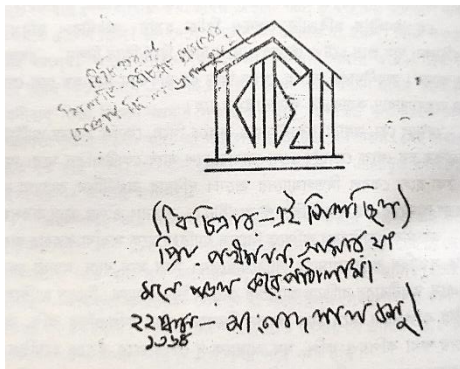
**Figure 3.25** – A page from the *Introductory Guide of the Art Section of the Indian Museum* by Percy Brown in 1915. Published by Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta. 1916



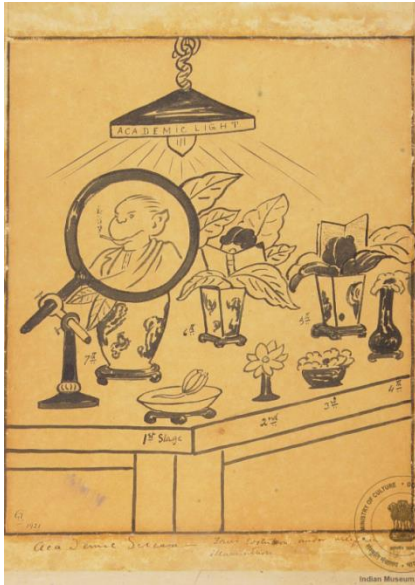
**Figure 3.26** – A page from the House of Commons Session Minutes on Abanindranath Tagore resignation, J & P Dept. 1915. Collection & Source: British Library, London



**Figure 3.27** – Pages from the publication of the first issue of Indian Academy of Art. a) – Title page of the illustrated Journal. b) – Photographic reproduction of ‘Manas-Kamal’ oil painting by Hemen Majumdar, in the first issue of the Journal. Image Source - *Indian Academy of Art*, 1920



**Figure 3.28** – Bichitra Studio’s logo, as designed by Nandalal Bose. *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal, Part I*



**Figure 3.29**–‘Academic Scream’ from his book of graphic illustration *Reform Screams* (Nobo-Hullor) by Gaganendranath Tagore, 1920. This was a collection of illustrated political, social and cultural satire on the colonial reformations of Bengal. Collection– Indian Museum, Calcutta. Image Source: Jatan, Digital Repository – Museums of India.



**Figure 3.30** –‘Artist Studio, Jorasanko’ cartoon sketch by Nandalal Bose, depicting from L-R A. Coomaraswamy, Surendranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, and himself. Collection & Image Source - DAG

## Rabindranath Tagore and the Santiniketan Model of Art Pedagogy

### Section I

#### Rabindranath Tagore: From Nationalist to Universal Confluences

##### *The Sunset of the Century*

The last Sun of the century sets amidst the  
blood-red clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred.  
The Naked passion of self-love of Nations  
In its drunken delirium of greed, is dancing to the clash of steel  
And the howling verses of vengeance.

The hungry self of the Nation shall burst in violence of fury  
From its own shameless feeding.  
For it has made the world its food,  
And licking it, crunching it, and swallowing it in big morsels  
It swells and swells. Till in the midst of its unholy feast  
Descends the sudden shaft of heaven piercing its heart of grossness.

শতাব্দীর সূর্য আজি রক্তমেঘ-মাঝে  
অস্ত গেল, হিংসার উৎসবে আজি বাজে  
অস্ত্রে অস্ত্রে মরণের উন্মাদ রাগিনী  
ভয়ংকরী। দয়াহীন সভ্যতানাগিনী  
তুলেছে কুটিল ফণা চক্ষের নিমেষে  
গুপ্ত বিষদন্ত তার ভারি তীব্র বিষে।  
স্বার্থে স্বার্থে বেধেছে সংঘাত, লোভে লোভে  
ঘটেছে সংগ্রাম-প্রলয়মগ্ননক্ষাভে  
ভদ্রবেশী বর্বরতা উঠিয়াছে জাগি  
পঙ্কশয্যা হতে। লজ্জা শরম তেয়াগি  
জাতিপ্রেম নাম ধরি প্রচণ্ড অন্যায়  
ধর্মেতে ভাসাতে চাহে বলের বন্যায়।  
কবিদল চিৎকারিছে জাগাইয়া ভীতি  
শ্মশানকুকুরদের কাড়াকাড়ি-গীতি।

The much referred and famed poem ‘The Sunset of the Century’ by Rabindranath was published with his collection of lectures on ‘Nationalism’ published in 1918. However, this translated English version, with a gap of presumably eighteen years is not an exact reworded version of the original Bengali poem ‘Shatabdir Surjo Aji’.<sup>1</sup> It is curious to observe and compare, how the Bengali version of the prose-poem critique colonialism, while its English translation extend itself through a profound claim of resisting ‘nationalism’. ‘Shatabdir Surjo

<sup>1</sup> Compiled and Ed. Shankho Ghosh, *Surjaborto – Rabindra Kobita Songkolon*, Visva Bharati, Kolkata, (25 Boishakh 1395) May 8, 1988 ; *Shatabdir Surjo Aji* is the 64<sup>th</sup> verse in Tagore’s collection of poems called *Noibedyo*, published in 1901. However the verse didn’t find its place in *Sanchaita*

Aji, written on the last day of nineteenth century, and before the partition of Bengal and long before the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, usher in the full expression of his anti-colonial nationalism. Curiously, the Bengali version of the poem didn't receive similar intellectual and cultural attention like that of the English rendition; or his other provocative Swadeshi compositions like 'Bidhir badhon' (1905), 'Amar shonar bangla' (1905), 'O amar desher mati' (1905), 'Jodi tor dak shune keu' (1905), 'Amra shobai raja' (1905), 'Nai nai bhoy' (1926), and many more, but most importantly 'Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka' (1911). The only author in the world to compose two national anthems, i.e., of India and Bangladesh, and giving voice to the collective imagination of nationalism of the period, in the course of time, proposed "Nationalism is a great menace. It is the particular thing which for years had been at the bottom of India's troubles. And in as much as we have been ruled and dominated by a nation that is strictly political in its attitude, we have tried to develop with ourselves, despite our inheritance from the past, a belief in our eventual political destiny."<sup>2</sup>

Merely rummaging through the 'Swadesh' section of *Geetabitan*, firmly positions Rabindranath as one of the strongest voice in the Swadeshi movement of Bengal. The 'Swadesh' genre in Rabindrasangeet provides a compact framework of thematic maturation of his ideology towards the universal sentiments of brotherhood, collective spirit, and moral unity. However, among forty-six of his Swadeshi songs, the majority share were composed in 1905, the year of Bengal partition, which fundamentally evoked a spiritual and a venerated image of the 'motherland'; and provoked a specific socio-political agenda. Songs composed during this year had particularly gained mass popularity in comparison to the compositions created at the other end of this time spectrum like - 'shadhon ki mor ashon nebey hottogoler knadhey', 'shubho kormopother dhara nirbhoye' or 'cholo jai cholo jai' that does not acutely address the

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<sup>2</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Nationalism in India" *Nationalism*. San Francisco, California : Book Club of California, 1917, p. 133.

agenda centric movement of accumulating collective virtue in defending motherlands soil or its glories, but offer a grander narrative of ‘finding and liberating oneself in the world’.

With such patriotic articulation, how does one determine Rabindranath’s rejection of ‘nationalism’? Rustom Bharucha has attempted to address this moot point, “To invent a distinct epistemology of the ‘national’ on Tagorean lines, which is simultaneously ‘national’ and ‘anti-national’ one must both prevent this epistemology from being subsumed within the discourse of nationalism while also dis-imbricating it from patriotism.”<sup>3</sup> Bharucha also cites Frantz Fanon’s *On National Culture* (1959), where he writes that “national consciousness is not yet Nationalism” and that universal consciousness along with national sensibility, together shall be the source of cultural stability. This two-fold vision accurately describes Tagore’s imagination of what is Visva-Bharati, “where the world makes it a home in a single nest”.

Rabindranath’s anticipation of the potential debacle of nationalism, if pursued through political agendas, is almost prophetic. He commented, “In the beginning of our history, of political agitation in India, there was not that conflict between parties which there is today. In that time there was a party known as the Indian Congress; it had no real programme..... They wanted scraps of things, but they had no constructive ideal. Therefore I was lacking in enthusiasm for their methods.”<sup>4</sup> Progressing through sequential socio-political stages in the last three centuries, the struggle of nationalism in India, he believed, is not entirely grounded in a singular imagination of a nation. It has been largely impacted by the desire of religious autonomy that will override all other anthropological multiplicities that essentially uphold the subcontinent. Rabindranath’s lecture on *Nationalism in India* has been cited and quoted repeatedly in the past couple of years across print media, contesting the intensification of

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<sup>3</sup> Bharucha, Rustom, *Reclaiming the National – Against Nationalism*, <http://www.bauhaus-imaginista.org/articles/5054/reclaiming-the-national>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 134

Hinduttva nationalist politics. It is crucial, in this context, to establish the overlapping nomenclatures that clarify Rabindranath's nationalistic standpoint, and also uphold the relevance of his radical social, cultural and pedagogic model which he developed through the Santiniketan experiment. The argument develops through three aspects of Rabindranath's axiom – firstly, his journey from spiritual nationalism to universal brotherhood, which was not only a crusade against the colonial oppression, but equally a movement that laid the foundational awareness of liberation in the country; secondly, the coexistence of his Pan-Asianism with the universal and regional identities imbibed at the core of his experiment in Santiniketan and with western intellectual confluences; and third most importantly, expansion of the regional intellectual scope of cultural inclusivity through the evolution of Santiniketan, as an indispensable cultural and pedagogic site. (Fig 4.1)

### Spiritual Nationalism

Tagore observes in his 'Nationalism' lecture, "India is too vast in its area and too diverse in its races. It is many countries packed into one geographical receptacle. It is just the opposite of what Europe truly is, namely one country made into many"<sup>5</sup>. This perpetual complexity has kept the debate of Nationalism in India growing, feeding into the religious, linguistic and cultural pluralism of the country. Citing the *Jugantar* and *Navshakti* trial prosecution of the Indian printed press, Aurobindo Ghosh pointed out in a lecture delivered at the Bombay National Union on January 1908 –

“There is a creed in India today that calls itself Nationalism, a creed that has come to you from Bengal. This is a creed which many of you have accepted when you call yourselves Nationalists... What is Nationalism? Nationalism is not a mere political programme. Nationalism is a religion that has come from God; Nationalism is a creed in which you shall have to live. Let no man dare to call himself a Nationalist if he does

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<sup>5</sup> Tagore, *Nationalism in India*, p. 136

so merely with a sort of intellectual pride, thinking that he is more patriotic... if you are going to assent to this religion of Nationalism, you must do it in the religious spirit.”<sup>6</sup>

Though taking off from a comparable spiritual point of view with that of Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh affixes the dissemination and survival of Nationalism, directly “in the strength of God”. He firmly implies the sacramental irrevocability of organised religion as a measurable design, for nationalism. “Have you realised that you are merely the instruments of God, that your bodies are not your own? You are merely instruments of God for the work of the Almighty. If you have realised that then you are truly nationalists; then alone will you be able to restore this great nation”<sup>7</sup>. Rabindranath decisively contradicts this the religious curve of nationalism in his essay ‘The Nation’, when he writes, “With the unchecked growth of Nationalism the moral foundation of man’s civilisation is unconsciously undergoing a change. The ideal of the social man is unselfishness but the ideal of the Nation, like that of the professional man, is selfishness. This is why selfishness in the individual is condemned while in the nation, it is extolled, which leads to hopeless moral blindness, confusing religion of the people with the religion of the Nation.”<sup>8</sup> The separation of spiritualism from that of religion enters the larger discourse of nationalist philosophy through Tagore. This proclivity eventually became a fundamental character of the campus and community of Visva-Bharati.

To consider the pre-independence reality of a non-constitution led republic, religiosity provided one of the strongest grounds of mass appeal. Rabindranath instead proposed the scope of spiritual harmony in the country, beyond the didactic religious hegemony over the country’s moral binding. He observed, “She (India) has tried to make an adjustment of races, to acknowledge the real differences between them where these exist, and yet seek for some basis

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<sup>6</sup> Aurobindo Ghosh, *Speeches of Aurobindo Ghosh*, Chandernagore, : Prabartak Publishing House, 1922, p. 10

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 12-13

<sup>8</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “The Nation”, *Creative Unity*. Macmillan & Co, London, 1950 (First Ed 1922) p. 149



of unity. This basis, has come through our saints, like Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya and other, preaching one God to all races of India”<sup>9</sup> Though Rabindranath dismissed the standardised western uniformity of the concepts of nationalism as well as religion spiritual unification offered an amicable route towards universalism of a highly diverse and plural civilisation. He further comments, “Let our civilisation take its firm stand upon its basis of social cooperation and not upon that of economic exploitation and conflict”.<sup>10</sup> Across the lecture, Tagore reiterates the significance of emancipating India from the concept of a ‘nation’ to upholding India through the notion of a ‘civilisation’, where the aspects of humanism is more prudent than that of the realm. He clarifies, “I am not against one nation in particular, but against the general idea of all nations. What is the Nation? It is the aspect of a whole people as an organised power.”<sup>11</sup> His hypothesis was essentially based on the history and evolution of man, which is superior to the augmentation of territorial administrative power. Tagore paved a postcolonial trajectory in the altercation of power, from subjecting masses to imperial taste and methods, to instigating the cultural location of a new nation with the corpus of inherent human intellect and universal cooperation. Aimé Césaire points out “... between colonization and civilisation there is an infinite distance; that out of all the colonial expeditions that have been undertaken, out of all the colonial statutes that have been drawn up, out of all the memoranda that have been dispatched by all the ministries, there could not come a single human value.”<sup>12</sup> The reposition, revaluation and negotiation of human value above the selfish intentions of political territorial manifestations was a key prompter of locating Santiniketan outside the colonised urban value system. The new agenda of national cultural edification was established through a pedagogic

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<sup>9</sup> Tagore, *Nationalism in India*, p. 119

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 153

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 131

<sup>12</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000. p. 11

system of enhancing individual ethics and collective intellect that corresponds with a global discourse, rather than negotiating with an oppressed narrow value structure.

However, at that juncture in the history of colonial India, the forces of nationalism, patriotism and anti-imperialism came together as different layers of an overlapping concept. In the Nationalism lecture, Tagore offers an alternate praxis of the discourse that indicate their individual proclivities. He expresses his anti-imperial opinions in the lecture as he observes, “The west must not make herself a curse to the world by using her power for her own selfish needs, but by teaching the ignorant and helping the weak, by saving herself from the worst danger that the strong is liable to incur by making the feeble to acquire power enough to resist her intrusion.<sup>13</sup>” Rabindranath’s affable and intellectual collaborations with William W. Pearson, C. F. Andrews, William Rothenstein bear witness to the strong potentials of the ‘friendships’ that he forged as a tool for laying the foundations of a new institution, that distinctly broke free of the hierarchical power structures of colonial institutions. His antagonism towards colonial methods were not validated by nationalist resurgence. He detects

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“Nationalism is the training of a whole people for a narrow ideal; and when it gets hold of their minds it is sure to lead them to moral degeneracy and intellectual blindness. We cannot but hold firm the faith that this Age of Nationalism, of gigantic vanity and selfishness is only a passing phase in civilisation, and those who are making permanent arrangements for making temporary mood of history will be unable to fit themselves for the coming age, when the true spirit of freedom will have sway”<sup>14</sup>.

The semblance in his critique of the ‘narrowness’ projected through both imperialist and nationalist predicaments, is striking. Tagore is situating himself and simultaneously the direction of Visva-Bharati, beyond the quagmire of the constricted route and aim of both

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<sup>13</sup> Tagore, Nationalism, p. 131

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

colonialism and nationalism. Through this, the movement of nationalism no longer remains the singular counter argument against colonialism. Rather, nationalism for him was a path towards a larger goal and ideology of universal brotherhood through intellectual and cultural confluences, and was to be set apart from the more jingoistic and parochial forces of patriotism and anti-imperialism. It is a different notion of nations as a part of a universal fraternity that he voiced through his literature and through his later turn to paintings. George Orwell offered a simple explanation to the difference that Rabindranath would consider essential, except that he reversed the values attached to the terms ‘nationalism’ and ‘patriotism’ –

“...(Nationalism is) the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognising no other duty than that of advancing its interests... By ‘patriotism’ I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people”<sup>15</sup>.

Rabindranath in one his letters to C.F. Andrews, wrote, “I sold all my books, my copyrights, everything I had in order to carry on the school. I cannot possibly tell you what a struggle it was, and what difficulties I had to go through. At first the object was purely patriotic, but later on it grew more spiritual.”<sup>16</sup> Visva-Bharati was moulded to give this ideological basis a ‘form’. The philosophical arc of Tagore’s journey indicate room for diversity and growth in this endeavour, rather than propagating a singular paradigm. Therefore, the way different disciplines were envisaged in the educational structure at Visva-Bharati had an openness and flexibility built in to them to allow them to partake of the larger foundational vision of universal brotherhood. (Fig 4.2 a, b)

Between 1850 and 1920, Bengal witnessed the most powerful resurgence in its field of education, literature, art, religious reformation and nationalist consciousness. This resurgence

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<sup>15</sup> George Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism*. Penguin Classics, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> C.F.Andrews (ed.) *Rabindranath Tagore – Letters to a Friend*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1926, p 29

was not a unidirectional progress of the fields but opened up critical counter argumentative possibilities for the region. A strong resonance of the Sadharon Brahmo Samaj born out of the revolt by the 'Young Brahmos' in 1878 propagated "religious radicalism" and "universal liberation" for the populace under a democratic republicanism - this predilection can be observed in Tagore's social experiment in setting up Visva-Bharati. The far reaching intellectual impact of the religious and social reform movements of the nineteenth century reform laid the way for Rabindranath's alternative visions for the community and educational centre he was building at Santiniketan. In turn, his ideas and pedagogic experiments at Santiniketan would make it a distinctive cultural region model that would have a nation-wide influence in the transitions from colonial to autonomous national institutions.

#### Pan-Asian Confluence

"The orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages, its cultural contestant, and of its deepest and most recurring images of the other."

- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978

Orientalism, Said proposed, was not just an ethnographic enquiry of the East; it was a rigorous exercise of the West in appropriating the 'other' to define itself 'as its contrasting image'. The presumption of western superiority over the eastern nations and cultures went hand in hand in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century with the image of a mystical and exotic Orient, and its time-trap in a bygone and distant civilisation. In Bengal, at the turn of the century, this Orientalist configurations of the East came to be significantly recasted through new nationalist bonds that would be forged between the two resurgent 'Oriental' nations of India and Japan. Three specific and broader historical events set the pace here. The first was Okakura Kakuzo's visit to India and to the Tagore household in 1902, followed by the publication of his book,

*The Ideals of the East with special reference to the Art of Japan*; the second was Japan's resounding victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905; and the third was Rabindranath Tagore award of the Nobel Prize in Literature as the first Asian in 1913. All of these occasions had a direct impact on the new cultural ideologies of Pan-Asianism that brought together Japan and Bengal, and created a prominent role for Japan as a model nation of the 'East' in the artistic and cultural upsurges in Bengal. These events would also take on a momentous cultural significance in the making of Rabindranath's vision of Santiniketan.

Without engaging here with the larger global discourses of pan-Asianism and its different bearings across countries like Japan and India, this chapter will only look into the trajectories through which Tagore advocated Asian unity, and proposed the scope of international intellectual collaboration as a part, not just of his reshaping of the scope and thrust of the nationalism but also of the specific community formations he aspired for his centre at Santiniketan. Identifying these two trajectories are important here in charting out the key foundational ideas of Visva-Bharati – that which separated itself from the western institutional framework established in Calcutta and the rest of the country; and that which reframed Western Orientalism as a tool for cultural revival of Bengal. His impulse of establishing an international intellectual collaboration was launched through the lectures delivered in Japan during his first trip to the country in 1916.

Andrews recollects,

“He (Rabindranath Tagore) looked more and more to a time when his *ashram* would pass beyond the school stage and become the centre of world fellowship, wherein students and teachers from the East and West should be equally honoured and welcomed. These thoughts were brooding in his mind during the year 1915; therefore it became clear to him that a visit to the Far East in order to win the friendship and cooperation of the leading thinkers of China and Japan would be necessary if the cycle of his work at Santiniketan was to be completed.<sup>17</sup>”

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<sup>17</sup> C.F. Andrews, *Letters to a Friend*, pp. 57-58

It is evident from Andrew's close observation of Tagore's attempt of defending and resurrecting pan-Asian unity and a comprehensive Asian scholarship during this trip that this is the time from which the seeds were sown for later developments – such as establishment of Cheena Bhavan in 1937 and the forming of a dedicated singular Southeast Asian collection of art and artefacts in Kala Bhavan Nandan Museum.<sup>18</sup> It is however thought-provoking to observe, that irrespective of a strong cultural exchange and collaboration with Japan, a dedicated centre of Japanese discourse, similar to the scope of Cheena Bhavan, was not established during Tagore's lifetime. It was only after his demise, that the Department of Japanese was established during 1954 in Visva-Bharati. (Fig 4.3)

Tagore admits during his later visit to Japan in 1929, that, “When I first met him (Okakura), I neither knew Japan nor had I any personal experience of China. I came to know both of these countries from the personal relationship with this great man whom I had the good fortune to meet and accept as one of the most intimate friends that I ever had in my life.”<sup>19</sup> Rabindranath visited Japan five times between 1916 and 1929. Three of those visits involved extensive cultural interactions reflected through his correspondence with Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, Samarendranath and Rathindranath Tagore, and more illustratively in his travelogue, *Japan Jatri*. However, by this time the Jorashanko house, the Society of Oriental Arts and the Government School of Art, Calcutta was already exposed to the east Asian artistic attributes through Okakura's first visit to Calcutta, followed by the visits of Yokoyama Taikan,

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<sup>18</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta, “Dialogues in Artistic Nationalism”, *Art India*, Vol XIV, Issue III, 2009, pp. 22-43. Guha-Thakurta exhaustively studies the broad range of Japanese and Chinese art works that are in the collection of Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum, and the ideological and artistic exchanges between Japan and Bengal.

<sup>19</sup> As quoted by Nilanjan Bandyopadhyay in ‘Rabindranath and his Japanese Correspondence’, in the book *An Encounter between Two Asian Civilizations- Rabindranath Tagore and the Early Twentieth Century Indo-Japanese Cultural Confluence*. (ed.) Subhash Ranjan Chakraborty and Shyam Sundar Bhattacharya, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 2018, p. 83

Shunso Hishida, Yoshuo Katsuta and Kintaro Kasahara much prior to Rabindranath's exposure to Japan; it is however curious to follow how Kala Bhavan in the 1920s imbibed East Asian aesthetics through its pedagogy, through a distinct trajectory set forth by Rabindranath, Nandalal and Surendranath Kar, that was subtly distinct from the interactions with Yokoyama Taikan, Hishida Shunso and Katsuta Shokin of Abanindranath and his students in Calcutta in the 1900s. In a letter to William Rothenstien from Yokohama in 1916, Tagore writes,

“I can see that Japan has had all the advantage of the smallness of her area, security over sea and homogeneity of her inhabitants. She is like a skilful gardener having a small piece of land, compelled to take recourse to intensive culture, making every inch of the ground yield its best. She has not been burdened with a bulk which breeds slowness and negligence. It is wonderful to see how the mind of a whole people has been trained to love beauty in nature and bring it out in art. It has been their conscious endeavour to make their daily life in all its details perfect in rhythm of beauty.”<sup>20</sup>

Tagore repeatedly through his literary endeavours, essays and lectures, particularly those delivered in Japan, rejected the idea of a ‘Nation’ as a mere governmental entity or as an institution of politics and commerce, borrowed primarily from the West. It was in the idea of friendship and collaboration that he advanced his objective of nations as a part of a universal fraternity and the avowed goals of a Pan-Asian unity, which was first called upon by Okakura. Tagore wrote, “I cannot but bring to your mind those days when the whole of Eastern Asia from Burma to Japan was united with India in the closest tie of friendship, the only natural tie which can exist between nations.”<sup>21</sup> Though no adequate record survives until this day, of correspondence between Okakura Kakuzo and Rabindranath Tagore, Okakura's call for Asian unity was a theme that reverberated throughout Tagore's Nationalism and his embryonic philosophy behind the establishment of Visva-Bharati University. **(Fig 4.4)**

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<sup>20</sup> Mary Lago (ed.) “Letter dated August 2, 1916” *Imperfect Encounter: Letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore, 1911-1941*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972, p. 231

<sup>21</sup> Tagore, “Nationalism in Japan”, p. 75

Okakura, in his book *Ideals of the East*, repeatedly asserted this connected network of Asian aesthetics through art history, spiritual history and philosophical history of ancient India China and Japan. What followed one of the most famous first lines ever written at the head of his book, “Asia is One” - Okakura then continued, “The Himalayas divide only to accentuate, two mighty civilisations the Chinese with its communism of Confucius, and the Indian with its individualism of the Vedas. But not even the snowy barriers can interrupt for one moment that broad expanse of love for the Ultimate and Universal, which is the common thought-inheritance of every Asiatic race, enabling them to produce all the great religions of the world.”<sup>22</sup> Tagore’s call for universal humanism and spiritual invocation of the trans-territorial and trans-national range of the great religions of the world amply traces back its root to Okakura’s call for pan-Asian unity against western imperialism. Other writers and art critics of the same circles, such as James Cousins, also highlighted the cultural unity of Asia as a spiritual one. He writes, “Within the era of cultural exchange India takes the place of originator not through seniority, nor by force but by the silent and deep pressure of the basic truth which it has been given her to utter, the truth of the unity of all things in the Divine Mind.”<sup>23</sup> Cousins recurrently refer to Okakura’s view of Asia in his essay, taking it to the extent of opening his book with that of Okakura’s “Asia is One” followed by the entire paragraph.<sup>24</sup> He studied the overlapping practices of humanity – its spiritual awareness in the mundane and its ideals of the universalism incepted by Okakura and Tagore. In a sequential rupture from colonialism and further from the predominant thrust of nationalist sentiments, Tagore found that creative unity of a fraternity of nations through this ideal of Asia.<sup>25</sup> **(Fig 4.5)**

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<sup>22</sup> Kakuzo, *The Ideals of the East*, p. 1

<sup>23</sup> James H. Cousins, “India, The Mother of Asian Culture” in *Cultural Unity of Asia*, , Theosophical Publishing House, Madras, 1922, p.123

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 1

<sup>25</sup> Rustom Barucha, *Another Asia- Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin*. New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. This is a seminal and exhaustive work on the Pan-Asian cultural discourse and Postcolonialism, which extensively discuss Tagore and Okakura, as a central concern in the field of study.



## The Universal and the Local

Through the *Nationalism* lecture, Tagore categorically analysed the varying conditions of nationalistic fervour observable in East Asia, the West and in India. The scope of defining 'nationalism' does not allow a linear method of comprehension. As has been debated and theorised by several renowned scholars on the specific nature of India as a nation, if the foundational notion of nationalism is drawn from the concept of unification, then India as a country faces diverse hurdles. Romila Thapar observes, "Concepts of nations based on a single exclusive identity – religious, linguistic, ethnic and similar singular identities are actually pseudo-nationalisms, and should be precluded from being called a nationalism, without the accompanying qualifier of their identity."<sup>26</sup> She further shows how nationalism as a universalizing concept... lent itself to asserting political power and that became the direction taken by most nationalisms... Nationalism is a function of the nation. Conceptually it consolidates aspects of the nation such as democracy, territory and power and endorses the value systems that ensure equal rights and justice."<sup>27</sup> The nature of nationalisms advocated in India in the last decades have harped upon essentially religious and singular ideological identities that has only managed to undo the constitutional spirit of nationalism. The Indian constitution is the only vehicle that advocates a systematic design of nationalist spirit in India. Rabindranath, recognised this fallacy of political and religious nationalism and paved a mode of territorial unification through universal humanism, which would resonate at a deeper level with the masses, than organised religion and systematised societal constructs claim to do.

His thrust, largely on the spiritual and cultural nationalism of the regions, was essentially a method of separating himself from the rising oppressive territorial forces of nationalisms and

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<sup>26</sup> Romila.Thapar, Abdul Noorani, Abdul Majeed. Gafoor and Sadanand Menon. *On Nationalism*. New Delhi: Aleph, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

his self-positioning in the network of a universal knowledge structure. The dominating agencies and power structure used in colonial knowledge accumulation were essentially located within the surveys and educational institutions. Regional peculiarities and merits were being increasingly recorded, accounted and analysed in this process of knowledge consolidation. Archaeological surveys, art collections and museums, art exhibitions and art historiography – all in the process of documentation and knowledge production - had widened the gap of territorial cultural orientations and regional artistic traits, within the country. The cultural perception of the country became more categorical, inwards and narrow. Bernard S Cohn breaks it down further –

“It was the British who, in the nineteenth century defined in an authoritative and effective fashion how the value and meaning of the objects produced or found in India were determined. It was the patrons who created a system of classification which determined what was valuable, that which would be preserved as monuments of the past, that which was collected and placed in the museums, that which would be bought and sold, that which would be taken from India as mementoes and souvenirs of their own relationship to India and Indians.”<sup>28</sup>

The social and cultural purpose, aim, value and practice of art and artefact changed drastically during eighteenth and nineteenth century in India. Along with it changed the projection of provinces and the sharpening of region-specific cultural and material representations of India to the outer world. Moving away from this commodity-centred colonial knowledge-system and its classifications of regions and territories, Tagore projected pedagogy as a universal knowledge network, which one could argue initiated a potential process of decolonisation within the Indian cultural milieu. Tagore wrote, “... our education should be in full touch with our complete life, economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual; and our educational institutions should be in the very heart of our society, connected with it by the living bonds of

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<sup>28</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 77

varied co-operations.<sup>29</sup>” Tagore used pedagogy as the tool that activated a new community and public sphere at Santiniketan through critical engagement and a multicultural learning scope.

## Section II

### Visva-Bharati: A Prelude to Critical Pedagogy in India

Keeping in view Tagore’s foundational principles as already discussed, the beginnings of the Santiniketan Ashram and the institution of Visva Bharati can be seen as an inaugural moment of critical pedagogy in modern India. Since the seminal publication of Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968; English 1970), theoretical assimilation of radical methods in education system across the West have been increasingly reviewed and applied. The three most crucial themes that Freire drives through the book are those of humanism, active participation and dialogue in the education process. He observed,

“The pedagogy of the oppressed as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has hardly been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and become a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages, it is always through action in depth that the culture of domination is culturally confronted.<sup>30</sup>”

In the case of Visva-Bharati, both the stages described by Freier, are noticeable but as two separate histories of the institution, more specific to the growth of Kala Bhavan. Tagore situated the scope for Kala Bhavan as the intellectual core of the institution’s pedagogic design

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<sup>29</sup> Tagore, *The Centre of Indian Culture*. 1919, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The Continuum International Publishing Group, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, London 2005, p. 54

that would reframe the cultural orientation of the entire set-up at Santiniketan. . The first Annual Report of Visva-Bharati bears testament to this - “On the cultural side the aim of the Visva-Bharati, was to create an institution of an all India character and to concentrate in this institution the different cultures of the East and the West, especially those that have taken their birth in India, or found shelter in her house to establish a new education on the basis, not of nationalism, but a wider relationship of humanity.<sup>31</sup>” Between the background setting of Gandhi’s Non-Cooperation movement in 1920 and the Quit India Movement in 1942, Tagore launched his own non-political movement of cultural confluences in Santiniketan. **(Fig. 4.6)**

It is largely the first stage of Freier’s theory, where the colonized opts for a transformative and libertarian praxis, that becomes applicable to the context of the new educational models that Rabindranath was trying to set into place at Santiniketan. The next two chapters will be looking closely into the specific points of departure from colonial art education that marked the curricular and non-curricular activities of the new art centre at Kala Bhavan, and into the ways in which the identity of the ‘national’ and ‘international’ came to coexist in the regeneration of artistic practice in Santiniketan. This chapter has considered the broader framework and foundations of Tagore’s vision of Visva-Bharati. In Tagore’s inaugural speech introducing the purview and ideal of Visva-Bharati, he underlines three factors that would constitute the core pedagogic praxis of the institution – i) to perceive the university as the site of knowledge production, instead of instruction; ii) to perceive culture as a comprehensive social and intellectual reference for pedagogy, instead of projecting difference in religious, political and moral entitlements; and iii) to perceive pedagogy as a social instead of a professional tool.<sup>32</sup>. These fundamental shifts introduced by Tagore in 1919 strongly resonate with the future pedagogic possibilities, proposed by Freier. Although Tagore’s contribution to what we may

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<sup>31</sup> Annual Report 1923, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, p. 4

<sup>32</sup> Rabindranath Tagore , Visva-Bharati Lecture #1, Boishakh 1326, April 1919, pp. 7-10

call an educational revolution is not as expressively recognised in the field of critical postcolonial theory as his contribution to literature, his novel approach to pedagogic restructuring and intervention created a legacy of immense cultural importance.

Uma Das Gupta, a historian and a renowned Tagore biographer, observed, “His evaluation of the East included the denunciation of the hierarchical and static elements of its culture. Therefore, he was concerned not just with the cultural domination that grew out of colonial hegemony but equally with the cultural domination that has evolved from his country’s own past and was gathering momentum as a decisive force between city and village in early modern India.”<sup>33</sup> Out of this concern for knowledge stagnation and cultural passivity, Tagore inspired a shift in teacher student dynamics in the institution. The ashram or the residential structure of the institution was intended to facilitate a form of teacher-student relationship that would go beyond the formal purview of the classroom. Tagore rigorously wrote letters to the staff of the university sharing his point of view and experience in the process of teaching.

Here are translated excerpts from a letter he wrote in Bengali, to Ajit Kumar Chakraborty in 1918:<sup>34</sup>

“The joy derived from teaching young students is unparalleled with any other form of work satisfaction. If one must submit their lives to a cause, then it should be to devote their time and learning to people who with their innocence accept knowledge, without remunerative conditions. Only that selfless provision of knowledge will allow oneself to pay off the debt of insight that is received from this world. The singularity of a site like Santiniketan is, it does not

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<sup>33</sup> Uma Das Gupta, *Using a Poet’s Archive to Write the History of a University: Rabindranath Tagore and Visva-Bharati*, Asian and African Studies XIV, 2010. p. 11

<sup>34</sup> Ed. and compiled by Anathnath Das, Pulinbehari Sen, *Santiniketan Bidyalayer Shikhhadarsha – Rabindranath Tagore*, Santiniketan Pustak Prokash Saminiti, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, 1981, p. 83. Ajit Kumar Chakraborty was litterateur and an ardent follower of Rabindranath Tagore’s literature. He was also one of the earliest translators of Tagore’s work. At Tagore’s invitation, taught English to the young students of the Santiniketan ashram.

seek the projection of opulence, nor pedantic calibre or glory in its people; the only responsibility is to selflessly devote themselves to the progress of the community's intellect.”

Through this unassuming exchange of insight, Tagore substantiated the desired and inverted power structure that he had in mind for the institution, that would evolve out of a gradual, mutual transfer of knowledge and perception between a teacher and a student. The second plank of the path of critical pedagogy elaborated by Freire that of active participation, becomes of relevance in Tagore's model of an interactive and collaborative teacher-student relationship and the processes of knowledge-sharing. Freire explains, “In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as a process of enquiry”<sup>35</sup>. The colonial pedagogic project of instilling knowledge, taste and values was by and large framed by this ‘banking’ model of depositing education, that made this educational deposit the guarantee of its continued authority over those who received it. The Santiniketan school was, in reaction, an aspiration towards a dissenting alternate model.

However, establishing such a new educational unit of international scope on philosophical rather than on tested institutional grounds, came with its share of scepticism, even from Tagore's closest collaborators. The friendship between Rabindranath and artist William Rothenstein and their long-drawn correspondence bear witness to their evolving personal and professional relationship. However, there came a time in this friendship, which Rothenstein in retrospect described as ‘a passing breeze’ during 1920-1922, that tested this endurance. A mild but growing exasperation is observable in their communication of this period, that has a

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<sup>35</sup> Freire , *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. p. 72

background in Rabindranath's clear antagonism towards England's allied role in the Great War, expressed through his Nationalism lectures and also several other letters. The implementation of the Esher Commission for India's military structuring aggravated this tension and created a rift between Rabindranath and many of those like Rothenstein, W. B. Yeats, Fox Stangways or Ezra Pound, irrespective of their contribution in his international recognition. Amidst the rising political and social conflict between India and England during this war period, a chain of six letters between Rabindranath and Rothenstein reflect this growing unease between them, with some of their arguments centering on the logistical structuring of Visva-Bharati.

Rabindranath's travel to England and America in 1920, were essentially "in need of raising funds for (his) school."<sup>36</sup> The assertions regarding the school and Tagore's frustration became evident in his following long letters to Rothenstein over the next two years. (**Fig 4.7**) An important testament of the time is captured through excerpts from these selected six letters, which demonstrate not only Tagore's resentment towards colonial methods of education system and administration, but also his passionate but pragmatic vision for Visva-Bharati. In the context of the growing debate on Visva-Bharati's current policies and their impacts, these letters are of great historical value and relevance, and needs to be at the core of the debate to understand what Tagore precisely revolted against, during the establishment of the institution and the basis of his urgency of establishing an alternate method of education and cultural grooming.<sup>37</sup>

Letter 1 - Tagore to Rothenstein from Brussels on October 6, 1920

"What hurts me most is the fact that your people are ready to judge others while they shield themselves from the judgement of history by all means of moral camouflage, by obliteration of evidence of misdeeds with scientific efficiency and farsightedness which were not within the means of our former ruler"

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<sup>36</sup> Mary M. Lago (ed.) "Letter from Tagore to Rothenstein, dated July 31, 1920, 60 South Kensington Palace Mansion" *Imperfect Encounter; letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore, 1911-1941*, Harvard University Press Cambridge 1972, p. 276

<sup>37</sup> *Imperfect Encounter, "A Passing Breeze 1920-1922"*, pp. 275- 287

He continues in the same letter –

“You have read Esher Commission Report and you know what it is going to be for our unfortunate country. More Army, more expenditure, more taxation when the cost of living has risen higher than two hundred percent. This will make your Reform Bill a cruel mockery for us... the mockery will grow in cruelty enormously when after a few years you will blame us for not carrying out any constructive programme satisfactorily though opportunity was given. All this politics means untold misery to a people held forcibly fixed to a state of helplessness for all time to come. But you must know the downfall of your Empire is imminent when the moral downfall of your people is proceeding in a rapid pace.”

Letter 2 - Tagore to Rothenstein, from Boulogne-sur-Seine, April 17, 1921

Let me remind you about our conversation about the International University. It was decided that a committee should be formed in England which would help the committee in India about the selection of teachers and students belonging to Europe and about other matters which would be more convenient for them to deal with. I hope it will be possible for you with the help of Mr. Montagu Lord Carmichael and other sympathisers to make a draft of rules and a list of names of those who will be likely to join us. I have reasons to hope that some oriental society in this country (France) can be persuaded to represent us in France.”

Letter 3 - Rothenstein to Tagore, dated April 23, 1921 Royal College of Art, London

“I went to dine with Lord Carmichael last night, to talk over your great scheme. He fully realises the importance of it and believes important things will come of it. He feels, as strongly as I do, that a committee of trustees should first be formed...Until you have something of the kind it will be difficult for you to get the people you want, true scholars, to go out to India, and, as things are now, there is a danger of people whom you don't want streaming in.

... Carmichael tells me all sorts of people are coming over regarding Calcutta University & that, if you could put your scheme clearly before people here, such as Sadler, it is precisely the moment for doing so...Unless you have found this rare but still obtainable bird, I would venture to counsel caution, so far as actual promise and invitations are concerned. It will take time before a scheme is being formulated, buildings equipped and you are ready to receive scholars. All sorts of questions will have to be threshed out before you can get your ship under weigh & there would be confusion, if an attempt were made to start before charts and compasses were provided”.



Letter 4 - Tagore to Rothenstein, from Boulogne-sur-Seine April 24, 1921

“My dear friend, when I sent my appeal to Western people for an International Institution in India, I made use of the word “University” for the sake of convenience. But that word not merely has an inner meaning but outer associations in minds of those who use it, and that fact tortures my idea, into its own rigid shape. It is unfortunate. I should not allow my idea to be pinned to a word like a dead butterfly for a foreign museum. It must be known not by a definition, but by its own life growth. I have saved my Santiniketan from being trampled into smoothness by the stream roller of your Education department. I am proud of the fact that it is not a machine made article perfectly modelled in your workshop – it is our very own. If we must have a university, it should spring from our own life and be sustained by it... This is the first time in my life that I have come to a foreign door asking for help and cooperation. But such help has to be bought with a price that is ruinous, and the bird must accept its cage if it must be fed with comfort and regularity. However, my bird must still retain its freedom of wings and not be turned into a sumptuous nonentity by any controlling agency outside its own living organism. I know that the idea of an International University is complex, but I must make it simple in my own way.”

Letter 5 - Rothenstein to Tagore, April 28, 1921 London

My dear friend – indeed I am neither a believer in machines, nor an inspector of schools, nor an enemy of freedom; yet you write as though I were all these things... For I believe you to be a poet, an inspirer of noble motives, a friend to all the gallant things that man has made and thought, a lover of the common things in life. I do not believe you to be a man of action & of affairs & I foresee many difficulties in your path if you take that dusty road... Secondly, the life of man is short, but he can build fabrics which endure. And if you build well now, the foundations you are laying should support walls to outlast all of us now quick and strong. I still believe you need men of capacity and integrity to take certain responsibilities from your poet’s shoulders. But you need not choose Europeans. Further, unpleasant and humiliating though it may be, the fact has to be envisaged that you cannot approach European scholars and leave English people unconsulted. If these last are not considered, you are making further difficulties for yourself.”

Letter 6 - Tagore to Rothenstein, May 8, 1921, Geneva

“My dear friend, when I was in America the British Agency thwarted me in my appeal to the people for the proposed University... It would be presumptuous for me to imagine that my project can thrive against suspicion lurking in the mind of British authorities. At the same time I feel strongly that it is far better to allow it openly to be strangled by that mistrust than to be fettered by its help... So long as my motive is true, my method is honest and the process of my work open to the view of all corners from all countries I shall not be afraid or ashamed of the meagreness of the result, poorness of appearance or afraid of an utter failure at the hands of a ruling power which would hesitate to allow us freedom for giving expression to our higher nature.”

The key aspects evident from these letters are Tagore's uncompromising belief in liberating his school from the arduous structure of education prevalent in India, to a more knowledge-generating global cultural think tank, which was not controlled through any external partisan interest, but propagated through global intellectual synergy. Letter 2 provides a glimpse of a probable direction towards sanctioned institutional collaboration that, Tagore was initiating. However, Tagore's hypothesis of the concept did not find favourable ground in India during that period as –

“I (Tagore) found the atmosphere of my country most unfavourable for my institution. Our people in a fanciful mood of resentment were ready to repudiate the West altogether and any proposal of cooperation with the Western humanity in any form was considered almost as an act of sacrilege. I have made myself conspicuously hateful to my countrymen by protesting against such an irrational outburst of passion. It was an irony of fate which while it drew upon my venture the mighty power of suspicion of the British Government also aroused antagonism in my own people against it. The onslaught of non-cooperation fell on me from both the opposing sides”<sup>38</sup>.

Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation movement against the British government which gathered sweeping momentum by September 1920, and provoked countywide resentment. As it is evident through his letters to Andrews, Tagore was initially optimistic about the morally united consciousness of the country against oppression. But that optimism did not last long. In a letter dated March 5, 1921, Tagore writes to Andrews, “The idea of non-cooperation is political asceticism. Our students are bringing their offering of sacrifices to what? Not to a fuller education, but to a non-education”<sup>39</sup>. From 1920 to 1935, Rothenstein served as the principal of the Royal College of Art in London, which was the nerve centre of British art

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, Letter# 149 Tagore to Rothenstein, July 13, 1922, Santiniketan, p. 292

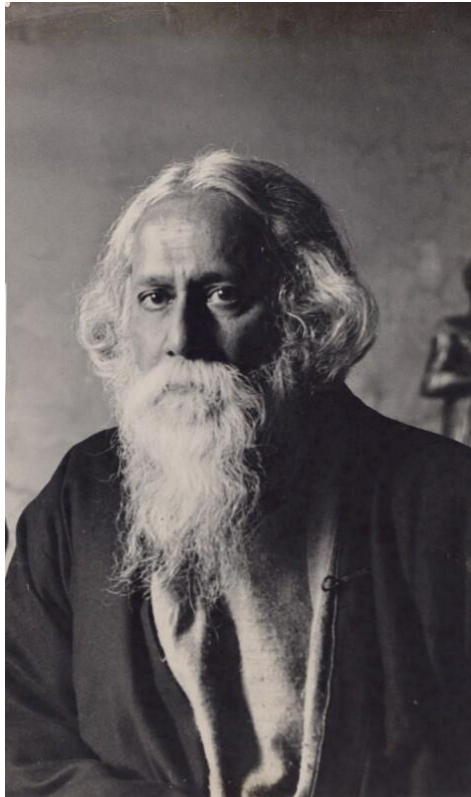
<sup>39</sup> C. F. Andrews, *Letters to a Friend*, p. 131

education. It is practically conspicuous (Letter 3 cited above) that Kala Bhavan at Visva Bharati would emerge as the key site of resistance to Western-style of art education

Within these paradoxical circumstances, Tagore returned to Santiniketan from his tour of Europe and presided over the formal constitution of Visva-Bharati registered under Act XXI of 1886. The institution's Annual Report of 1923 records, "From the constitutional point of view, the Visva-Bharati was primarily a Society, a Society with certain ideals, aims and objects and a working programme and entrusted with the consolidation, maintenance and development of the many institutions (Patha Bhavan, Uttara Bhavan, Shikha Bhavan, Vidya Bhavan, Kala Bhavan, and Rural Reconstruction) mentioned above."<sup>40</sup> Tagore's short story 'Tota Kahini', written in 1918, made a satirical demonstration of the grandiosity around education system and the extraneous result- oriented programme that would boost institutional bureaucracy and commercial viability, without actually addressing the fundamental resources of education. In the next two chapters, I will be exploring the extent to which, Tagore's third aim of proposing pedagogy more as a social tool and less as a professional marker of one's intellectual agility, find its fruition in Kala Bhavan.

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<sup>40</sup> Annual Report 1923, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, p. 4



**Figure 4.1** – Rabindranath Tagore.  
Collection and Image Source - Rabindra  
Bhavan Archive, Visva Bharati



**Figure 4.2 a)** - Charles Freer Andrews with Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan. Source: Wikimedia (Public Domain). **b)** – William Rothenstein with Rabindranath Tagore 1912. Image Source - Imperfect Encounter – Letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore 1911 – 1941. Harvard University Press, 1972



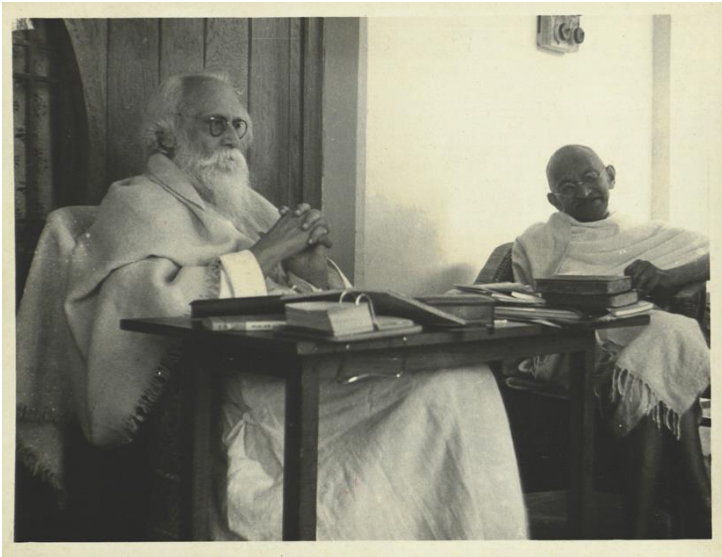
**Figure 4.3** – Rabindranath Tagore on his way to China and Japan, accompanied by Nandalal Bose, Kalidas Nag and Kshitimohan Sen. Image Collection – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva Bharati. Image Source – *An Encounter between Two Asian Civilisations: Rabindranath Tagore and the early twentieth century Indo-Japanese Cultural Confluence*. The Asiatic Society 2018



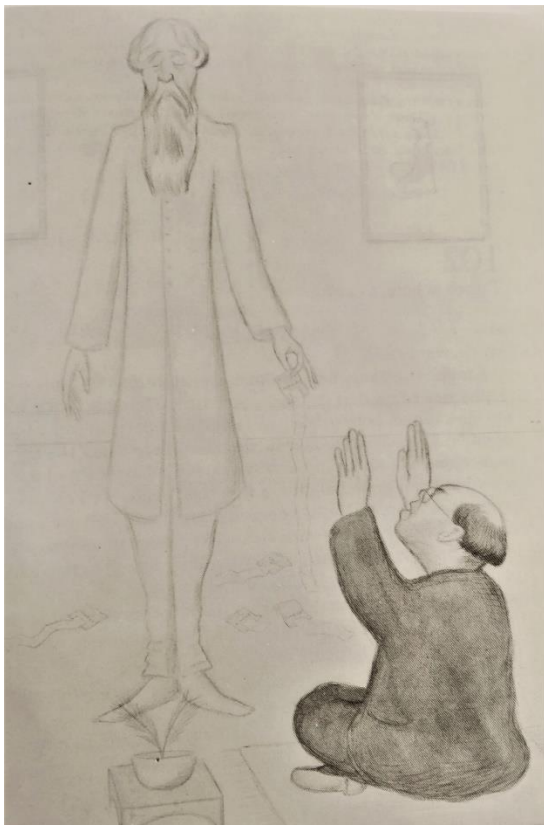
**Figure 4.4** – Rabindranath Tagore with Mrs. Okakura and her family during his visit to Izura, Japan in 1916. Image Collection – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva Bharati. Image Source – *An Encounter between Two Asian Civilisations: Rabindranath Tagore and the early twentieth century Indo-Japanese Cultural Confluence*. The Asiatic Society 2018



**Figure 4.5** - Rabindranath Tagore during his speech *India and Japan* at a public hall in Tennoji, Osaka on June 1917. Image Collection – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva Bharati. Image Source – *An Encounter between Two Asian Civilisations: Rabindranath Tagore and the early twentieth century Indo-Japanese Cultural Confluence*. The Asiatic Society 2018



**Figure 4.6** - Rabindranath Tagore with M. K. Gandhi in Santiniketan. Source: Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva Bharati



**Figure 4.7** - 'William Rothenstien warns Mr. Tagore against being spoilt by Occidental success' Cartoon sketch by Max Beerbohm, 1913. Collection - Mrs. Eva Reichmann and Richard Spiegelberg. Image Source - *Imperfect Encounter: Letters of William Rothenstien and Rabindranath Tagore 1911- 1941*. Harvard University

## **The Forming and Workings of Kala Bhavan (1901 – 1935)**

### **Section I**

#### **Formative Timeline: 1901 – 1923**

In almost every account of the formative history of Kala Bhavan, the first seventeen years of the institution have been circumnavigated, possibly for two reasons – first, because the vacillating course of developments during those years does not allow the preeminent narrative of the institution to grow; and second, because the surviving sketchy documentation does not allow a consistent scrutiny of this period. It is however, crucial to take into account this negotiating phase of the institution, to identify the stimulus and shifts in pedagogic ideal and methodology that became the ‘Santiniketan school’. The educational experiment of Rabindranath began with dialogues with people from varied cultures and experiences, as discussed in the previous chapter. It is therefore crucial to lay those non-linear accounts of the formative phase of this institution in a straight forward manner, which will narrate the pre-conditions and the early history of the inception of Kala Bhavan.

#### The Bramhacharya Ashram

The Bramhacharya Ashram in Santiniketan was established in 1901. The *ashram* school started with a handful of students that comprised of his son Rathindranath Tagore and sons of some of his friends; and an initial nucleus fund set up by selling Rabindranath’s house in Puri<sup>1</sup>. Apart from the ashram school, the trust deed executed by Debendranath Tagore, also provided for a library and an annual country fair on the seventh day of Poush,<sup>2</sup> to commemorate the ‘Brahmo-dharma’. The inaugural corpus

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<sup>1</sup> Rathindranath Tagore, *On the Edges of Time*, Visva-Bharati, 1958. p. 43

<sup>2</sup> According to Bengali calendar, the month of Poush is the third week of December.

of this library was formed entirely out of Rabindranath's collection of books in Calcutta, which gradually grew in the existing library of the Ashram.<sup>3</sup> In 1904, Gopalchandra Kabikusum, trained in elementary drawing at the Government School of Art, Calcutta, was appointed to teach drawing to these set of students in the *ashram*.<sup>4</sup> Though infrastructural arrangements were made for these art classes, his tenure came to an end within three months of his joining at Rabindranath's behest. Tagore writes in a letter to Mohitchandra Sen<sup>5</sup> about Gopalchandra's removal and the need to appoint someone credible to teach drawing and Sanskrit for fifteen rupees a month with food and lodging. The role was fulfilled by Nagendranath Aich, who also brought in his expertise in free hand drawing and model drawing for the next five years; followed by Panchu Gopal Roy for the following year.

Running alongside these embryonic developments in the emerging design of Santiniketan, the world outside was witnessing momentous political and cultural developments, which mark the turn of the twentieth century, when Asia was emerging as a consolidating power. Two key events leave their subsequent impressions on Rabindranath's pedagogic experiment. One was the signing of Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902, which unlocked greater exposure and exchanges with Japan and other south-east Asian countries, with British India. This led to strong compassionate bonds between Japanese scholars and artists with the Tagore household and long term aesthetic, philosophical and artistic communion, that impacted art, collection methodology and knowledge propagation of the time, in Bengal. Secondly, this phase also marked the upsurge of swadeshi movement that swept up a passionate and ideological anti-colonial churning in Bengal, leaving a defining impact on the formative ideals of the institution. Rathindranath recalls in this memoir the effect of swadeshi in Santiniketan ashram, as he and his classmates would gallivant around the neighbouring villages and town, singing swadeshi songs led by Dinendranath and Ajit Chakraborty and collecting alms for the 'Matri Bhandar' (National Fund). On September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1905 a huge bonfire was lit and songs were sung all night at the playground

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Panchanan Mandal. *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part I. Second Edition December 2018. p. 463

<sup>5</sup> Mohitchandra Sen gave up his career as a college lecturer in English literature and joined the *Brahmavidyalaya*. Even before he took charge of the Santiniketan School he was associated with it as a member of the administrative committee along with Jagadischandra Bose and Ramanimohan Chatterjee. In 1904, Mohitchandra became the Principal of the school, but had to leave some months later due to ill health.



of Santiniketan to celebrate the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth. The significant influx of Okakura Kakuzo's book, *The Ideals of the East with special reference to the Art of Japan* made a transcultural impact on the intellectual foregrounding in Bengal. "Asia is one" found a strong resonance in the evolving oriental nuances of the cultural moorings in the region.

Santosh Kumar Mishra, a third-year student at the Government School of Art, joined the ashram as a drawing teacher at Rabindranath's request and Abanindranath's approval in 1910. Santosh Mishra introduced model drawing and foliage study in the curriculum, taking inspiration from E.B. Havell's handbook.<sup>6</sup> By this time, the total student strength of the ashram consisted of hundred pupils which included Mukul Chandra Dey, Dhirendrakrishna Dev Barma, Benode Behari Mukherjee and Monibhushan Gupta who particularly took interest in the art class. Panchanan Mandal also records in his account that it was during this time that 'alpona' was evolving as a practice-based program in the ashram mandir, with Santosh Mishra facilitating the subtle shifts in the conduct in *alpona* with addition of leaves and flowers as pattern making elements along with the linear progression of designs on the surface.<sup>7</sup> Santosh Mishra was eventually given the responsibility of the junior section of the ashram, however by 1916 he moved onto dedicate his efforts towards the rural reconstruction program developing in Sriniketan.

Concurrently, Asit Kumar Haldar had moved his base from Calcutta in 1911 to join Rabindranath's ashram. This was the same year when he completed his training in the Government School of Art, Calcutta under Abanindranath Tagore. With Rabindranath's enthusiasm towards focusing on art education as an independent scope of learning in the ashram pedagogic structure for children, he entrusted the responsibility of forming a centre for art to Asit Haldar. (**Fig 5.1**) This moment is indicated as the moment of inception of the institutional idea of Kala Bhavan.<sup>8</sup> For the next five years Asit Haldar continued to teach the children and the adolescents of the ashram along with collecting terracotta panel specimens and moulds from terracotta temples in the adjoining villages like Nanur and Barangar. Asit

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<sup>6</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part I. Second Edition December 2018.

<sup>7</sup> The method and material progression of Kala Bhavan will be elaborated in Chapter 5

<sup>8</sup>Asit Kumar Haldar, *Robithirthey*. Anjana Prokashoni. Calcutta 14 January, 1959 (Poila Magh, 1365) p. 33

Haldar recounts in his memoir that his mentor Abanindranath Tagore in a letter dated July 8, 1911 wrote to him, expressing his wish to develop a gallery space for art display as the central focus of developing art education in Santiniketan.<sup>9</sup> That brief letter also urged him not to become a “gurumoshai” to the children, but instead suggested that if he wants his students to fly, he too needs to be a bird himself. In manifestation of Abanindranath’s advice, Asit Haldar recollects that he never became the ‘mastermoshai’ of Kala Bhavan but remained to be known as Asit- da to all his students and staff members of the institution.<sup>10</sup> For the next five years, Asit Haldar continued to hold the reins of the art section of the ashram with Mukul Dey, Dharendra Krishna Deb Burman, Monibhushon Gupta, Annada Majumdar and Santosh Mitra as his students. During Rabindranath’s visit to England, he wrote to Asit on January 7, 1913 expressing his wish to expand and build on the art school in Santiniketan, along with a school of music, but the financial circumstances did not allow him much room to work with. Later that year, Rabindranath was honoured with Nobel Prize in literature for *Gitanjali*. The attention of the world and also his countrymen gradually started to sway towards his education project in Santiniketan.

In February 1915, Mahatma Gandhi along with his family and students came to Santiniketan ashram from South Africa at Rabindranath’s invitation. **(Fig 5.2)** It can be assumed that from this moment on, Santiniketan ashram became a more focused ground of experiment towards decolonisation and nationalism. This very year, Gandhi also established his Satyagraha Ashram. In Asit Haldar’s memoir of Santiniketan, he briefly narrates the daily routine that Gandhi followed and how the ashram premise was adapting to the ideals of the new practices introduced by Gandhi. His morning elixir of neem and instead of tea, humble lunch and supper with locally available resources, clinically treating the sick under the sun – all comes into expanding the pedagogic discourse - of reclaiming the national, to imbibing and testing the values in one’s lifestyle; therefore, comprehending the formative history of this residential institution will require looking beyond the prosaic resources of depository. In 1916, Rabindranath entrusted the responsibility of the ashram to Gandhi and left for America via Japan. This

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

was when a parallel scope of developing Santiniketan and Sabarmati Ashram as a counter pedagogic structure to the state sponsored colonial system of education, presented itself with scope. During Mahatma Gandhi's visit, the students that followed him to Santiniketan were from his Phoenix School in South Africa. In an undated letter<sup>11</sup> written by Tagore, he expresses his gratitude towards Gandhi for choosing his school for the 'Phoenix boys' and "that their influence will be of great value" to the ashramiks "that will form a living link in the *sadhana* of both of (our) lives."<sup>12</sup> During this phase, Gandhi made certain provisional changes in the infrastructural and working methods of the Santiniketan *ashram*, which reflected his mission of *swaraj* through self-sustenance, self-discipline. "The word Swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which 'independence' often means". (Young India, 19-3-1931, p. 38) However, it was indicative during this initial ideological encounter, that the two schools of thought were taking their own different paths.

In 1916, Asit Haldar moved back to Calcutta to join the Government School of Art, as an assistant teacher to Ishwari Prasad, in the advanced 'Drawing class' program of the institution, that provided him a stable salary. As recorded in *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, the current students under the program was Hirachand Dugar, Ramendranath Chakraborty, Nateshan Sharbadhikari, Mahabir Prashad and Ardhendu Bandyopadhyay. His return to Calcutta further enabled him to join Bichitra studio as a founding member (Bichitra Studio will be discussed in chapter three). Absence of Haldar in Santiniketan further amplified the wavering conditions of Rabindranath's initiatives in art education. At this point in history, the transposition of Nandalal Bose became a singular factor in determining the prospect of the two institutions.

In 1914, while Haldar was still facilitating the art education programme in Santiniketan, Rabindranath invited Nandalal Bose to the campus with much pomp and the ritualistic ashram felicitation. Alpona

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<sup>11</sup> Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *The Mahatma and the Poet: letters and debates between Gandhi and Tagore, 1915-1941*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1997, .p. 50

<sup>12</sup> "The boys of the Phoenix school stayed in Santiniketan from 4th November 1914 to 3rd April 1915; their stay was arranged through the mediation of C.F. Andrews". Ibid, p. 47; Also see 'MK Gandhi to Maganlal Gandhi 4th Dec, 1914.' *Collected Work of Mahatma Gandhi* Vol-XII New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India. p. 558

was drawn by Asit Haldar and his students, and Nandalal was adulated with flowers and conch, Rabindranath recited and presented him with a benedictory poem. (Fig 5.3) Haldar drew a portrait of him recording the occasion – the news of the ceremony made it to Probasi and Modern Review editions of 1915. Though this was Nandalal’s first encounter with Santiniketan, Rabindranath had already sought him out when he asked Nandalal to illustrate a collection of his poems titled *Chayanika* in 1909<sup>13</sup>. Ajit Kumar Chakraborty, Monilal Ganguly and Charu Bandyopadhyay in consultation with Rabindranath, published *Chayanika* through Indian Press. After its publication Rabindranath wrote to Charu Bandyopadhyay, in a letter dated September 28, 1909, that he was waiting for this publication to see how the illustrations have been printed and that it was to his disappointment that the sensations (rasa) of Nandalal Bose’s painting were missing from these prints, as he had experienced them in its tactile forms. It is quite evident from his equivocal reaction that Rabindranath deeply invested in Nandalal’s artistic genius.

The second close interaction between Nandalal and Rabindranath occurred when Rabindranath invited him, along with Mukul Dey to his Shilaidaha estate, in January 1916. Surendranath Kar was already accompanying Rabindranath at Shilaidaha. Nandalal records in his biography, that this was their first experience in nature study.<sup>14</sup> Here he compared the pedagogic methodologies of Rabindranath with Abanindranath, as he reflects on the fact that prior to this their art practice entailed of inspirations drawn from puranic scriptures; Abanindranath would assign gurus who would read and explain stories from puran and his students would ideate visuals from those texts. But in Shilaidaha, the guru was the spiritual beauty of Padma (river) and the commentator was the poet himself.<sup>15</sup> This very moment can be considered as the shift in perception of pedagogic methodology that matured through Kala Bhavan. Nandalal recalls that their Shilaidaha trip, provided the foundation in breaking down canonical barriers

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<sup>13</sup> There were seven illustrations of Nandalal Bose, which were included in the first edition of *Chayanika*. They are ‘Kebol tobo mukher paney chahiya’, ‘Dhoop apnarey milaite chahey gondhey’, Jodi moronlobhitey chao esho tobe jhap dao’, Khepa khuje khuje phirey poroshpathor’, Hey bhoirob, hey rudro boishakh’ (colour), Bhoomir porey janu pati tuli dhonooswar’, Amaye niye jabi ke re dinshesher shesh kheyaye’ as recorded in Bharat Shilpi Nandalal, p335. See *Rabindra-Jiboni* by Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, p 229

<sup>14</sup> Bharat Shilpi, part I, p 340

<sup>15</sup> The name of Rabindranath’s boat at Shelaidah was also Padma. See *Rabindra Porikar: Surendranath Kar 1892-1970*. Ed. Sovon Som. Anustup Publication. p. 5

between the poet and the young artists, establishing their life-long creative collaboration that took form through Kala Bhavan. During this trip Rabindranath asked Surendranath Kar to join Santiniketan after his return. In retrospect, it is contemplated that Rabindranath arranged this trip as an initial induction session of the Kala Bhavan faculty.<sup>16</sup> Surendranath Kar joined the 'Kala-Bibhag' at Santiniketan in 1917.

The next couple of years remained wavering, before Kala Bhavan could establish its institutional presence in the artistic milieu of the region, primarily due to the cross currents between the Indian Society of Oriental Art, and the Bichitra collective in Calcutta, spearheaded by Abanindranath and the Santiniketan project of Rabindranath. (Fig 5.4) However, this back-and-forth was put to an end by Rabindranath Tagore through a consequential letter addressed to Abanindranath, which changed the course of Bengal's artistic direction and institutional future. In this decisive and almost a straight arrow letter<sup>17</sup>, Rabindranath explicitly expressed his role in the future of Indian art, and the estimation of other art initiatives functioning in the region. He writes that in his hope for a stronger artistic revival of the country, he financially invested in the programme of Bichitra studio, which he believed to be the seed of a nationally conscious and self-sustained future for artistic practice, so that there is a more permanent system that delivers cultural progression for the country. He underlines the fact that, any creation in literature or art reaches its dignity and triumph, when it is conceived with liberty; and if this glory is attained by the hard work and affirming intentions of the people of this country. It can perhaps be determined that Rabindranath was not entirely appeased with the formation and mission of ISOA due to its dependence on government aid and that Nandalal Bose was at the centre of this paradox. Rabindranath, in this letter, further voices his concern for Nandalal, that this ongoing tug ISOA and Kala Bhavan, and Abanindranath and Rabindranath himself, might perplex his creative abilities and artistic integrity, which can be otherwise seamlessly channelized in Santiniketan. Abanindranath as his mentor, rightfully demands his loyalty, but for the great good of the future of art in the country, he should let Nandalal go and allow him to make a choice of his own will. Rabindranath admits that

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<sup>16</sup> Mandal, Bharat Shilpi Nandalal, Part I, p. 348

<sup>17</sup> Private Correspondence with Abanindranath Tagore. Rabindra Bhavan (File i/ii/iii/iv), Letter written in Bengali, Undated.

financially he cannot match up to the range of government funding in ISOA, which Nandalal Bose receives as his remuneration, but he does find his strength in the fact that establishing Kala Bhavan in the pedagogic direction that he aspires to, will bring greater personal, cultural and national glory than financial aspirations. Rabindranath ends the letter by advising Abanindranath, that may he give the request of Nandalal Bose joining Kala Bhavan, a careful thought, keeping in mind the greater good of the field of art practise, before coming to his decision.

### The Founding of Visva-Bharati

In December 1921, a provisional constitution was adapted with Rabindranath Tagore as the founder-President and Nilratan Sarkar, Hirendranath Dutta and Rabindranath as trustees of Visva-Bharati, and was formally registered under the Act XXI on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1922.<sup>18</sup> It was also during this year that a deed assigned the copyright of Rabindranath's all Bengali publications to Visva-Bharati<sup>19</sup>. However, the first official annual report was published in 1923, which laid down the structural shift of Santiniketan from a pedagogical hypothesis to an institutional experiment that became Visva-Bharati. The detailed report presented by the "Karma Sachivas", Rathindranath Tagore and Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, is an edifying piece of document, which defines the inaugural vision and an interdisciplinary structure of the institution. Before entering the history of Kala Bhavan, it becomes imperative to delve into this institutional vision of Visva-Bharati. **(Fig 5.5)**

The account demonstrates how the institution separates itself from canonical structures of nineteenth and early twentieth century institutional paradigms in its approach towards a more comprehensible vision of community development. The annual report of 1923 begins by recollecting all the momentous events since 1901, which contributed towards the initiation of Visva-Bharati. It marked out C.F. Andrews and W.W. Pearson's arrival in Santiniketan in 1913, along with Rabindranath Tagore when

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<sup>18</sup> The report states that as the new Constitution had only been functional for a few months, the current report cannot claim to be recognized as an annual report of the institution.

<sup>19</sup> It is recorded in the Visva-Bharati Annual Report of 1923 that the copy-rights of Dwijendranath Tagore and Balendranath Tagore had also been assigned to the institution.

he returned from England that year. Their work of community development in the ashram widened the scope of Rabindranath's educational reform beyond the school project. It also mentioned L.K. Elmhirst who came to Santiniketan in 1921 and initiated the scheme of rural work at Surul, about one and a half mile away from the core premise of Vishva-Bharati. This gradually matured to the Institute of Rural Reconstruction in Sriniketan, expanding the topographical and as well as the ideological scope of the ashram. In 1923, *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly* was also initiated, in place of *Santiniketan Patrika* which became the official organ for the institution. The publication opened with a bulletin on the 'Educational Institutions at Santiniketan', that clearly lays out the departmental classifications of the institute. As recorded, the departments consisted of: (i) Purba Bibhag with is the ashram school that was by then was named Patha Bhavana. The bulletin elaborates that the school primarily allows students to prepare for Visva-Bharati College courses and also for examination in other universities; (ii) the Uttara Bibhag which was initially formed as the Department of Higher Studies, but eventually reformed to two sections as Shiksha Bhavan, the Santiniketan college and Vidya Bhavan, the research centre; though the other departmental classification were laid according to methodological advancement and not disciplinary brackets, (iii) Kala Bhavan (the School of Art and Craft), (iv) Nari Bibhag (Ladies College) and (v) Krishi Bhavan (Dept of Agriculture and Rural Reconstruction) that occupied a distinct disciplinary status in the institutional composition.

The statement records that a "school of painting with distinctive features of its own is developing at Santiniketan under the supervision of Abanindranath Tagore who is the Director."<sup>20</sup> However, the annual report of the year registers Nandalal Bose as the person in- charge of the Fine Arts section. **(Fig 5.6 a, b)** Correspondingly, the institution expanded its library and publication department. The rural reconstruction project with programmes on agricultural settlement, rural education, and village sanitisation, travelling dispensary, child welfare schemes, experimental vegetable and dairy farm, tannery, weaving fundamental to building a reciprocating community was a, revolutionary step towards

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<sup>20</sup> *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, Vol 1, Issue 1-4. Educational Institutions at Santiniketam, April 1923.

creating an alternate education system. This philosophy would be particularly crucial for the art pedagogy of Kala Bhavan, as it became the fundamental perspective and method in their art practice.

The other fields that were brought into the educational programme were Sanskrit literature, Prakrit, Tibetan, Dharma-shastra, Persian, English, Bengali, German, French, Logic, Philosophy, Vedanta (Upanishad), Greek, Political Economy and Sociology. Apart from delivering regular lectures on the subjects, the nature of engagement gravitated more towards critical research. Some of the examples, as recorded in the annual report, are – a project initiated by Mr. N. B. Utgikar of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Centre of Pune to edit Mahabharata in collaboration with Dr. Winternitz, Pandit V. Bhattacharya and the students of the institution; preparation of an edition of the *Abhidharmartha Sangraha* was initiated by Pandit Netai Vinode Goswami; special lectures were facilitated on Sanskrit language and philology, ‘Avesta’<sup>21</sup>, ancient Indian education systems, social organisations, history of cultures and international relations by Prof. V Lesny of Prague, Prof. I. J. S. Taraporewala, Prof. Radhakumud Mukherjee, Prof. Radhakamal Mukherjee, Prof. Patrik Geddes, Dr. G. S. Jones and their likes. It was also during this year that Prof. Sylvain Levi was appointed as the first Visiting Professor of the institution. This brief description of the range of disciplinary fields that were being explored in the foundation year of Visva-Bharati, serves as a testament to Rabindranath’s ideals when he wrote –

“Hereafter my life and all that I have - which is only a little – is to be devoted to be establishing first in India, and then elsewhere, if possible a university in which the better minds of all races, to whom we must look for leadership may mingle, and the culture of the East and the culture of the West may be united in fellowship. It is men of the world mind that we need, men of the spirit that we need to see that we are all citizens in the Kingdom of Ideas”.

- An International University, in *The Modern Review* February, 1921, p 270

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<sup>21</sup> Primary collection of religious texts in Zoroastrianism.



## Section II

### The Institutional Configuration: 1919 – 1935

On April 1919, Rabindranath introduced his formative idea of Visva-Bharati through the *Santiniketan Patrika*.<sup>22</sup> Announcements were published in this journal, across its monthly volumes, about the classes that would be conducted in Santiniketan. In the summer edition (*Joishtho shonkhya*) of the journal, and the declaration read that Nandalal Bose and Surendranath Kar will be teaching art (*chitravidya*) to prospective students; it was followed by another announcement in the monsoon edition of the journal that Nandalal Bose and Surendranath Kar are prepared to take classes on art, as local and many offshore students have arrived in Santiniketan to join the institution.<sup>23</sup> Benode Behari Mukherjee recalls that during this year an art competition was announced by Nandalal, for the entire strength of the students present in the ashram. His conjecture was that this competition was arranged as a process of seeking out the desired creative aptitude among the students. The subjects suggested for the art competition were – electric post, cows and buffaloes and trees and flowers (flora & fauna).<sup>24</sup> Not arbitrary as choices, these themes were suggested to identify the changing environment of the campus. The electricity supply wires and wooden posts, across the campus were new additions – however mundane or aesthetically uninspiring the object might stand, it was perhaps Nandalal's strategy to move away from canonised themes in art, to identifying art and design in everyday objects; and shifting the perspective of observant methods in art practice, that concurrently offered comparable gratification in studying the newly sown Kanchan tree in the Ashram ground (Gourprangan).<sup>25</sup> These sketches/paintings were then added to the repository of the Kala Bhavan museum by Nandalal Bose, which was just beginning to take shape.

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<sup>22</sup> *Santiniketan Patrika* was the first mouth piece of the institution, which was published from April 1919 to November 1926. The volumes were edited by Jagadananda Roy, Bidhusekhar Sashtri, Santosh Chandra Majumder, Pramathanath Bishi, consecutively.

<sup>23</sup> Announcements were also made of C.F. Andrews teaching English language and literature and Bhimrao Shastri and Dinendranath Tagore taking the responsibility of music in the institution; Rabindranath published 'Kala Vidya' - through the 1919 volumes of *Santiniketan Patrika*.

<sup>24</sup> Benode Behari Mukherjee, *Chitrakatha*, Aruna Prakashani, April 1984, p. 145

<sup>25</sup> Dhirendrakrishna Dev Varma, *Sritipotey*, Research and Publication Department, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, 1991, p. 87

However, Nandalal's visit to Santiniketan still remained weekly trips, as he was not entirely relieved from his responsibilities at ISOA. Consequently, Rabindranath asked Asit Kumar Haldar to return and resume his responsibilities in Nandalal's absence. Resigning from his job at the Government School of Art, Calcutta, Haldar shifted his base to Santiniketan, along with his wife.

### The Locale and the Environs

The contrasting institutional history of the Calcutta art school or any other colonial art institution in India and Kala Bhavan lie not entirely in their ideological and methodological variances, but also remain embedded in its emerging trans-Indian and trans-national ethnography of Santiniketan. Here were people uniting from various parts of the country and the world at large, forming an ideology driven lifestyle, giving shape to unique sense of space, aesthetics and architecture, adapting to a distinct school of religious ideals and working towards a singular goal of an alternate pedagogic model. Against the backdrop of the larger philosophy and institutional vision of Santiniketan, this section of the chapter will only present a compendium view of the natural setting of the place, to locate the environmental merits of the current campus of Kala Bhavan. (Fig 5.7) As a former student of the institution, it has been a long association with a sustained observation of the shifting character of Santiniketan. After hundred years of this institution, this study is located in the constant negotiations between the frictions of what constituted Visva-Bharati and the realities of its un-doing. It is also s this attempt of writing the history of Kala Bhavan that provides a sense of resurrection of its foundational ideologies.

A pair of *Chhatim* trees, which now stands as an ideological symbol of the university and a tourist landmark, was the first marker of the area, which later came to be known as Santiniketan, after the hermitage built by Debendranath Tagore. Situating this and the prayer hall (known as "*Kachner Mandir*" or the "glass shrine"), as the core of the territory, the institution grew from an estate to a scholastic campus of multidisciplinary pedagogic network. Gradually a constellation of humble structures came up in the immediate vicinity, to house the students, teachers and guests of the institution, which shaped a free-flowing inherent character of the campus with that of the previously existing rural

habitats in the neighbourhood. With meagre financial resources, most of the earlier structures in Visva-Bharati were single storied, made of mud and straw. Some of the early structures that were built between *Prak Kuthir* which served as a hostel for teachers and students; *Balabhi Kuthir*, an extension of *Prak Kuthir*; *Dehali*, *Notun Bari* and *Dwarik*.<sup>26</sup> Most of these structures were built in stages, usually extending horizontally while vertical floor additions were made occasionally. The horizontal expansion in Santiniketan architecture also is a telling feature that reflected the endless barren terrain of Birbhum and does not obstruct the landscape of the region. **(Fig 5.8 a, b)** Gradually the enrichment of the campus evolved through such tender philosophical as well as palpable nuances, that the academic campus gradually matured into a participatory museum space. Surendranath Kar, Arthur Geddes and Rathindranath Tagore devoted themselves to give shape to Rabindranath's vision of not erasing environmental energies from that of human habituation – a criterion that is acutely reflected across his songs, poems, spiritual and pedagogic philosophy. The unpretentiousness of its architecture that evolved naturally with the flora of the campus, the surrounding *khoai* at its peripheries, the rust earth, and the pedagogic pursuits – all the components together gave shape to the distinct and comprehensive cultural site of Santiniketan. **(Fig 5.9)**

Kala Bhavan started on the first floor of *Dwarik*, in the month of July 1919.<sup>27</sup> **(Fig 5.10)** The space is fleetingly described as one long hall space; Nandalal attempted a project of executing a ornamental mural based on decorative panels after Ajanta fresco on the first floor walls and pillars of *Dwarik* in which he was assisted by the students of Kala Bhavan and Patha Bhavana.<sup>28</sup> Though Surendranath Kar made the first attempt of painting a mural on the interior mud surface of *Adi Kutir* in 1918-19 inspired by the Ajanta technique, it was however experimental and premature in its endeavour at that stage.<sup>29</sup> Kala Bhavana shifted from *Dwarik* to *Shishu Bibhag*, which was later named as *Santoshalaya* in 1922,

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<sup>26</sup> Samit Das, *Architecture of Santiniketan*. Niyogi Books, p. 73

<sup>27</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part I, p. 470; Sovon Som, *Shilpa Shiksha o Ouponibeshik Bharat*, p. 326; Dhirendrakrishna Devbarma, *Sritipatey*, 1991; Sangit Bhavana classes were conducted on the ground floor of *Dwarik*;

<sup>28</sup> Jayanta Chakrabarti, R. Siva Kumar, and Arun K. Nag. . *The Santiniketan Murals*. Calcutta: Seagull Books published in association with Visva-Bharati, p. 85

<sup>29</sup> The mural is now lost, however the study will be elaborated in Chapter 5.

also constructed under the supervision of Surendranath Kar.<sup>30</sup> The location shift of Kala Bhavan was further followed by its occupancy of Patha Bhavan old library building, before occupying its current campus in 1929. (Fig 5.11 a, b) The physical shifts of its location can be loosely tracked by the murals done by the teachers and students of Kala Bhavan, that Nandalal made an integral part of the pedagogic programme of the art school. Though the exact date of Kala Bhavan shifting to the location of Patha Bhavan Old Library cannot be confirmed, but the next mural and the earliest surviving example of their experiment was in this site done in 1923. Assisted by Benode Behari and his elder daughter Gouri Bhanja, Nandalal painted an elaborate mural roll across the four walls of the library room projecting the ‘lotus – that regulates the rhythm of the mural derived from Ajanta, and other motifs including various kinds of fish, birds, water-birds, animals, fruits, flowers and figures that have both local and seasonal associations’.<sup>31</sup>

In 1923, Rabindranath raised adequate fund from his travels through Gujrat, to initiate building a dedicated structure for Kala Bhavan. He bestowed the responsibility to Surendranath Kar, who had by now effectively established his architectural novelty that was in alignment with Rabindranath’s vision. The old Nandan, which currently house the Graphics Department of the institution, was inaugurated on December 1929. (Fig 5.12) On the inaugural occasion, Rabindranath named Kala Bhavan house as ‘Nandan’ and Sangeet Bhavan as ‘Gandharva Bhavan’. Rabindranath wrote –

হে সুন্দর, খোলো তব নন্দনের দ্বার,  
মর্তের নয়নে আনো মূর্তি অমরার।  
এরূপ করুক লীলা রূপের লেখায়  
দেখাও চিত্তের নৃত্য রেখায় রেখায়।।

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<sup>30</sup> Som, *Shilpa Shikhsa O Oupanibeshik Bharat*, p. 361

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10

As opposed to the established practice of the students and teachers of the Government School of Art, working outside classroom deliverables were considered as doing commissioned work, Kala Bhavan experimented broadening the scope of a classroom from an enclosed cube to an open environment with is positioned at the core of its community. This liberation of enclosed space is also gradually visible in the modes of viewing an art work, where an art object is conceived and created amidst its context, enhancing its empirical value.

### People and Community

Dhirendrakrishna Deb Burman recollects that during those early days, the induction of Kala Bhavan students from the 'Bramhacharya' school community, primarily transpired through a spontaneous call of names by Bidhushekhari Shashtri for the students to 'step forward' for these specialised stream of learning. The boys who chose Kala Bhavan, Sangeet Bhavan or research work were then directed towards designated humble residential spaces. The first students to join Kala Bhavan were Ardhendu Bandyopadhyay, Harichand Dugar, and Krishnakinkar Ghosh from Governmentt School of Art, Calcutta; Dhirendrakrishna Deb Burman and Benodebehari Mukherjee joined as the internal students of the ashram. There were no regimented curriculum, syllabus, examination or defined course period set in decree. The students did not yet require a guardian's approval to join the art division. In the 1923 *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* and the annual report of the same year, Kala Bhavan was introduced as a "School of painting with distinctive features of its own, developing at Santiniketan under the supervision of Abanindranath Tagore, who is the Director."<sup>32</sup> Prior to that, Kala Bhavan was referred as *Kalabibhag* in official or formal declarations.<sup>33</sup> The elements of examination, syllabus or duration were disregarded even in the 1923 annual report as educational programme of the institution was not channelized through uniform course work. The ambience of the institution and its future pedagogic

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<sup>32</sup> *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, Vol 1, No 1, 1923, p. 2

<sup>33</sup> A review of Kala Bhavan's exhibition in Y.M.I.A Madras was published in *Santiniketan Patrika* 3rd year, 4th Vol 1921, under the heading 'Kala Bhavan'

directions grew out of the evolving relationship among teachers, students and staff of the institution with the space and the ambit of Santiniketan.

However when in 1920, an exhibition was organised in the Young Men's Indian Association (Y.M.I.A) Madras by Anne Besant. Mrs. Adiar and Dr. H.J. Cousins, showcasing nearly hundred artworks by the teachers and students of Santiniketan. The exhibition was coordinated and presented by Asit Haldar, and it was the first exposure of Kala Bhavan outside its regional precincts, which amplified its institutional presence and distinct artistic ideologies in the emerging narrative of Indian art. Though the 1916 exhibition of 'Modern Indian Paintings' organised by ISOA included nine paintings by Surendranath Kar; and Mani Bhushan Gupta as 'the first exhibited work of a new student' lent by the 'Bolpur School Committee'.<sup>34</sup>

During 1918-19, while Rabindranath travelled through Ahmedabad and Bombay, he witnessed curiosity and enthusiasm among the luminaries of those regions to send their daughters to this experimental centre in Santiniketan for tutelage in Indian Art.<sup>35</sup> This proved to be an added impetus for Rabindranath to prepare the residential campus and the infrastructure of Kala Bhavan, where female students could harmoniously inhabit. This headway towards undoing gender discrimination in institutional spaces, enhanced the prospect of training women artists in India, within residential institutional ambit. Therefore as recorded history would serve us, the first female students of Kala Bhavan in 1921 were Kiran Bala, Savita Tagore and Sukumari Devi.<sup>36</sup> A comprehensive student list, as compiled in Appendix V, will demonstrate the steady induction of female students since the formative phase of Kala Bhavan.

In 1921, Asit Haldar wrote to Rabindranath requesting a fixed salary for his work at Santiniketan, to which Rabindranath expressed his concerns regarding the increasing expense of Visva-Bharati which made it difficult for him to commit to a specific figure at that moment. He also cautioned Asit Haldar

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<sup>34</sup> *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Modern Indian Paintings* (Indian Society of Oriental Art) at the YMIA, Madras, February 19<sup>th</sup> to March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1916 The five drawings exhibited by Manibhushan Gupta were "The Mridanga Player", "The Sankirtanam", "The Ruined House", "The Music Party", "The Winter's Evening". These five drawing were catalogued as class work at the Brahmacharya Ashram; Surendranath Kar contributed nine paintings to the exhibition; The Madras Exhibition of 1916 will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>35</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part I, p 468

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix 3 for the entire list of Kala Bhavan students from 1921-1951.

that since he would not be able to pay a sanctioned amount of remuneration to all the faculties of the institution, he did not want to set a wrong example of offering Asit Haldar more remuneration. But he was hopeful that Asit Haldar's artistic pursuits will bring him the financial sustainability.<sup>37</sup> In 1921, Rabindranath wrote him another letter advising him against the art pedagogic influences of England.<sup>38</sup> This letter stand as a symbolic and consequential observation that determined the impending nature of art pedagogy in Santiniketan. Rabindranath asserted –

That art students from India who travel to institutions in England to get a stamp on their credibility, gravely disappoints him. It results in the British further claiming inherent sensibilities of Indian aesthetical moorings. If our art doesn't get its desired validation without Rothenstein's affirmation, then that art practise should only find its place in England. There is a larger world outside the institutional hegemony of South Kensington School of Art and it is there in the outer courtyard that Indian art should find its liberty. That should be our crowning glory. These art students do have their own artistic strengths, however if they surrender themselves to the British art training methodologies and financial rewards, the history will remember them as followers of British intellectuals than a pacesetter of Indian art.

This letter apart from underlining Rabindranath's view on the rejection of colonial art education, also points towards two other directions. Firstly, it reveals his impression of Asit Haldar's ambitions, from which Rabindranath was probably attempting to protect him. Rabindranath did not shy away from exposing prospective students to travel across the borders towards the West or the East, to gain further expertise in the field. However, in case of Asit Haldar, his professional enthusiasm of climbing the bureaucratic ladder, did not align with Tagore's vision of pedagogic purpose. Secondly, a more far-reaching consideration for Rabindranath was to separate the knowledge and exposure to western art and aesthetics from the entrenched colonial influence on the art practices in the subcontinent. This letter written to Asit Haldar in 1921, can be considered as path defining moment in the merging history of Kala Bhavan. There is a subsequent occurrence recounted by Panchanan Mandal that Asit Haldar was officially released from his duties at Santiniketan in 1923, after he returned from England, due to a leg injury.<sup>39</sup> However, during the same year while Asit Haldar was still in London, he wrote to Ramesh Charan Basu Majumdar, about his sense of betrayal and hurt that he received from Nandalal Bose and

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<sup>37</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part I, p. 473.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p. 471

<sup>39</sup> Asit Haldar travelled to England with Pearson in 1923.

the artist community of Santiniketan, and that he felt “that there was no longer any place for him in Santiniketan.” He also expressed that, though he was happy to receive the opportunity to take responsibility of the Jaipur School of Art, which provides him with a secure and satisfactory remuneration, he doubts if he will be left with any time for his own art practice.<sup>40</sup>

In 1922, Dr. Stella Kramrisch came to Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan, at Rabindranath’s invitation from Vienna school of art. **(Fig 5.13)** This episode can be considered another important inceptionary moment in the history of the institution – a moment that marked the introduction of art history within Kala Bhavan. At this point of time, art history as a subject would not endure within the institution, and would disappear soon with Stella Kramrsich’s move to Calcutta. But it laid a foundation of interest that would be informally taken up by Benodebehari Mukherjee in the coming decades. At Rabindranath’s request, it was mandatory for all teachers and students of Kala Bhavan to attend her class lectures. Stella Kramrisch initiated her illustrated lectures with Gothic art history, then covered Renaissance art centres across Europe; then moved on from Impressionism to Cubism, setting the precedent for western art history module that was later programmed as part of the syllabus of the institution. Kramrisch broke down the discourse on art movements through the artistic ideologies, their aim, the success and the failures of the movement and the sociological contributions that projected the distinct philosophical and visual styles through these movements. It was the first notable exposure for Indian artists to the art movements of Europe. Stella Kramrisch simultaneously discussed examples of early Indian art, with the Amaravati stupa and the sculptures from Anuradhapura, directing the students towards various methods of perceiving elements of ‘abstraction’ in art forms.<sup>41</sup> This can be considered as one of the first instances within an art institution in India, at that time, where art students were critically engaging in the investigation of artistic styles and forms, and developing module of art appreciation.

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<sup>40</sup> Long letter written by Asit Halder to Ramesh Charan Basu Majumdar, from 52 Cranley Gardens, South Kensington, London SW 7, dated 3rd July 1923. The letter was part of the online exhibition ‘The Art of the Painted Postcards: Nandalal Bose and his Contemporaries’, curated by Tapati Guha-Thakurta. Source – Ramesh Charan Basu Majumdar Collection - CSSSC Visual Archives.

<sup>41</sup> Benodebehari Mukherjee, ‘Kshitindranath,, Society Shiksha O Kala Bhavan’, *Adhunik Shilpa Shiksha*, p. 151



In the same year, French artists Andre Karpèles joined Kala Bhavana and introduced oil painting and wood cut to the students of Kala Bhavan. Karpèles along with Pratima Debi started the Santiniketan Vichitra Studio in 1922, which was primarily focused on craft skill development through woodcut printing, book binding, lithograph printing, lacquer dolls, oil painting, fresco and *alpona*.<sup>42</sup> In 1923, a descriptive essay was published in the Santiniketan Patrika by Andre Karpèles, laying out the aim and objectives of Vichitra. She wrote that a “School of Applied Arts and Crafts” has been added to Kala Bhavana and Abanindranath Tagore shared his keen interest and suggested the project to be called ‘Vichitra’.<sup>43</sup> Abanindranath Tagore visited Kala Bhavan in 1922 for the first time after its formation and advocated the significance of craft in art pedagogy. Karpèles charts out the ‘practical’ aims of Vichitra as – i) to establish permanent cooperation between artists and craftsmen; ii) to prevent as far as possible that harmful separation between art and crafts which is quite contrary to the Indian spirit and deprives art of all decorative qualities; iii) to keep up that love of beauty in the simples objects of daily use which was so characteristic of Indian life and which provided the artists and craftsmen with such a wide field of creative expression.<sup>44</sup>

Some of the craft works done during its first year were displayed for the first time in Calcutta, along with the copy of Bagh murals done by Surendranath Kar, Asit Haldar and Nandalal Bose. However, the far-reaching aims of Vichitra was to establish a pedagogical model of craft revival through the agencies of local resources and female participation, develop a self-sustaining financial model and inculcate the scope an artistic community, in negotiation with the institutional premise of Kala Bhavan. However, as the concept matured towards a self- reliant endeavour, the programme eventually took an independent dimension when attached to the Sriniketan project and became what we presently know it as *Shilpa Sadan*. This episode is also considered as the precursor of *Karu Shangha* that was established as a cooperative body, formed essentially by the ex-students of Kala Bhavan in 1930. Some of the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 152

<sup>43</sup> Andre Karpèles, “Vichitra”, *Santiniketan Patrika*, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vol, 1923, Santiniketan, pp. 31-33

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

founding members of this cooperative society were – Nandalal Bose, Prabhatmohan Bandyopadhyay, Manindrabhushan Gupta, Vinayak Sivaram Masoji, Ramkinkar Baij, and Indushudha Ghosh.<sup>45</sup>

In 1923, the core faculty of Kala Bhavan comprised of Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Kar, Andrée Karpèles Sukumari Devi. In 1928, Lisa Von Pott briefly took charge of initiating sculpture classes in the institution. In 1929, Benode Behari Mukherjee and Vinayak Masoji joined the teaching force. In 1934, Ramkinkar Baij joined Kala Bhavan as a teacher, while Masoji left for a period, to join the faculty again in 1940. Surendranath Kar left Kala Bhavan to take up responsibility of Visva-Bharati as its Registrar (*Karma-Sachiva*), in 1935. This year Nivanani joined Kala Bhavan as a temporary faculty. In 1937 Hiren Ghosh, Gouri Bhanja and Biswarup Bose joined Kala Bhavan as its faculty. The same year, Narsinghalal Mistry came to Kala Bhavan and initiated the Jaipuri fresco technique in the curriculum.<sup>46</sup> The following year, Hiren Ghosh left and A. Perumal joined Kala Bhavan.

In 1925, Nandalal accompanied Rabindranath on his trip to China and Japan. **(Fig 5.14)** This trip would make a significant impact on the formative history and intellectual disposition of Kala Bhavan. Nandalal realised how the core of Kala Bhavan's pedagogic methodology was inspired by Okakura's ideal about the confluence between conceptual (*moulik*), natural (*noiswargik*) and traditional (*oitijhyogoto*) attributes in art practice that will successfully cultivate the true artistic spirit of a nation.<sup>47</sup> Rabindranath was invited by the Lecture Association in Peking (Beijing). Apart from Nandalal, Kshitimohan Sen and Miss Green represented Visva-Bharati; and Elmhirst travelled as Rabindranath's personal secretary coordinating the entire journey.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Dutta, Pulak, Karu Shangha – Santiniketan Shilpi Samabaye, Rabindra Bhavan, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, 2001 p 2

<sup>46</sup> Narsinghalal was also invited by E. B. Habell to Govt. School of Art, Calcutta to provide training in Fresco painting to the art students.

<sup>47</sup> Mandal, "Kala Bhavaney Shikshar Padhati 1931-1952", *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part III, , October 1988, p. 3

<sup>48</sup> Jugal Kishore Birla contributed Rs. 11,000 that sponsored the travel itineraries of all dignitaries from Bengal who travelled to China and Japan with Rabindranath Tagore.

## Pedagogic Projects and Curriculum

Kala Bhavan did not begin with any specific curriculum or standard institutional prototype that would produce intended results from the outset. In a radical move, Kala Bhavan did not introduce examination as an evaluation for educational progress until much later in the 1970s. It began a studio that would allow teachers and students to work together breaking the hierarchical structure of a classroom and establishing a circle of knowledge exchange. The successful completion of knowledge accumulation and artistic pursuits in KB were certified by the teacher's recommendation, primarily that of Nandalal's. This 'circle' of knowledge has an epistemological as well as metaphorical position in KB's pedagogic structure, which will be discussed in this section. In writing an institutional history of the formative decades of Kala Bhavan, the progress of its growth cannot be accounted as a linear narrative, where uniform developments occur in a sequence. Therefore to provide a structure to the pedagogic progression, the section will map the art projects alongside with the classroom teachings in Kala Bhavan, which will provide a comprehensible picture of its approach to art education.

The first example of a mural done in *Santoshalaya* was during 1921 by Benodebehari Mukherjee, Dhirendrakrishna Dev Burman and Ardhendu Prasad Mukherjee. However, during this period, this building was the living quarter of the students, so the murals were done less for public display and more as practice work inspired by ideas shared by Nandalal during their Bagh expedition. In 1925, Benodebehari painted scenes from Santhal life in tempera with rice starch on the southern veranda of *Santoshalaya*, followed by Nandalal's mural of a bamboo grove and a 'full figure portrait' of Benodebehari in the same location of *Santoshalaya* in the late 20s. With such instances of gradually turning their studio space to sites specific practices and introducing radical intellectual approach in institutional configuration of art pedagogy in the region.

By 1921, the education programme of Kala Bhavan gained momentum, when the current faculty was invited to Bagh caves for documentation. This experience became the precursor of the field study programme in Kala Bhavan curriculum that retained its uniqueness until very recently. This also became

the determining point of artistic trajectory for Kala Bhavan that it formed through pedagogic pursuits in the years to follow. The first art historical encounter with Bagh caves and its mooring in mural traditions of the country happened in 1914, when Asit Haldar accompanied Samarendranath Gupta at the invitation of the Director General of Archaeological survey of India Sir John Marshal to copy the foundation plan of the Jogimara cave.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, Asit Haldar was invited again in 1917 to study and prepare a report on the condition of Bagh mural in the Gwalior Estate by the Archaeology department. Based on this report, the government invited him in 1921 to copy the murals at Bagh cave. This project made provisions for more artists to join and led to the participation of Nandalal Bose and Surendranath Kar in making the first copies of Bagh murals.<sup>50</sup> 1921 was also the year when the programme of a study tour was initiated in Kala Bhavan. This year during the Durga Puja vacation, Nandalal planned an excursion to Nalanda, Rajgrih, Patna, Gaya and Bodhgaya with Surendranath Kar, Krishnakinkar Ghosh, Ardhendu Banerjee, Dhirendrakrishna Dev Burman, Ramendranath Chakraborty, Vinayak Masoji, Hariharan, and Pratima Devi's brother Kalidas Chaterjee<sup>51</sup>.

From 1923, Kala Bhavan proceeded as a steady institutional force, as Nandalal officially took its reins as its in-charge after submitting his resignation letter to Gaganendranath Tagore from his role at ISOA. By this time, Nandalal's son and elder daughter Biswarup Basu and Gouri (Basu) Bhanja were already enrolled as students of Kala Bhavan in 1922.<sup>52</sup> Nandalal conceded to his chronicler that initially he did not bring drastic changes to Asit Haldar's methodology of art practice in Kala Bhavan.<sup>53</sup> Both Asit Haldar and Nandalal Bose under Abanindranath's tutelage, and Rabindranath's ideological prompts inferred the direction of art pedagogy in Kala Bhavan. Separating the basis of art education from commodity or purpose driven practice, to 'imagination' driven methods, Nandalal reversed the education programme from a predefined set of skill development exercises, to encouraging creative faculties of the student first, and then determining the skillset required for their artistic persuasion. This

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<sup>49</sup> Asit Haldar, *Robitirthey*, Calcutta: Anjana Prakashani. p. 88; Also see Asit Haldar, "Ramgarh – Pother Kotha", *Prabasi*, Vol 14 Part II, 1st Issue 1914 (Kartik, 1321)

<sup>50</sup> Santiniketan Patrika, 1921 (*Falgun shankhya*, 1327) p 627;

<sup>51</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part II, p. 5

<sup>52</sup> Nandalal Bose's younger daughter Jamuna (Bose) Sen joined Kala Bhavan sometime before 1930s. See full list of Kala Bhavan Students in Appendix 3.

<sup>53</sup> Benode Behari Mukherjee, *Adhunik Shilpo Shiksha*.. p. 147

fundamental turn in methodology shifted the entire thrust of what came to be known as the ‘Santiniketan school’ of art. A semblance of the change could be gauged from Jitendralal Bandyopadhyay’s account of Rabindranath’s pedagogical methodologies - he recollects that, language studies being a core discourse in Santiniketan, Rabindranath used to supervise over most of its instructional methodologies.<sup>54</sup> The classes of English language and grammar were specifically monitored by Rabindranath – most of the available grammar books and elementary learning in English across the country were written in a set pattern that started with stages of syllables and word formation. Jitendralal observed that for senior students, the greater challenge in learning a foreign language lay in forming the ‘complete idea’ of a sentence. The method applied in forming an idea in their mother tongue, was quite contrary to understanding and expressing through English. Rabindranath reversed that method of engaging with the language, so that the students can learn to think or conceptualise their thoughts first and then identify the tools they require to actualise its formation.<sup>55</sup> Though there are no evidential record of this particular methodological anecdote to have inspired Nandalal in his own course of pedagogical transitions, but it is impossible to ignore the affinity of their methodological strategy in diversifying the fundamentals of ‘learning’<sup>56</sup>.

Nandalal’s breakdown of course-work for the art students in Kala Bhavan, as laid out in detail in the book *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal* by Panchanan Mandal, was in many ways a vital departure from Abanindranath’s pedagogic styles.<sup>57</sup> Nandalal recollects that all colonial art schools in India had only encouraged an ‘Academic’ pedagogic methodology of technically mastering application skills in art

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<sup>54</sup> Jitendralal Bandyopadhyay, *Rabindranath Er Shikshadan-Pronali*, Ed. & Compiled by Anathnath Das, Santiniketan Bidyalayer Shikhhadorsho – Rabindranath Tagore, Santiniketan Pustak Prokashok Samiti, Visva Bharati Santiniketan, (7<sup>th</sup> Poush 1388) 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 1981, pp. 201-202

<sup>55</sup> See *Rabindranath Er Shikshadan-Pronali*, in which C. F. Andrews is quoted - “The Poet (at this time) was engaged in working out with his pupils a new intensive method of explaining and illustrating the construction of English sentences. He would take some difficult passage, from the best English prose writers, and build up a whole series of parallel English sentences, which might illustrate the construction and idiom of the English passage in the text. p. 208

<sup>56</sup> ‘Learning’ in correlation to teaching had a crucial role in Santiniketan pedagogy. For here it is important to make a note of Rabindranath’s book ‘Engraji Shopan’ that he wrote specifically of the Bramhacharya ashram students. Here his correspondence with Brojendronath Sil who wrote the ‘Note on University Reform’ submitted to the Indian Universities Commission is significant. See *Rabindranath Er Shikshadan-Pronali*. pp. 233- 238

<sup>57</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, pp. 499-502

practise. Abanindranath resisted that method and initiated his students to conceptually develop their artwork based on traditional, mythological and historic narratives, as a mode of restoring Indian sensibilities. Drawing from Abanindranath and Okakura's ideology of conceptual maturity as the core of any artistic practice, Nandalal augmented its scope by liberating thematic possibilities that could find its root in the evolving topography of Santiniketan, and that could stimulate art students who came from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, the premise of 'Nature Study' was expanded from the Academic model of foliage drawing to observing nature through the shifts in the seasons. Students were advised to keep a journal of their own where they would record flowers and birds in Santiniketan according to the change of season; trees and animals in and around the campus. These would be then further categorised according to colour palettes and sorted in boxes. The exercise, beyond the canonical or pictorial prospect of nature study, dwells into the topographical growth of the space, gradually introducing art students to the significance of site, for the working ground and environment as the immediate stimulus. It was not incidental that a compelling volume of sketches of the Santiniketan school - more prominently in case of Nandalal Bose, Benode Behari and Ramkinkar Baij, and less defined in case of Surendranath Kar, Manibhushan Gupta, Ramendranath Chakraborty, Ardhendu Prasad and their likes - show how nature study became a distinct genre of the modernist art of the period.

**(Fig 5.15)**

The stimulus of nature study also found its manifestations in developing ornamental motifs, a tendency that was already discernible from the early murals and alpona patterns in Santiniketan. **(Fig 5.16)** First published in the new series of Visva-Bharati quarterly in 1935 and later as an independent primer, Nandalal prepared an illustrated discussion on 'Ornamental Art'.<sup>58</sup> At the onset of this illustrated primer, Bose categorically clarifies, "What I understand as ornamental work includes such as: ornaments, carpets, alpona, embroidery, illumination etc.; in short where arrangement is the main feature. These notes are merely suggestive, and might help a student to work better: in no case do they

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<sup>58</sup> An augmented version of 'Ornamental Art' was written and published by Nandalal Bose, from Kala Bhavan Santiniketan on November, 1940, that is being referred to, here in the chapter. The previous and a preliminary version titled 'Notes on Ornamental Art' was published in the Visva Bharati Quarterly in Vol 1, Part 1, New Series, May- July 1935

claim to teach one how to create”.<sup>59</sup> In retrospect, this primer on ‘Ornamental art’ not only provides a descriptive aspect of the curriculum advised in Kala Bhavan in its formative years; it also provides a window to Nandalal’s pedagogic methods that made a long-lasting impact on Santiniketan’s visual culture. Though educational in its nature, the primer was intended more as a reference point than an instructive drawing manual for art students to copy from. Through multiple illustrated motifs, Nandalal confers various principles of transforming natural forms to decorative patterns, for example through spacing, light and shade, inward and outward form of the object, and modulation of movements. He demonstrates these fundamental aspects in greater detail by breaking down the anatomical form of the lotus flower and its leaf, which have recurrently appeared in his own work, and variedly across ancient and medieval Indian painting traditions. (Fig 5.17 a, b) The instruction, more demonstrative in nature, indicate methods of ‘viewing, corresponding to methods of ‘doing’ ornamental patterns. This emphasis on the importance of perceiving and conceptualising before its pictorial execution, has been a distinctive pedagogic device of Kala Bhavan, which emancipated itself from the colonial methods of elementary art education in India. As advised by Nandalal, the nature of studies should make clear the diverse ways in which the decorative arts are studied and made use of as symbols. The form of the lotus flower is thus shown as getting modified according to the materials the artists has to work upon, and hence the remarkable variety of its design, projecting the playful and imaginative scope of nature study that elevate purpose, form, texture, tactility and abstraction of design aesthetics.

Published much later, a similar example of another drawing primer was the *Rupavali* series by Nandalal, directed towards Kala Bhavan students. (Fig 5.18 a, b) These four volumes of *Rupavali*, compiled and demonstrated human anatomical drawings that Nandalal copied from Ajanta, Bagh, Sigiriya, Konark, and Rajput miniatures, in their various postures and iconographical details.<sup>60</sup> The ‘Model Drawing’ component of the course work in Kala Bhavan, matured from academic pattern of Still Life study to the study of all objects that can be geometrically deduced – cylindrical forms like bottles, colour drums, iron pipes or glass containers; rectangular forms such as books, stools, and almirah; cubical shapes as

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<sup>59</sup> Nandalal Bose, *Ornamental Art*, Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan November, 1940, p. 1

<sup>60</sup> Nandalal Bose, *Rupavali Series (Four Parts)* Visva Bharati Publication, Calcutta. First published on January 1950. Current Edition June 2013.

observed in packing boxes or biscuit jars; conical shapes of the *dhootra phool* transferred to the Gramophone player; or the roundish shapes of football, orange or a pitcher (*kalshi*). We see here, Nandalal's pursuit in the diversifying of objects, shapes and materiality, as he provoked the students to see beyond the passivity of a 'still life' to the effective energies of everyday objects through their art practice. These elementary exercises formed the foundational guiding principles in Kala Bhavan.

An arguable comparison can be drawn between the functional aspects of 'Ornamental Art' and *Rupavali* with that of the *Technical Art Series*, as they were all intended for the purpose of reference for art students. However, the *Technical Art Series*, published by Survey of India Offices, produced plates of architectural illustrations and ornamental details that would "give them (craftsmen) ideas which they can work up for themselves in their own way."<sup>61</sup> Although both, *Rupavali* by Nandalal Bose and *Technical Art Series*, compiled by E.B. Havell since 1900 from the collections of the Indian Museum, helped circulate Indian design patterns amongst art students and craftsmen, the pedagogic undercurrents and its cultural effectiveness remained diverse.

One of the first questions, that this thesis asks is – how do art schools provoke the artistic trends and shifts in art practice and what are the provincial tendencies and priorities that shaped distinct style of modernity in the art practice of Bengal? The writing of modernist history on Indian art has essentially been navigated through individual nuances of artistic styles, reviewing indigenous cultural appropriation and post war European pictorial experiments. In case of the emerging twentieth century metropolis like Bombay, Lahore or Madras, where art schools were fundamentally technical in nature, the art works produced within the institutional capacity did not quite emerge beyond 'class work' specimens. However, in case of Bengal, the course of surveying individual artistic manifestations comes to be intrinsically linked to the pedagogic direction of the new art school at Santiketan. Between 1922 and 1951, under the direction of Nandalal Bose, Kala Bhavan can be seen to be fundamentally shaped the transcultural scope of modernity in Indian art.

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<sup>61</sup> Technical Art Series, 1886



Therefore, in the scrutiny of Kala Bhavan's curriculum, the syllabus of the institution that was implemented as studio practice, was merely one aspect of its pedagogic pursuits. The other vital aspect remains the collective projects initiated by the Kala Bhavan community. Appendix IV compiles and demonstrates the range of method and material experiments that unfolded in the institution between 1930 and 1950, which fortified the emerging modernity in Indian Art. Prof. R Siva Kumar's projection of Rabindranath, Nandalal, Benode Behari and Ramkinkar as the culmination of modernist diversity of the Santiniketan School, underlines the individual artistic manifestation that matured from a restorative transcultural inclination of the site. Siva Kumar clarifies, "This brief survey of the individual works of the core Santiniketan artists and the thought perspectives they open up makes clear that, though there were various contact points in the work, they were not bound by a continuity of style but by a community of ideas. Which they not only shared but also interpreted and carried forward. Thus they do not represent a school but a movement."<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, in writing the history of the institution, it is imperative to address the larger question of the formation of the community and collectivity of art practices that the institution nurtured through its class room, travels and outdoor activities. As observable through Appendix 4, the pedagogical experiments initiated at Kala Bhavan were not limited to artistic growth of any individual student or teacher, but a larger creative and intellectual evolution of the campus and community of Santiniketan. Pratima Devi travelled to France to learn the Italian 'wet process' of mural painting. Based on her notes and experience, teachers and students started experimenting with the process in Kala Bhavan.<sup>63</sup> The arrival of Narsinghalal in 1927 initiated a renewed phase of learning and experimentation in the execution of murals in Santiniketan. The projects, collaborative in nature encouraged three crucial aspects of Kala Bhavan's pedagogy – the seamless flow of knowledge and interpretation was made available to all that ward-off the power play of a classroom that is typical of most other institutional set-ups; the opening of art practice and art object for community engagement as a spontaneous creative

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<sup>62</sup> R. Siva Kumar, *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism*. New Delhi: National Gallery of Modern Art. 1997

<sup>63</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part II, p. 429

alignment for the community with the locality; the progression from methods of ‘viewing’ to methods of ‘doing’.

A very telling example is the ‘Seated Buddha’ sculpture, which was first executed by Rudrappa Hanji, a student who enrolled in Kala Bhavan in 1922.<sup>64</sup> An exact date for Hanji’s Buddha cannot be determined, however, the narrative of the evolving space around it is demonstrative of how collaboration of artists, themes, viewers, and environment was formed out of a constant dialogue and interpretation and not from a monolithic standardised course work. **(Fig 5.20)** In 1935, Ramkinkar for the first time used mortar of cement and laterite pebbles to construct a sculpture of a female figure inspired by the tall and slender figure of Jaya Appasamy.<sup>65</sup> During that phase, the landscape of Santiniketan was still barren and flat, providing a sharp contrast to the delicate verticality of the sculpture. Later Nandalal, suggest Ramkinkar add the bowl on head that will carry the milk porridge for Buddha in meditation and appropriated the sculpture as the mythic figure of Sujata, in a tangential relation to the Buddha sculpture in its vicinity.<sup>66</sup> This expanded the narrative of the solitary sculpture of Sujata to be ‘experientially encountered’ and in a dialogue with the surrounding ambience. Nandalal also planted the first eucalyptus tree next to Sujata, underlining the direct resemblance to forms and movements found in nature. Thus Ramkinkar’s Sujata comes to be surrounded by eucalyptus trees, projecting an illusion of the tree transforming into her and she into the tree. The sculpture has constantly grown and evolved across time with its surrounding atmosphere.

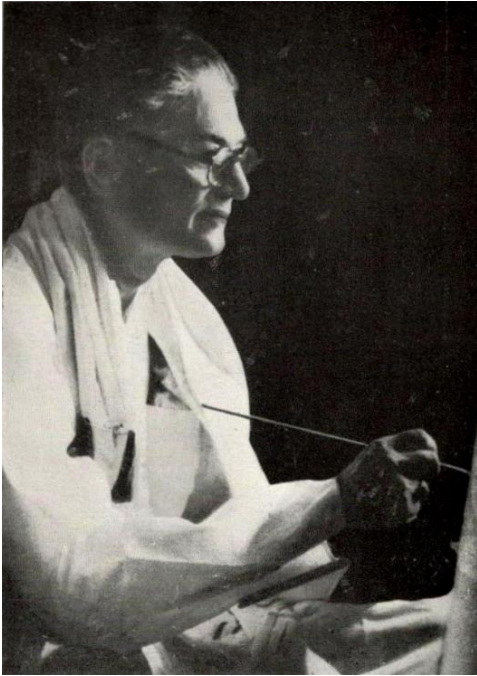
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<sup>64</sup> Anshuman Das Gupta, ‘Centrifuge: Visual Metaphors for the Modernist Moments’, Ramkinkar Baij Centenary Exhibition Catalogue 2006-2007, Nandan, Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan 2007, p. 7; also discussed by R Siva Kumar in Ramkinkar Baij: A Retrospective 1906-1980 (catalogue), Exhibition curated by K. S. Radhakrishnan, Published by DAG and NGMA, New Delhi 2012, pp. 79-90

<sup>65</sup> The list of early students in Kala Bhavan, as compiled in Appendix 3, show that Jaya Appasamy was enrolled in KB in 1940 and in 1935 there was a student named Mrs. Esther Jayawanti Appaswamy who was inducted in Kala Bhavan. However, the student list made by Nandalal Bose mention Jaya Appasamy was enrolled in 1935.

<sup>66</sup> R. Siva Kumar, Ramkinkar Baij Retrospective Exhibition Catalogue, p. 80

## Chapter Five – Illustrations



**Figure 5.1** - Asit Kumar Haldar. Photograph published in *Roop-Lekha*. Source: Gallery Rasa Archive



**Figure 5.2** – M.K. Gandhi greeted by Rabindranath Tagore on his arrival at Santiniketan. Image Collection & Source – GandhiMedia: GandhiServe’s Digital Media Archive



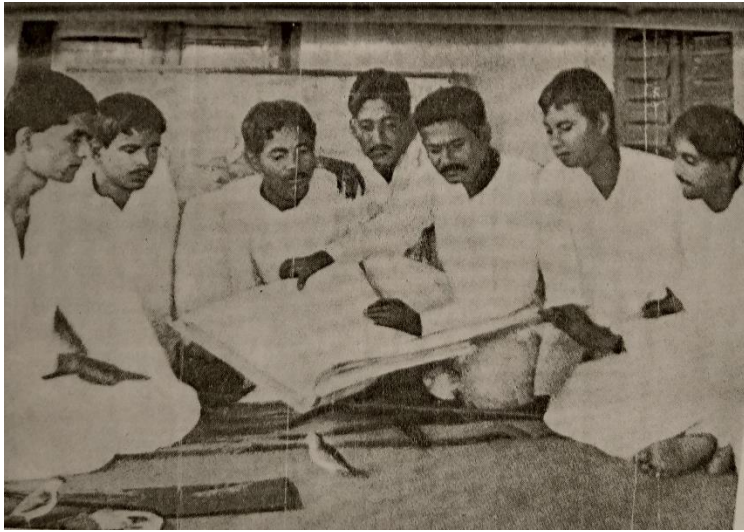
**Figure 5.3** – Ceremonial reception of Nandal Bose in Santiniketam by Rabindranath Tagore. Image Collection & Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-



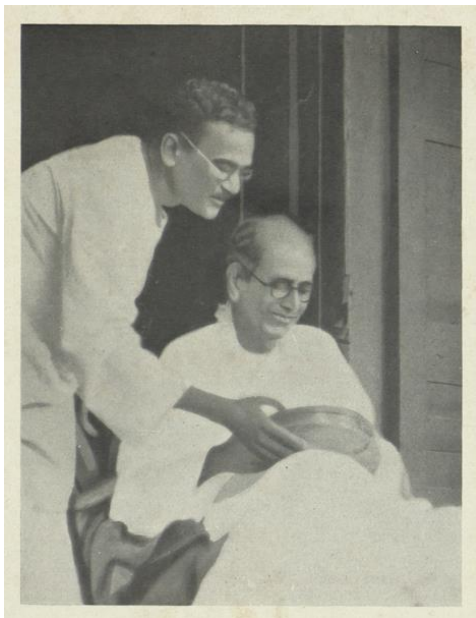
**Figure 5.4** – Rabindranath Tagore and Abanindranath Tagore at Jorasanko House, Calcutta. Image Collection & Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati



**Figure 5.5** – Ceremonial establishment of Visva-Bharati on December 1921. Image Collection & Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati.



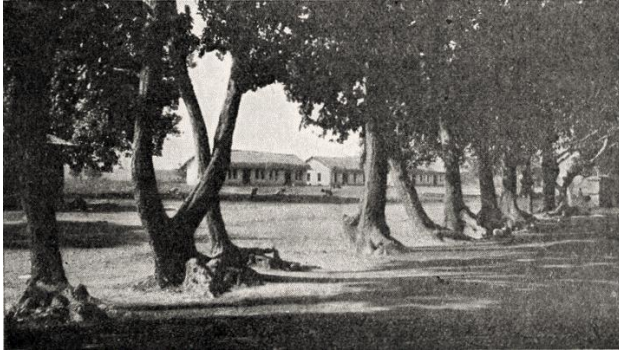
**Fig 5.6 a)** – L-R - Asit Haldar, Surendranath Kar, Dhirendrakrishna Dev Burman, Hirachand Dugar, Nandalal Bose, Krishnakinkar Ghosh and Ardhendu Prasad Bandopadyay. Image Source – *Smritipatey* by Dhirendrakrishna Dev Burman



**Figure 5.6 b)** – Nandalal Bose with Abanindranath Tagore. Image Collection & Courtesy – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva Bharati



**Figure 5.7** - View from the Terrace of the University, 1929. Photographed by E. O. Hoppe. Image Source - E.O. Hoppe Estate



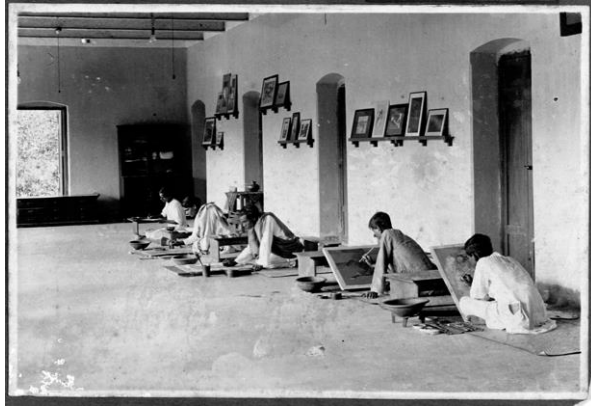
**Figure 5.8 a, b)** – Photographs from the early phase of Santiniketan Ashram. Image Source – *Santiniketan: The Bolpur School of Rabindranath Tagore* by W. W. Peareson



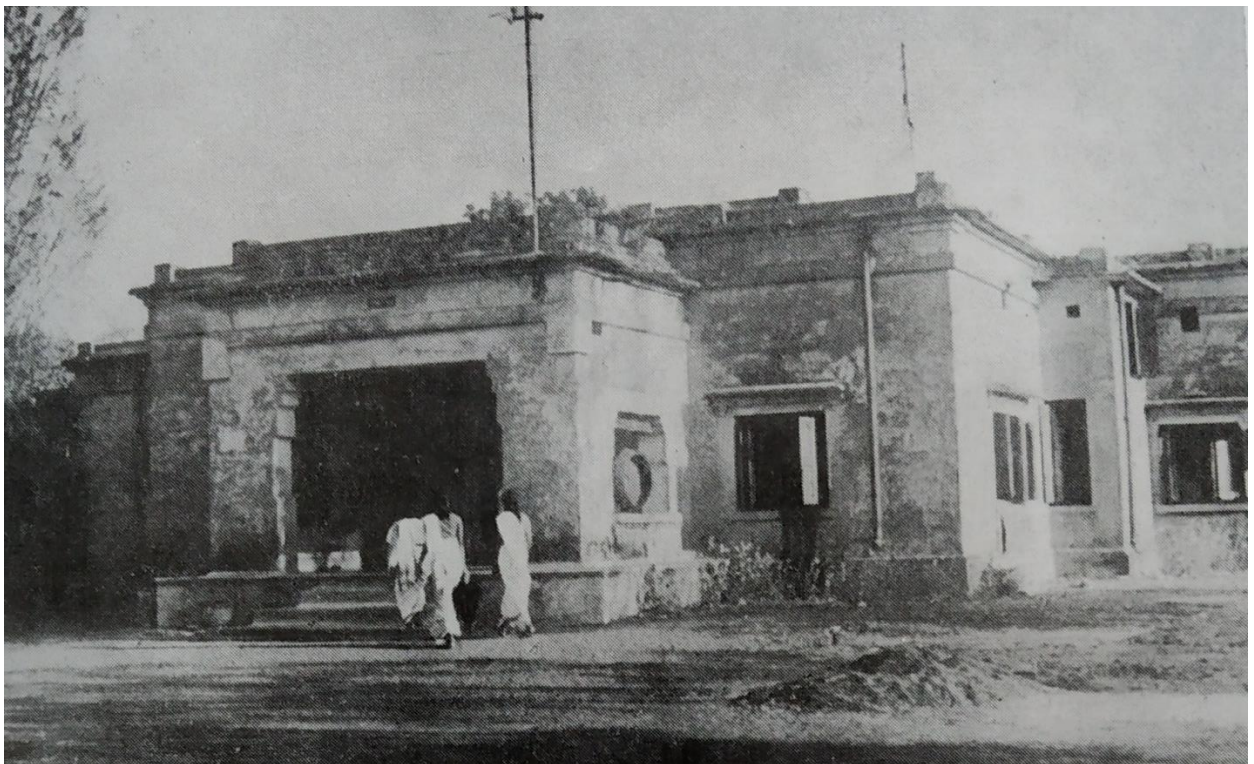
**Figure 5.9** – Singha Sadan Complex, Visva-Bharati. Image Source – Anshuman Dasgupta



**Figure 5.10** – Dwarik, one of the earliest structure in Santiniketan Ashram. Kala Bhavan formally started on the first floor of this house on July 1919. Source: Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati



**Figure 5.11 a, b)** - Early Kala Bhavan studio housed in the Old Library Building of Patha Bhavan, Santiniketan.  
Source: Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati



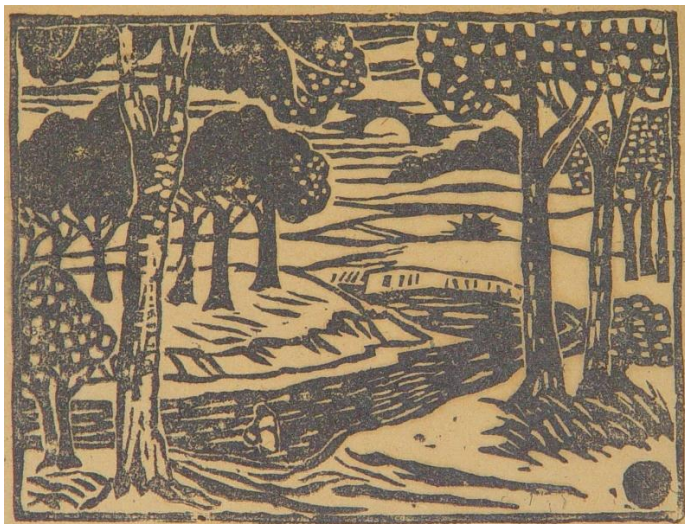
**Figure 5.12** – The entrance of the Kala Bhavan- Nandan structure, designed by Surendranath Kar. Image Source – *Rabindrapurakar: Surendranath Kar.*



**Figure 5.13** – Stella Kramrisch. Image Collection & Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati

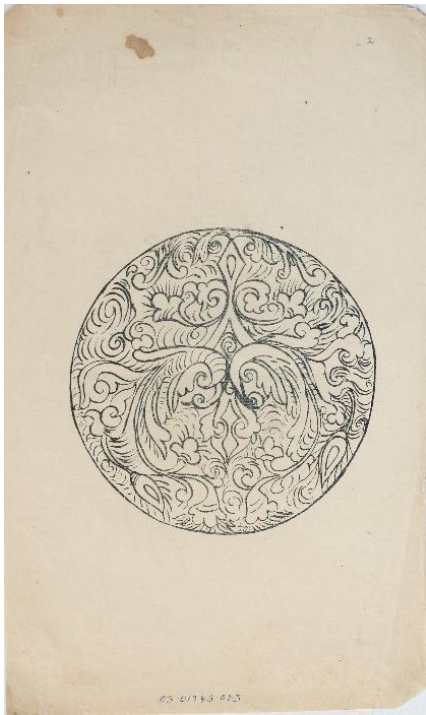


**Figure 5.14** – Nandalal during his trip to Japan in 1925. Image Collection & Courtesy – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati

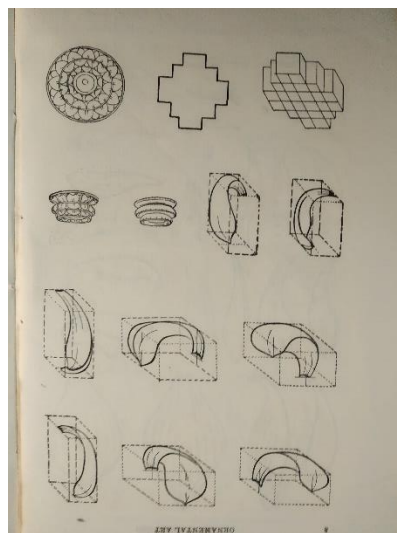
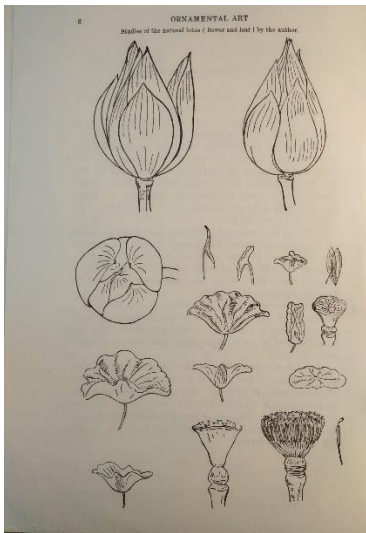


**Figure 5.15** – ‘Landscape’ in Linocut print by Manindrabhushan Gupta. Image Collection & Source – Nandan-Kala Bhavan

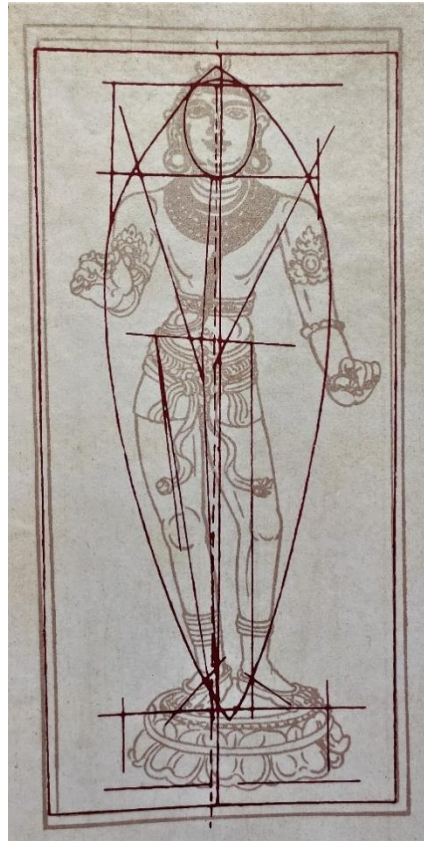
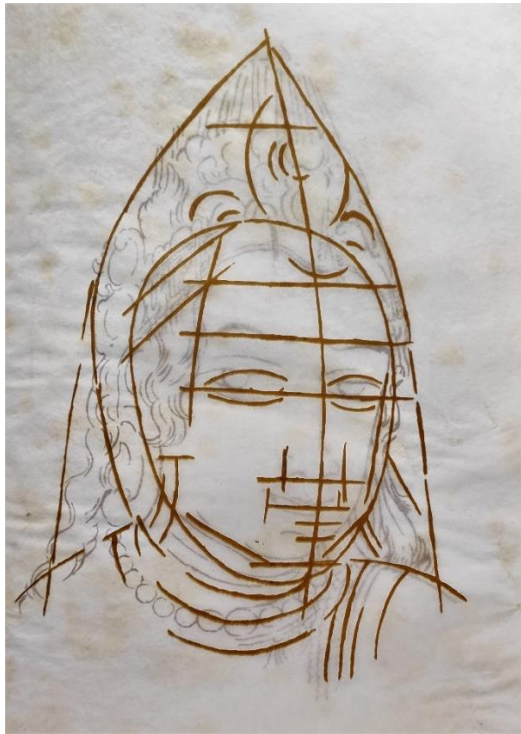




**Figure 5.16** – A circular ornamental pattern by Pratima Devi. Image Collection – Nandan-Kala Bhavan. Courtesy – Visual Archives, CSSSC



**Figure 5.17 a, b)** – Demonstration of transforming the Lotuls flower form to ornamental pattern by Nandalal Bose. Image Source – *Ornamental Art*



**Figure 5.18 a, b)** – Demonstration of anatomical drawing in Indian Sculptures, by Nandalal Bose. Image Source - *Rupavali*



**Figure 5.19** – Another view of the Black house from east, where the Buddha sculpture sits within the Kala Bhavan Campus. Image collection and Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati



**Figure 5.20** – Sujata, concrete sculpture by Ramkinkar Baij in the Kala Bhavan campus, 1935. Image Source - Author

## **Kala Bhavan: Matrix of Modernity through Campus and Community**

### **Section I**

#### **Site as a Metaphor and Locus**

Kala Bhavan shifted to its current campus in 1929, where it had a singular central symmetrical structure, designed by Surendranath Kar. The house was named Nandan by Rabindranath. (**Fig 6.1 a, b, c**) The structure has evolved with time, and so has the scope of the space. The ‘Old Nandan’ has a central hall with glass protrusion on its terrace and unique system of ventilation. The space was used as a museum space to store and periodically display works. It was also used as common gathering room for faculty students and guests of the institution. What was once the ceremonial front of the building is now out of sight. The front of the structure now holds a two part mosaic mural done by Somnath Hore between 1977 and 1982. The mural lists the names of the students who assisted Somnath Hore during the process of the mural. Some the students have now become teachers in the institution, and some illustrious in their own domain. The space has changed and so has their position. It now houses the Graphics department. And the mural plays the role of a backdrop to the evolution of the campus. (**Fig 6.2 a, b**)

The majestic tree which holds its ground at the centre of the campus is a Pilkhan or Pakur tree, but colloquially called “Cheena Bot” in Kala Bhavan. The etymology of ‘cheena bot’ is not known, however there is an anecdote. When Nandalal was planning to move base from Calcutta to Santiniketan, Abanindranath gifted him a banyan bonsai, brought from Japan.<sup>1</sup> (**Fig 6.3 a,**

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<sup>1</sup> Panchanan Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part I

b) In one of his trips to Santiniketan, Nandalal carried the bonsai with him and decided to liberate it from its constraints. The popular narrative is, that in the hands of Nandalal the tree grew to its full capacity. The metaphor is hard to miss. However logically, ‘cheena bot’ cannot be the bonsai which Abanindranath gifted, as they belong to two different botanical species. But, for the sake of the analogy which has been derived out of the popular narrative of the campus, the name ‘cheena bot’ has remained and forms a central element in the campus of Kala Bhavan. The oral history or reminiscence about the tree is inconclusive, but its allegory with the formation of the institution, stands strong, and marks the configuration of a space, that would be the habitus of Kala Bhavan. Just as the Bramhacharya ashram started under the trees, nature and its elements habitually became a key component in the learning process at Kala Bhavan. Benode Behari recollects that their curriculum had neither a measured routine nor specific class hours. Students were free to loiter around the campus and sketch whoever they came across. Unlike the Calcutta art school where every subject is allotted a specific studio, students in Kala Bhavan found their subjects all around their campus – life study, flora and fauna, animal study, all were studies through coexistence. Mukherjee added, “It was only when we would translate our learning to art forms, that we would shut ourselves in a room”.<sup>2</sup> The pedagogic thrust of Kala Bhavan was heavily grounded on nature study with seasonal changes providing natural tools for art and environmental engagement.

Within this all important natural setting of the Kala Bhavan campus, this chapter will run through a set of collective programmes and curricular activities of the institution. . Having established the rudimentary arrangement of the institution hitherto, this chapter now moves on to analyse the wide-ranging pedagogic tools, the people who designed them and the artistic experiences, which became Bengal’s cultural harvest. The chapter will navigate through four

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<sup>2</sup> Benode Behari Mukherjee, “Adhunik Shilpa Shiksha” Kanchan Chakraborty (ed.) Chitrakatha, Aruna Prakasani, April 1984. p. 151 (Paraphrased from Bengali)

broad themes – the study tours; the collaborative aspect of art projects like Black House; collection methodologies and the making of Nandan museum; and finally an assimilation of implications of these modes in shaping the curriculum and the practice.

### Travels and Study Tours: The Bagh Excursion

To begin with the first major study tour, the previous chapter cursorily mentioned the Bagh expedition in 1921 by Asit Haldar, Nandalal Bose and Suren Kar. Apart from conducting the project of copying the Bagh Cave murals commissioned by the Archaeological department in Gwalior Estate, the trip provided a crucial insight and impetus towards the formation of a distinct temperament of the institution. All the three teachers, who formed the first faculty nucleus of Kala Bhavan have individually recollected their experience from this field trip in their memoirs (**Fig 6.4**).<sup>3</sup> The analogous sentiment and intent which reflected through all the chronicles, revealed immense need of sharing their experience and knowledge with the student and artist community back in Santiniketan. (**Fig 6.5 a, b, c, d, e**)

Nandalal narrated an incident to his biographer Panchanan Mandal about their shenanigans to secure a separate copy of the Bagh murals for Kala Bhavan students, though an agreement was secured before the project started. However, the Superintendent of the Gwalior Archaeological department, M.B. Garde had kept a close eye on the workings of the assignment and managed to guard the faculty from making a separate copy of the mural for Kala Bhavan. By the end of the two month long Bagh expedition, Nandalal came to the end of his endurance of Garde's bureaucratic control over the mural copies, and decided to work nights to secure a tracing from the copy for Kala Bhavan's collection. The faculty achieved this mission and had secretly

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<sup>3</sup> See *Bharat Shilpi Nandal* by Panchanan Mandal Part II. Sri Durga Press, Bolpur, March 1984; *Bagh Cave and Ramgarh* by Asit Haldar; and "Smriti Charon" in *Robindraporikor Surendranath Kar* (ed.) Sovon Som.

dispatched the tracing roll back to Santiniketan with a coded message. Reporting its safe delivery, a post card was received by Nandalal from Santiniketan. Nandalal asserted that they rejoiced at the news by crying together, *Vandemataram*<sup>4</sup>. The tracing roll is now in the collection of Nandan Museum and the slim long casket which stores the roll is painted with patterns and motifs influenced from Bagh mural. (**Fig 6.6 a, b**).

On their return, the experience of this study tour encouraged these faculty members to include excursions in Kala Bhavan's annual pedagogic calendar, starting with the ancient city of Rajagriha (current day Rajgir) in Bihar. A group of six students from the first official batch of Kala Bhavan— Krishnakinkar Ghosh, Ardhendu Banerjee, Dhirendrakrishna Dev Burman, Ramendranath Chakraborty, Vinayak Masoji, Hariharan, Kalidas Banerjee along with Surendranath Kar and Nandalal left for Bihar during the autumn break of 1921. (**Fig 6.7**) From there, the group travelled to Nalanda, Patna, Gaya, and Bodhgaya trailing the Buddhist pilgrimage route, studying the landscape, archaeological excavation remains, bronze statues, jewellery designs and patterns, architectural styles distinct to Bihar. Students were encouraged to sketch mountains, forests, trees, birds, foliage, animals and anything which would prompt their curiosity and attention; and teachers would guide them when only asked for. The contrasting methodology between the desirable measured proficiency in drawing demanded in the Government School of Art, Calcutta vis a vis the liberty of students to explore their skills through viewing and execution, sums up the pedagogic thrust and aim of both the institutions. From 1921 until Nandalal's retirement in 1951, students of annually travelled to regions of Bihar, Mahababalipuram, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, with the strength of the group increasing from six people to hundred, comprising of male and female students.

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<sup>4</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal Part I*, pp. 563-588

## Hand-Painted Postcards

The other innovative practice which prominently emerged from the Bagh expedition was the use of postcard as a medium for sketching, taking notes and compiling data, apart from being a message carrier. The early history of Kala Bhavan, offered a distinct practice of hand drawn postcards that were exchanged among faculty, students and peers, as a knowledge generating pedagogic tool. A considerable volume of postcards have been found from the Bagh expedition, which demonstrate the nature of drawings that were being inculcated into Kala Bhavan's pedagogic system. The common purview of postcard as an object of popular culture is categorically divergent from analysing the scope of postcard as a tool in art pedagogy. Circulation of images through the exchange and collection of postcards, form a specific narrative of popular communication across the globe. However, this similar trajectory of exchange, circulation and collection when applied to pedagogic purposes transformed as a learning tool in visual arts. This illustration of a cluster of students sitting under the trees with their teacher, is a postcard sent by Asit Haldar from Santiniketan to Nandalal Bose who was still in Calcutta, luring him to join the modest life of Santiniketan. **(Fig 6.8 a, b)** On the other side of the drawing Haldar describes what his living quarter might look like and the kind of tress that would surround it. The scope of this postcard has transferred itself into not just a mode of communication among peers but also in retrospect, an object of art which holds historical as well as pedagogic value; it has become the human element of pictorial engagement, unconstrained by method and material. These exchanged postcards also become compelling archival material, which generates an in-depth understanding of the nuances of this institution. **(Fig 6.9)**

The scope of postcard usage, we find, was not restricted to the aspects of personal and pictorial exchanges. Postcards have been extensively used by Surendranath Kar and Dhirendrakrishna Devburman as well, for documenting objects, designs and patterns which they encountered

during their many travels. (Fig 6.10 a, b) The series of birds arranged in a pattern as drawn by Suren Kar are one among many such postcards, which demonstrate his propensity for the collection of motifs and forms which he further used in Santiniketan's architectural patterns, in *alpona* and as ornamental forms in batik. Beyond the decorative aspect of this pattern formation, horizontal rows of four different kinds of birds, narrates a story, animating the otherwise flat and linear portrayal. The second postcard by Suren Kar is a drawing of a wild boar in block colours, which demonstrates with tenacity of pictorially documenting indigenous forms, during his museum visits. The inscription in Bengali under the figure reads – “three thousand years ago the figure was scratched on the surface of this vessel. What unpretentious colours. How do you like it?” The post card was probably addressed to Nandalal Bose. The postcards by Dhirendrakrishna Dev Burman as well determine similar intention of anthropological research and documentation which was being gradually installed in the pedagogic experiments at Kala Bhavan. The drawing of the Silver Betel box is of a sketchy temperament, with the purpose of recording the character of the craft specimen. The postcard with the drawings of a bird shaped kite and a wooden bell for elephants, is a little more detailed in its drawing, highlighting unique ornamental intricacies. The most ornate of all is the iron and silver nut cracker, drawn swiftly but with care and precision. As opposed to colonial methods of museumization and possession of objects, the collection method in Kala Bhavan were essentially built on research data, and gift specimens.

Among the many new art mediums adopted in Kala Bhavan, postcards were apparently a less assertive tool of imparting skill proficiency and more of a consolidated knowledge building exercise and cultural exchange. They became a medium of dialogue, field notes and art historical anecdotes, which in retrospect, have formed a very critical element in art pedagogical methodologies of the institution. Moving away from geometrical forms or still life objects set within a studio ambience, the students of Kala Bhavan were encouraged to set out in nature



and study natural forms in their seasonal, geographical and aesthetic distinctions. The mobility in outdoor studies was further enhanced by the convenience of carrying postcards and making notes in the form of drawing. It resonated the idea of a collective research model, as opposed to individual legacy of scholarship; and at the same time created an intimate form of exchanges and drawing from experiences, weaved through the community and campus.

### Mural Painting Projects on the Campus

The Bagh expedition made a more fundamental, prominent and lasting impact by bringing mural painting, directly into the teaching methods and legacy of Kala Bhavan. Though R Siva Kumar has chronicled a comprehensive study on the mural traditions of Kala Bhavan, it is pertinent to discuss mural as a collective pedagogic project and the gradual growth of Santiniketan as cultural site bringing art into a new public space. Nandalal's exposure to mural techniques started at the Government School of Art, Calcutta when Havell introduced Jaipur technique through Narashinghalal. Though mural painting remained as part of the school's curriculum, it never managed to mature within the pedagogic programme of the institution. This experience was followed by Nandalal's exposure to the mural tradition of Ajanta he travelled there with Lady Herringham in 1911, which not only inspired Nandalal to experiment with the medium further, but also experiment with the format, scale, composition and subject in his own work. When Nandalal travelled to Bagh, a decade later in 1921, the notes, sketches and tracing sent from Bagh were meant to be copied by the students. This was instructed by Nandalal to be their class work while the faculty was away.<sup>5</sup> This exercise allowed students to get accustomed to the character of the drawings, figure compositions and the schematic nature of Bagh murals and invigorated them to experiment with the process. However, after Suren

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<sup>5</sup> Benode Behari Mukherjee, *Adhunik Shilpa Shiksha*. p. 155

Kar's first attempt of 'Ajanta Technique' on Adi Kutir mural in 1918-19, he attempted 'tempera on wood' process in Satish Kutir the same year. The following two murals were done in Santoshalaya and Dwarik in 1921 as a group project under Nandalal. However none of these murals exist today, nor are any representational image or sketch of the murals were to be found. The first surviving example is Nandalal's Patha Bhavan Old Library mural done in 1923, using earth colour with rice starch as the binding medium. **(Fig 6.11)** During this time, Nandalal with the help of Pandit Haridas Mitra started translating Silpa Sastra, to rediscover treatise in artistic techniques, especially on mural painting.<sup>6</sup> During these various experiments with the technique, Pratima Devi joined Nandalal to paint a mural in a small room of the old library. This experience stimulated Pratima Devi's interest in the medium and she travelled to France in 1924 to learn the Italian Wet Process.<sup>7</sup> On her return, Pratima Devi shared substantial notes on Buon fresco with Benode Behari and Nandalal, introducing a new technique in Kala Bhavan's experiments. In 1930, Nandalal executed the Halakarshan mural at Sriniketan with Buon process, with Benode Behari's assistance. **(Fig 6.12)** While introducing experimental techniques for art forms, Nandalal was also restaging the local everyday like around Santiniketan as subjects which would mirror the rural aesthetics and establish a link with the community around.

Another significant development was the arrival of Narasinghalal in Kala Bhavan in 1927, and an ambitious mural project was conceived for the Patha Bhavan first floor veranda. The panel was divided into two prominent composition – 'Vasanta Utsav' or the spring celebration was composed by Nandalal; and 'Vaitalik' or Procession, was composed by Suren Kar. **(Fig 6.13)**

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<sup>6</sup> Pratima Devi, *My Experiments with Murals*, 1972 (translated by Ajit Kumar Dutta). Originally published in Lalit Kala Contemporary, 1972. Sourced from [https://criticalcollective.in/CC\\_ArchiveInner2.aspx?Aid=277&Eid=615](https://criticalcollective.in/CC_ArchiveInner2.aspx?Aid=277&Eid=615)

<sup>7</sup> Wet Process fresco is called Buon Fresco in which alkaline-resistant pigments, ground in water, are applied to wet plaster. It is opposite from the fresco-secco and finto fresco techniques, in which paints are applied to dried plaster

The murals were executed in collaboration with Narasinghalal in Jaipuri technique.<sup>8</sup> In 1931, another noteworthy mural project was taken up as class work inside the Santoshalaya hall. The team comprised of Nandalal, Benode Behari Mukherjee, Chitraniva Chowdhury, Rani Chanda, Jamuna Sen, Nivedita Bose, Geetha Roy, Gouri Bhanja, Bonbehari Ghosh, Hiren Ghosh, Jadupati Bose, Saratendu Sinha and Rudrappa Hanji.<sup>9</sup> The ratio of female students to male, have always been, if not equal, comparable, in Kala Bhavan, sharing campus life and pedagogic scope, in equal measure; unlike Calcutta art school's bureaucratic policy of inducting female students to the institution, on conditions of designing separate and appropriate curriculum and eligible teachers for them.<sup>10</sup> **(Fig 6.14)**

Between 1938 and 1949, a series of murals were done inside the Kala Bhavan Boys hostel, which stands opposite to the Kala Bhavan campus. Blocks of rooms scattered across the stretch, is designed as an open space concept, unlike Sree Sadan and Ananda Sadan girls hostel. Among many blocks of clustered rooms, three blocks were selected to execute murals on as class work. The first mural was executed in the veranda of the North Eastern block, under Benode Behari's supervision, in 1939 **(Fig 6.15)**. The mural is an assortment of various indigenous forms and motifs, along with characters from the campus and its surroundings. Spread across the ceiling, walls and columns, the composition is not a coherent one but plays to the quirks of the space. **(Fig 6.16 a, b, c, d)** Breaking away from the academic constructs of composition, balance and thematic parity, Benode Behari encouraged the multiple participant with multiple forms, represented through the space. The mural underlines the coexistence of diverse forms and entities, breaking away from the scroll format of mural compositions.

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<sup>8</sup> Jaipuri fresco, also known as Sekhawati Painting, is also a form of wet process, where thick layer of pigment is directly applied on the wet plaster lime surface.

<sup>9</sup> *The Santiniketan Murals*, p. 87

<sup>10</sup> Tenth Quinquennial Review

The North West Block of the boy's hostel is broadly Benode Behari's composition of the Birbhum Landscape. (Fig 6.17 a b) The bird's eye view of Birbhum's red soil is inverted to challenge the perceived point of view. The experiment with space, composition and viewing methods, make this work a key example of Kala Bhavan's radical pedagogic methodology. Executed in egg tempera, like most of his murals, Benode Behari's legacy in landscape painting reaches a culmination through this mural. In the West Block of the Boy's hostel, there are three segments of mural executed in 1949. The north wing of the block showcase 'Life of Budhha' a series of episodic murals done by the students of Kala Bhavan, under Biswarup Bose's supervision (Fig 6.18 a, b). Murals in the South wing of the West Block represent 'Life of Christ', supervised by A. Perumal and Vinayak Masoji (Fig 6.19 a, b). The west wing of the same block is a series of scenes from Hindu mythology, implemented under Gouri Banja's supervision (fig 6.20 a, b). All the murals in the boy's hostel are done through the process of egg tempera.

These murals go a long way to show how Kala Bhavan was displacing the preeminent methods of engaging with a public space, and blending place of work with place of living. The murals in Ajanta or Bagh, or the temple sculptures in Orissa or Khajuraho, exists in the architectural or spatial scope in which they were created. The practice of separating sculptures from its shrines, was a practice which had been regulated through colonial institutions in the pretext of museum collection. Through the larger project of mural paintings, Kala Bhavan restored the artistic energies back to the campus community. Due to the rise of urban spaces since the British rule, location of art too had shifted from cultural or ritualistic experiences to gallery and museum spaces. The methods of viewing art too was evolving with it, and so did its relation with the mass. Therefore this alternate ambit of site, space, geography, and environment amplified through the practice of mural painting in Kala Bhavan, stands to be of vital significance in the conditions of viewing modern art in India.

## The Black House Project

Tracking the trajectory of hostel and spaces of living, the other vital project in which the entire community of Kala Bhavan embarked on, was the Black House (Kalo Bari) mural (**Fig 6.21**). Initiated primarily as an infrastructural need, Nandalal Bose and Ramkinkar Baij transformed the dearth in resources to opportunity.<sup>11</sup> This Black house stands as one of the most important collective art projects of Kala Bhavan, which started as a functional need, and emerged as a unique pedagogic experiment. Driven by a purpose of occupying the space after its completion, the project cannot be analysed in a way, art historical objects are analysed. The experience is different of a person who occupied that space vis-à-vis a person who can just walk past the structure – the latter will not discover the layers of ingenuity in equal measure. Given the geographical location, a mud house with a thatched roof is the indigenous system of living. The humble structure of the Black House is in complete resonance with vernacular architecture of the surrounding villages, which diminishes the institutional elitism and bridges the gap of social standing.

There are about thirty six relief sculptures done on the walls of the Black House. Among them eleven relief panels are selected portions from the Mattancherry Palace mural “Marriage of Shiva’ and *dwarpala* figures based on Aihole sculptures.<sup>12</sup> (**Fig 6.22 a, b**) On the northern side of the Black House are relief copies of Egyptian, Assyrian Lion, Indus Valley Bull and examples from Bharhut, and Pallava art traditions. Drawing from this varied range of art historical illustrations, Black House becomes a pedagogic ‘museum viewing’ experience for the students and faculty of Kala Bhavan. Constructing a radical structure like Black House in the middle of the campus goes to show how the institution was built not of predetermined

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<sup>11</sup> R Siva Kumar, “The Black House: In the Context of Santiniketan Murals” *Black House*, Visva-Bharati, 2016, p, 32

<sup>12</sup> Arun Nag, R. Siva Kumar, Jayanta Chakrabarti. *The Santiniketan Murals*, Seagull Books in association with Viswa Bharati, 1995. p. 26

canons but on terms of social and cultural responsiveness. The project of Black House was completed during 1938.

To bring the discourse of Bagh expedition to a full circle, a group of students, under Biswarup Bose's guidance in 1937, executed a portion of the Bagh mural, based on the tracing which Nandalal had sent to Kala Bhavan. The Old Nandan building extended a hall on its west end, which was named after Havell in 1938, after Mrs Havell donated his paintings and books to Visva-Bharati that year. Occupying the entire breadth of the west wall, the copy of the Bagh mural was one of the finest copies. Also the scale and the composition proved to be monumental in its scope. On the opposite wall of Bagh mural copy, another set of students in 1949 (Jagdish Mittal, E. Kumaril Swamy, Vinapani Kanakararatnam, and Sonali Sengupta) copied Ajanta mural under Vinayak Masoji's guidance. (**Fig 6.23 a, b, c**). This larger than life scale of art works began to displace smaller formats of painting on the Kala Bhavan campus. The practice of mural paintings in various scale remained a persistent device of activating the odd corners of the campus. Ramkinkar Baij inspired by this idiom of scale and monumentality, created the 'Santhal Family' in 1938. However, the campus aesthetics which he was developing in Santiniketan remained a one man show, where the community engagement got activated through his works.

### Surendranath Kar

However, in this chapter's argument about 'space' and its formation as a key constituent of Kala Bhavan, the most vital contribution was by Surendranath Kar, who shaped a conducive atmosphere for the creating the entire expanse of Santiniketan campus into an artistic site. (**Fig 6.24**) Much of modern Indian art history has been written focusing on the object, than on the experience of it. The kinds of intervention that the artist and student community in Kala Bhavan

were exercising require a different approach of analysing its cultural impact. Likewise, in case of Suren Kar, the lack of dialogue on his methodology and practice, shows the problem of art writing methodologies and research in India. Without a focused body of art work, the contribution of an artist cannot be categorised or studied. The probability of discussion gets slimmer when his works have not been documented or collected or represented. However, from a finer scrutiny of the institutional history of Santiniketan, it can be gathered that Suren Kar was one of those people in Santiniketan who had offered his services in any scope required. As one of the first faculty members of Kala Bhavan, his involvement with the institution can be tracked along with the progressive shifts in its orientation. And Suren Kar's most important work has been in planning the architectural style of Santiniketan.

Kshitish Roy wrote, "Suren babu was literally and figuratively one of the architects of Santiniketan... Since its incorporation as a university, Santiniketan has seen many buildings come up and many more will probably be built. But, I daresay, even the biggest and costliest of them cannot compare with Udayana and Shyamoli."<sup>13</sup> Suren Kar planned Udayan, Chaitya, Konark, Shyamali, Punashcha, Kala Bhavan Nandan, present Patha Bhavan/ Old Library and all the furniture housed in Udayan. **(Fig 6.25 a, b, c, d)** Through Suren Kar's own reminiscence, he provides a linear description of the gradual expansion of the campus of Santiniketan. This account is crucial in understanding the institutional stimulus of the site being integral in the formation of its pedagogy and equally Suren Kar's provident contribution in the making of Santiniketan. The earliest topography of the site consisted of the Santiniketan house, chhatim-tola and Shishu Bibhag at the south eastern end; the south western side of the campus that now breaks up into the premises of general kitchen, Sree Sadan girl's hostel and Kala Bhavan, which was initially an empty expanse with sporadic thorn bushes. Architectural markings in that area

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<sup>13</sup> Kshitish Roy." In Memorium: Surendranath Kar". Som, Sovan (ed.) Robindroporikor: Surendranath Kar (1892-1970). Anustup, Calcutta 1993, p. 180

is the first introduction of the institution. It is within that definition of space that the identity of the institutional aesthetics and its ideology gets reflected.

Surendranath Kar was also a travel companion of Rabindranath Tagore. He travelled with him to Shilaidaha, Pithapuram, Hajipur, Mysore, and several other places in India. In 1924 he travelled with him across Europe. On his return to Santiniketan, he started teaching lithography to the students of Kala Bhavan, among whom Ramendranath Chakraborty was one of his first students'. In 1927, Suren Kar travelled to Indonesia, Malaya, Java and Sumatra along with Tagore and Dharendra Krishna Deb Burman. During this trip Suren Kar extensively documented the process of Batik, a resist dye technique and Indonesian costumes, which strongly influenced of aesthetic of costume designing in Santiniketan.<sup>14</sup> Over time, Batik has become a synonym for Santiniketan. The cultural acceptance and popularity it has gained through Santiniketan, have almost erased the Indonesian cultural lineage of the craft, and Suren Kar was singularly instrumental in propagating Batik in Santiniketan.

To study the pedagogy of Kala Bhavan, through the conceptual scheme of space as a connecting point, allows the observation and interpretation to expand its scope to subjective reading. The difference in the analytical study of the teaching at the Government School of Art, Calcutta and Kala Bhavan is located not only in the different temperament of art pedagogy and artistic methodology, but also in the approach with which the institutions have been conceived and their histories have been preserved. But even if the different parallel histories can be regulated, the disparity in their spatial and cultural profiles cannot be synchronised. From the moment of germination of Kala Bhavan, every history or anecdote about Santiniketan has been marked by a defined space. Apart from architecture and outdoor sculptures which command and define the mise en scène, emerged the centrality of the practice of *alpona* in Santiniketan.

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<sup>14</sup> Suren Kar, Robindroporikor: Surendranath Kar (1892- 1970) Som, Sovan (ed.) Anustup, Calcutta 1993, p. 24



### Alpona as Public Art

Celebration of seasons is of primacy in the institution's yearly plan and is woven through the pedagogy of the institution. It is more pertinent in case of Kala Bhavan, as the broader responsibility of the preparation is usually given to the institution. Visva-Bharati celebrates Basanta Utsav (spring festival), Varsha Mangal (monsoon festival), Ananda Bazar (autumn festival), Poush Mela (winter festival). And *Alpona* is the central commemorative symbol of all occasions in the university. Kshitimohan Sen was the first proponent of *alpona* in Santiniketan.<sup>15</sup> Sen along Vidhushekhari Shashtri and some of his students used to recite *Slokas* from Vedic texts, which are relevant to the celebration, and draw *alpona* on the floor with *Panchaguri* (powder of five different colours). When Nandalal Bose was ceremonially invited by Rabindranath to Santiniketan, Asit Haldar drew *alpona* around his sitting arrangement to commemorate the event. This form of *alpona* exercised in Visva Bharati was not votive in nature. Rather the form and purpose of *alpona* was modified to reflect the ideological and cultural standing of the institution.

In the Early history of Santiniketan ashram, drawing of *alpona* was limited to occasional purposes. In 1921, a woman from very humble background joined Kala Bhavan in the first batch of students. She was discovered by Rabindranath Tagore for her drawing skills in *alpona* and had asked her to join his ashram. Sukumari Devi, a young widow, neglected my family found her home in Kala Bhavan and her guide in Nandalal Bose. A woman with no prior education but an acute sense of aesthetics became a faculty in Kala Bhavan by 1923. On Sukumari Devi's insistence, Nandalal added *alpona* to the pedagogic programme of Kala Bhavan. (**Fig 6.26 a, b, c**) Along with *alpona*, Sukumari Devi also taught embroidery to the female student of Kala Bhavan, and developed decoration patterns.<sup>16</sup> The distinct legacy of

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<sup>15</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part II, p. 562

<sup>16</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal* Part II, p. 562

ornamental and decorative patterns the public art practice of Kala Bhavan evolved through Sukumari Devi. Gauri Bhanja, Jamuna Bose, Chitraniva Chowdhury and Gita Roy was Sukumari Devi's students and worked with her closely on Kala Bhavan's distinct ornamental forms. "She drew *alponas* in the traditional style with finger tips dipped in rice paste. Her *alponas* were freehand drawings, as in the traditional *alponas* without much preparation or measurement"<sup>17</sup> observed Swati Ghosh, who has worked extensively on the design traditions in Santiniketan. It is also discernable that a room for gender distinction between art and craft practices was finding its growth among male and female students of Kala Bhavan gradually, where female students were encouraged more towards the decorative pattern works through *alpona* and embroidery instructions.<sup>18</sup> (Fig 27 a, b, c, d)

By introducing a domestic, informal and ritualistic form of drawing into an art institutions pedagogic scope, Nandalal breathed in a greater socio-cultural dynamics to the form of *alpona*, as well as enriched the narrative of traditional forms of drawing in Indian art. Arthur Geddes, who had extensively researched the existing architectural styles in and around Bolpur, and, like Suren Kar, planned and designed a few structures in Sriniketan, observed, "the designs vary from simple patterns to quite complex designs of flowing lines with birds, beasts and fishes used as motifs, but always treated very decoratively, and conventionally, though often with verve and grace."<sup>19</sup> Following Abanindranath and his research on Bengal's votive rituals, Nandalal took a forward trajectory of reinterpreting and refining ornamental patterns, which would be more in synchrony with the aesthetics of the space.<sup>20</sup> Abanindranath's designs as well

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<sup>17</sup> Swati Ghosh, *Design Movement in Tagore's Santiniketan*. p. 87

<sup>18</sup> However among men, Nani Gopal Ghosh was one of the earliest proponents of design pedagogy in Kala Bhavan. More recently, Sudhiranjan Mukherjee, is a prominent artist in Santiniketan, with expertise in *Alpona*.

<sup>19</sup> Ghosh, *Design Movement in Tagore's Santiniketan*. (Arthur Geddes Correspondence)

<sup>20</sup> Abanindranath Tagore, *Banglar Brata*. Visva Brarati Publications. Santiniketan 1943. *Banglar Brata* by Abanindranath Tagore, written in 1919, is a seminal research work on the traditions of *alpona* and other indigenous domestic rituals in Bengal. These rituals were strongly associated with married as well as unmarried women of household.

as the lineage of Santiniketan *alpona* is intricate but controlled, elaborate but refined. This form of decorative pattern which does not require an object to hold its craft, but simply exists in space to add value and beauty, becomes a site specific artistic form. Therefore the tradition of *alpona* has not only survived and grown in Santiniketan, but have also intensified its visual impact. As *alpona* entered into the scheme of class room, its influence has been paramount on the larger design programme of Santiniketan. (Fig 6.28)

## Section II

### Method to Material – Campus to Community

#### The Nandan Museum Collection

Drawing from the collective nature of art practices which has been discussed until now, the chapter now enters the practice of object collection in Kala Bhavan. The institution from its foundational moment have fostered the ambit of collecting art and artefacts, as a resource point for pedagogic needs. In the early photographs of Kala Bhavan, when the institution used to operate out of one hall space in Dwarik or the Old Library building, one will notice the line of art works displayed, or stacked around the skirts of the room. When Kala Bhavan was finally shifted to its current campus of Old Nandan in 1929, the central room of the structure was built with the purpose of a museum.<sup>21</sup> (Fig 6.29 a, b) The first significant collection of objects which reached the museum and was recorded, were the multiple post card drawings by Nandalal Bose,

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<sup>21</sup> VB Annual Report, 1929

Suren Kar and Asit Haldar from Bagh, and the Bagh mural tracing. While the scheme of the documentation project and the connotation of the post cards have been previously discussed, it is important to observe here how a documentation methodology was developing. Countering a dominating colonial system of acquisition, collection, classification and representation, the Kala Bhavan faculty was digging deeper from tracking object histories to sensing its cultural nuances, and building a visual as well as an empirical inventory of varied art practices. (Fig 6.30 a, b, c)

This methodology was a continuous but an unregulated process as this format of knowledge resource gathering would only be possible when the teachers of Kala Bhavan were travelling. After the Bagh excursion, the other significant opportunity that came to Kala Bhavan was Rabindranath Tagore's journey to Java, Bali, Indonesia, Malaya and Sumatra. Tagore, in most of his journeys would invite an artist from Kala Bhavan to accompany him in his trail. This was perhaps Tagore's way of providing artist-teachers various cultural exposures. For his Java trip, Tagore invited Suren Kar, and Dharendra Krishna Deb Burman, to accompany him, along with E. Ariam, Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Mr and Mrs A. A. Bake. The trip was for a little over three months, and on their return, Suren Kar recollects that the trip was a tremendous learning curve for him.<sup>22</sup> As previously discussed in this chapter, the cultural knowledge and their specimens which they collected proved to be of extreme significance to the aesthetic moorings of Santiniketan. A comprehensive collection of postcards from the Indonesia trip, which documented artefacts, costumes, toys, motifs etc., with notes, are in the Nandan museum repository. The museum further received "valuable collection of art and crafts examples collected by Rabindranath Tagore from Java, Bali and Siam".<sup>23</sup> In 1929, when the institution was being shifted along with the museum collections, Nandalal Bose started building an

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<sup>22</sup> Sovon Som (ed.) *Rabindra Porikor*, p. 24

<sup>23</sup> VB Annual Report 1927

illustrated catalogue of the Nandan Museum collection. (Fig 6.31) The entries in the catalogue of almost all objects are hand drawn and recorded by Nandalal, making the first catalogue of Nandan Museum too, a vital art historical precedent in collection and documentation methodology. Following this exemplar, documenting cultural objects or examples of artistic interest became part of Kala Bhavan's pedagogy. This methodology also allowed sharing the knowledge with in the community, as opposed to art collecting tendencies for private possession. However, as briefly touched upon in Chapter Four, this collection in Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum, still stands as one of the most pivotal collection of South-east Asian artistic range in India, it is crucial to question the invisibility and accountability of this broad range of objects that is in the strong-room of the museum. Tapati Guha-Thakurta's essay *Dialogues in Artistic Nationalism*, throw light into the repository and the invaluable paintings and copies by Kampo Arai, Hishida Shunso, Yokoyama Taikan and much more.<sup>24</sup> It is essential that its collection gain a public life for greater scholarly interventions and act on the purpose of the museum.

The Nandan museum collection also holds paintings of former students and teachers, archaeological specimens, broad samples of textiles, Thangka paintings, manuscripts, terracotta tablets and heads, relief sculptures, casts of terracotta temples, selection of dolls and toys across south east Asia, Pata Painting from various regions of Bengal, a considerable portion of *kantha* and *batik*, making it an extensive collection of Eastern Indian and Southeast art and crafts.

#### Rotation Method and Study Charts

Alongside the museum collection, Nandalal established a distinct arrangement of students in a 'Circular' method (Rotation method as expressed by Benode Behari or Wheel System, as

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<sup>24</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Dialogues in Artistic Nationalism" *Art India*. Vol XIV, Issue III, 2009. pp. 22-43

described by Sovon Som) of training in Kala Bhavan during 1930s.<sup>25</sup> Conceptual Artwork, Nature Study and Traditional Copy were instituted as three fundamental categories of the subject scope of 'Fine Arts' education. Nandalal devised a 'Study-Chart' where a group of six students, would explore a certain module under a specific teacher who commanded expertise on that technique, for a week or a fortnight, and then progress to another module under another teacher. Here is an example of a study chart for 1950<sup>26</sup>

#### Study Chart

1. Students grouped in outer circle, will receive instructions from their respective teachers in the subjects mentioned in the Syllabus.
2. The working hours with the teachers will be morning five periods only.
3. The afternoon periods will be considered as study-time, when the students will continue their work, and, if necessary, consult their respective teachers for guidance, if they are free.
4. As the works are finished, they will be exhibited for a short duration, in the Havel Hall. This will be known as the 'Running Exhibition'.
5. At the end of the terms and before Puja vacation, there will be two exhibitions – Student's works and studies; and Teacher's works and studies.
6. The Library will remain open in the afternoon. Students desirous of consulting any particular book or Museum collection should get written recommendation from their respective teachers.

Under this scheme, the classes of attempting an original art work, of nature study and making copies of traditional paintings were conducted for students in the above mentioned sequence, to establish the foundational stages of their learning. Benode Behari recalls in *Adhunika*

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<sup>25</sup> Sovon Som, *Shilpo Shiksha O Ouponibeshik Bharat*, p. 400

<sup>26</sup> Mandal, *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*, Part III, pp. 8-9

*Shilpa Shiksha*, that initiating the teaching order with execution of an original art work first enabled the teachers to evaluate and understand the student's creative integrity. Depending on their observation, the teachers would then direct them towards exploring and improving desired technical skills required for their creative impetus. This teaching methodology fostered the idea of considering every student as an individual aspiring artist who were to learn projecting their individual voice and perception through their art practice; which was quite contrary to the artistic aim of the colonial art schools. Though these three subject premise were also taught at the Government School of Art, Calcutta, art students there would only get the opportunity to explore the subject specialisations in a stipulated manner of linear progression. The scope of colonial structure of art education allowed a student to first to gain satisfactory proficiency in copying skills in model and still life study and then progress to perfect the academic naturalism; only after satisfactory results would an art student be allowed to exercise the option of exploring independent visual compositions. This methodological difference between both the art schools, found manifestation in the distinct artistic character and inheritance, of both the schools.

Apart from the 'Rotation Method', there were two other pedagogic practices that were implemented by Nandalal in Kala Bhavan which were called 'Mutual Respect' for all and, 'Studio or Guild System'. The studio system was a tradition that found its way in Kala Bhavan through the legacy of Abanindranath's Bichitra Studio, where teachers and students would simultaneously work together in the same space, and classes would happen in the mode of a dialogue. The inclusion of mutual respect within pedagogic methodology of Kala Bhavan was an indication of developing a habit of ethical discipline that, in Nandalal's view, every artists should imbibe. Nandalal clarified that lack of respect for artistic views of others and more importantly the natural privileging of a teacher's knowledge and experience, will only lead to conflicted ambience of learning, which is never conducive for any creative engagement. Yet in

the end, an indication of conservative approach towards sanctification and canonisation of the foundational ideals of Kala Bhavan pedagogy can be observed. The last prospectus created by Nandalal in 1951, before his retirement also backs his concern in perpetuating his pedagogic legacy.

There were no departmental divisions in Kala Bhavan, until the 1960s. From two prospectus published in the *Visva-Bharati Bulletin*, one made in 1938 and the other which was the last Kala Bhavan prospectus under Nandalal Bose's direction in 1951, reveal a shifting and concentrated course structure for the institution<sup>27</sup>. The categories addressed through the prospectus were – i) Principle of Training, ii) Museum & Art Library, iii) Course, iv) Studios, v) Extra Facilities, and vi) Residential Arrangements. The first difference that can be noticed among the two prospectuses is the course period – The *Visva-Bharati Diploma* course, and the certificate course were the only two programmes, offered by the institution until 1967, which were of five years in case of diploma, until 1938; it was then reduced to four years in 1951. The syllabus structure offered in 1938 was – Free Hand Drawing, Still Life, Nature Study, Painting, Copying, Enlarging and Reducing, Designing, Ornamental Drawing, Fresco Painting, Clay Modelling, Terracotta, Lino-cut and wood-cut, Etching, Architectural Drawing and wood block painting, artistic leather work, and Batik<sup>28</sup>. The prospectus also mentions that, though there were no explicit and dedicated routine conducted for 'theoretical study of Art' in the syllabus, the students were encouraged to consult the library regularly under the guidance of their teachers.

However, in the 1951 prospectus, certain clear structural changes were made to the course work of Kala Bhavan. The four years Diploma, initially admitted students on a probation of six months. During those six months, if the candidates were found to be of the desired "aptitude

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pp. 415- 422

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 420



for Fine Arts and the Ashrama life is found satisfactory” they were permitted to continue with the course work. The subjects offered as well, project a more compressed programme, with the removal of Still life, Enlarging and Reducing, and inclusion of Wood-engraving and Coloured wood Block printing. The 1951 prospectus also records that if the student possess “special taste for some particular subject, (they) may be allowed to continue his studies in the subject, even after the completion of the usual four years course, provided his conduct as an inmate of the Ashram is found satisfactory”. This process of prospectus planning and standardisation of a class routine, indicates that Kala Bhavan too was shifting towards a pedagogic regulation, which it had challenged in case of the colonial lineage of the Academic art education in Government School of Art, Calcutta. The stipulation of ‘satisfactory conduct’ from a student fit for the Santiniketan ashram, also stand out as a rupture in Rabindranath Tagore’s vision where “...this institution should be perpetual creation by a co-operative enthusiasm of teachers and students, growing with the growth of their soul; a world in itself, self-sustained, independent, rich with ever renewing life, radiating life across space and time”<sup>29</sup> In course of time with Tagore’s demise, the realities of Santiniketan altered and with it shifted the perception of ‘universal brotherhood’ within the campus of the institution. Though the prospectus did not mention any standard examination routine within the course structure during 1951, and that the Kala Bhavan students still could exercise the liberty of exploring cross disciplinary modes of art practice, before the ‘specialisation course’ was initiated within a decade, the sanctification of Kala Bhavan pedagogy was already in progress, under Nandala Bose.

The main compulsory subjects offered for diploma in 1951 were – i) Original Painting or Modelling, ii) Free Hand Drawing, iii) Nature Study, iv) Decorative and Ornamental Work, v) Copying traditional paintings, and vi) Knowledge of Clay Modelling. A further division was

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<sup>29</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “An Eastern University”, *Building New India*. p. 22

offered in Technical skill development in two groups - The compulsory Group A included – i) Process of Tempera Painting with different media and materials, ii) Process of Wash painting, iii) Brush work, iv) Mural Painting (Fresco Wet Process, Ajanta Process, Egg Tempera) and v) Lino-cut and Wood engraving. The Optional B Group included i) Coloured Wood block printing, ii) Needle work, iii) Batik, iv) Artistic Leather work, v) *Alpana*, vi) Elementary Architectural Drawing, viii) Stage and Festival Decoration, and viii) Knowledge of Teaching. This detailed categorisation observed in the syllabus by the end of Nandalal's tenure, suggests the predomination of painting, sculpture and design in Kala Bhavan's pedagogic thrust. (Fig 6.32 a, b, c, d, e)

The wash technique never found its footing in the Kala Bhavan curriculum and according to the 1938 prospectus, Kala Bhavan was determining its own route of painting traditions, moving out from the Bengal School tendencies. However, Benode Behari recollects, that by 1935-1940, the European influences of modernist styles were seeping into the imagination of the art students in Kala Bhavan. As most of the art students worked as Nandalal's assistant in his mural projects, there were pedagogic harmony in their tutelage. However, as the female students habitually worked under Nandalal, they were guarded from the range of stylistic 'isms' tested in Europe, to find its place in their artwork; but those influences were observed in the work of the male students in their own conceptual composition. Consequently, Nandalal initiated a module of 'copying' from traditional Indian art styles into the curriculum. Nandalal bought an album of paintings called the 'Lucknow Birds' from an art dealer and that became central and compulsory to the exercise of 'copy' in Kala Bhavan.<sup>30</sup>

The Painting and the Sculpture department was officially established in 1967 and the Department of Graphic Art (Printmaking) in 1968. In 1958, Art History became a taught and

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<sup>30</sup> Mukherjee, *Adhunik Shipa Shiksha*, p. 174

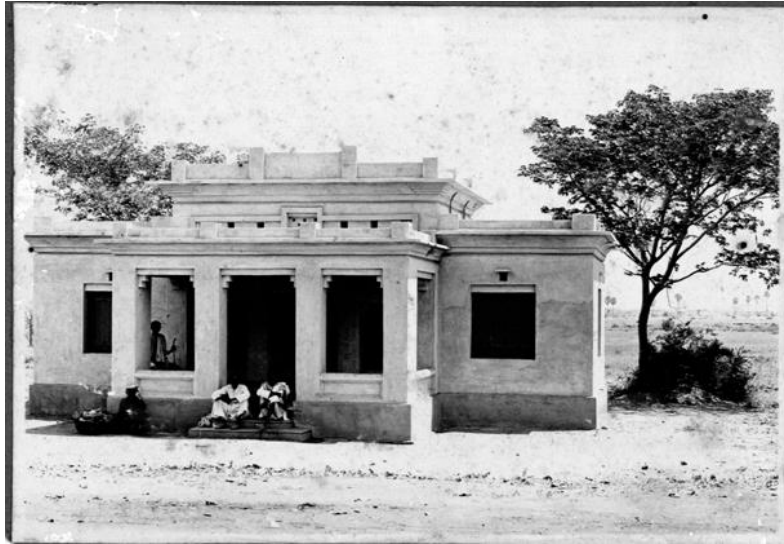
examined course in Kala Bhavan, which also happens to be the first instance of any art institution in India to do so.<sup>31</sup> It would be a decade later, when Kala Bhavan was restructured along the University disciplinary lines under Dinkar Kowshik, that an independent Department of Art History was established along with other subjects.<sup>32</sup> In 1951-1952, Surendranath Kar, who took the responsibility of Kala Bhavan after Nandalal, initiated the design certificate course for the female students<sup>33</sup>. However, the unrestricted use of methods and material during the pre-specialisation period of Kala Bhavan allowed the pedagogic experiment of familiarising the art students and also the faculty with path breaking art projects in Santiniketan, and immensely facilitated the range and diversity of modernist practices that came out of the place. The thesis has argued until now that the modernity in the artistic movement of Kala Bhavan should be traced through its pedagogic process, parallel to the individual careers and credentials of the Santiniketan masters. Moving away from writing the history of modernism through individual artists and art movements, using this chapter as a core example, this thesis demonstrates the alternative importance of a community and collective approach to artistic endeavours, and argues that it is this Santiniketan matrix of campus, community and dialogues in cross-disciplinary artistic expressions which is at the core of much of twenty-first interventionist art practices across the globe.

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<sup>31</sup> The Department of Art History and Aesthetics in M.S. University Baroda was established in 1965.

<sup>32</sup> Annual Report, Visva-Bharati, 2016-17, p. 248

<sup>33</sup> Mukherjee, *Adhunik Shilpa Shiksha*, p. 106



**Figure 6.1 a)**–Kala Bhavan – Nandan (Old Nandan) was designed by Surendranath Kar and open in 1929. Photographer Unknown. Image Collection and Source: Rabindra Bhavan Archives, Visva-Bharati.



**Figure 6.1 b)** One of the oldest surviving logo of ‘Nandan’ found in the earliest structure of the Kala Bhavan campus or the Old Nandan (currently Graphics dept.)

c) Current logo of ‘Nandan’ at the History of Art Dept. Kala Bhavan. Image Source: Author



**Figure 6.2 a)** – Gradual evolution of the ‘Nandan’ structure, image from rear side of the building. Photographer Unknown. Image Collection and Source: RabindraBhavan Archives, Visva-Bharati



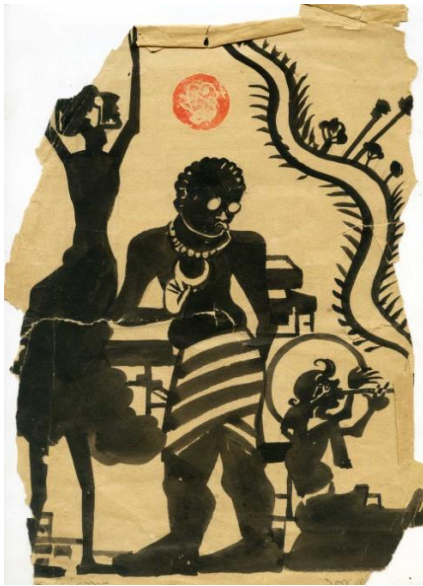
**Figure 6.2 b)** – The current ‘Old Nandan’ structure and the entrance of the Graphics Dept. adorned by SomnathHore’s tile mural. Image Source - Author



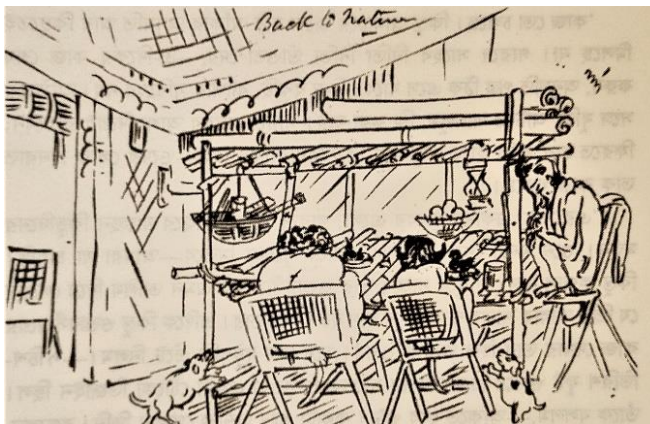
**Figure 6.3 a)** – ‘Cheena Bot’ in front of ‘Old Nandan’ or the Current Graphics Dept, Kala Bhavan. Image Source - Author



**Figure 6.3 b)** – Nandalal Bose, second from left, with his students and the banyan bonsai in Kala Bhavan. Photographer unknown. Image collection & Source – RabindraBhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati.



**Figure 6.4** - Caricature drawing by Nandalal Bose of AsitHaldar, SurenKar and himself on a postcard. Collection - Prof. Malini Bhattacharya. Courtesy – Visual Archives, CSSSC



**Figure 6.5 a)** - Postcard Sketch by Nandalal Bose during Bagh Expedition. Source: Bharat ShilpiNandalal. Image Source – *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*



**Figure 6.5 b)** – Postcard drawing by AsitHaldar during the Bagh excursion in 1921. Collection - Prof. Malini Bhattacharya. Image Source – Visual Archives, CSSSC

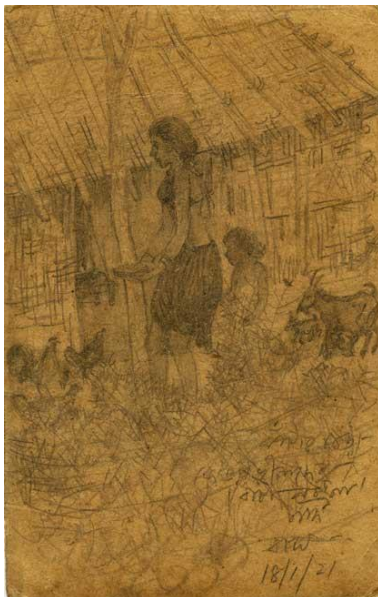


**Figure 6.5 c)** – Postcard drawing of their makeshift tents by SurendranathKar during the Bagh Excursion in 1921. Image Source – *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*



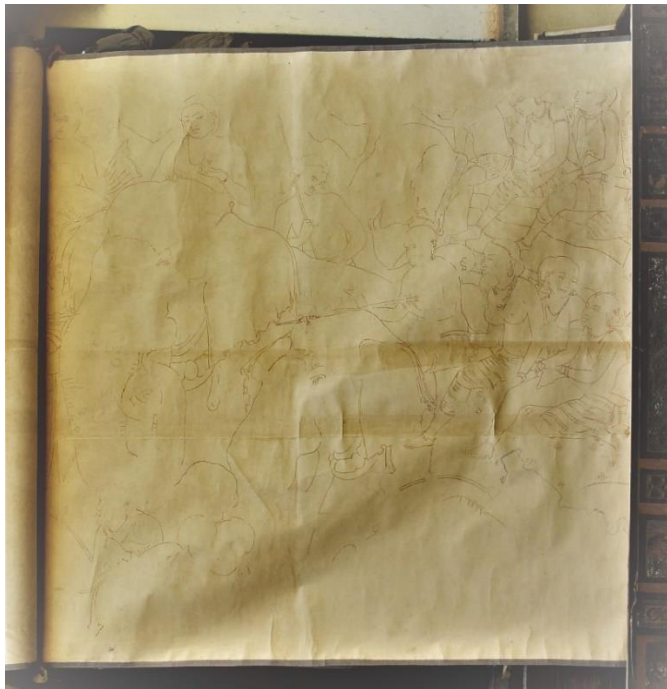
বাগ গুহার অবস্থা – সুরেন্দ্রনাথ কর

**Figure 6.5 d)** – Drawing of the exterior of the Bagh Caves by SurendranathKar in 1921. Image Source – *Bharat ShilpiNandalal*



**Figure 6.5 e)** – Drawing of a Bhil woman by Nandalal Bose during the Bagh excursion in 1921. Collection - Prof. Malini Bhattacharya. Courtesy – Visual Archives, CSSSC

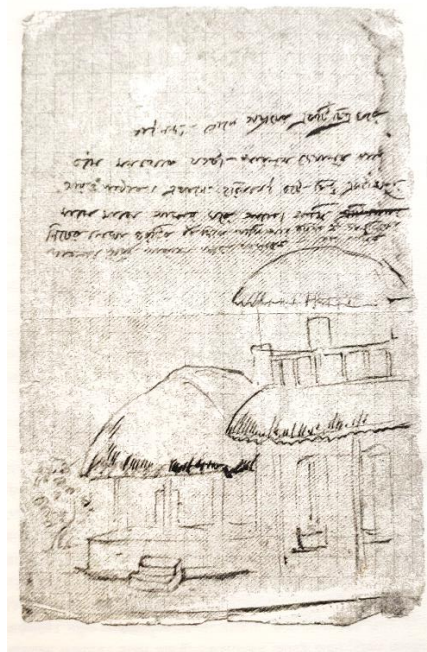




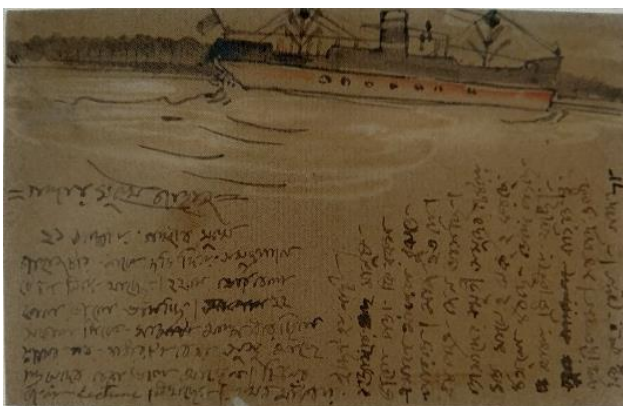
**Figure 6.6 a)**– The tracing scroll of a section of the Bagh mural, that Nandalal Bose sent to Kala Bhavan from the excursion in 1921. **b)** – The painted casket in the patterns and motifs from Bagh mural, in which the scroll was sent by Nandalal Bose. Collection & Image Source – Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum Archive.



**Figure 6.7** – Nandalal Bose during one of the Study-Tours of Kala Bhavan. Photographer unknown. Image collection & Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati.



**Figure 6.8 a)** – Postcard sent by Asit Haldar to Nandalal Bose in 1915, describing the campus life of the Santiniketan ashram. **b)** – Reverse side of the same postcard with a short note to Nandalal, illustrating the humble beginning of the ashram. Image Source – *Bharat Shilpi Nandalal*



**Figure 6.9** – Postcard sketch of a ship, which carried Nandalal Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Kalidas Nag and L. Elmhirst to Burma, China and Malaysia in 1924, by Nandalal Bose. Collection – Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum Archive. Image Courtesy – *Rhythms of India: The Art of Nandalal Bose*, San Diego Museum of Art.



**Figure 6.10 a)** – Rows of different birds in multiple rows, drawn by SurendranathKar on post card.  
**b)** – A postcard drawing of Wild Boar in Block Colours, By SurendranathKar. Collection and Image Courtesy – Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum Archive.



**Figure 6.11** – Drawing by Nandalal of Narsinghalal and SurenKar working on a panel in PathaBhavan. Image Source – *The Santiniketan Murals*



**Figure 6.12** – A selected portion from the panoramic mural 'Halakarshan' in Sriniketan, by Nandalal Bose in 1930. Image Source – *The Santiniketan Murals*



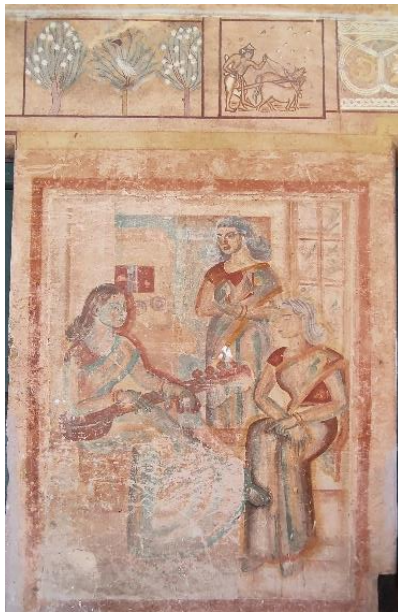
**Figure 6.13** – Top Panel is part of the Vaitalik mural done by SurendranathKar at PathaBhavan. Bottom Pannel is Vasanta utsav or the Spring Festival by Nandalal Bose in the same location. Source – *The Santiniketan Murals*



**Figure 6.14** – Students of Kala Bhavan painting mural inside the Design Studio. Collection & Image Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati



**Figure 6.15** – North-East wing of the Kala Bhavan Boy's Hostel, adjacent to Kala Bhavan Campus, where student worked on mural under Benodebehari Mukherjee's supervision in during late 1930s. Image source – Author



**Figure 6.16 a)** – Portion of the mural project in the North-East block of the Boy’s Hostel, depicting music students of the institution practicing in their studio. **b)** – The list of students who worked under Benodebehari Mukherjee for this project, painted within the mural space. Image Source – Author.



**Figure 6.16 c)** - Portion of the mural project in the North-East block of the Boy’s Hostel, depicting scenes from Persian Miniature. Image Source – Author.



**Figure 6.16 d)** - Portion of the ceiling and decorative panels of the mural project in the North-East block of the Boy’s Hostel. Image Source – Author.



**Figure 6.17 a)** – ‘Birbhum Landscape’ by Benodebehari Mukherjee on the ceiling of the North wing of Kala Bhavan Boy’s Hostel. Image Source - Author



**Figure 6.17 b)** – The walls of the North wing of the Boy’s Hostel, depicting the people in and around Birbhum. Image Source - Author



**Fig 6.18 a, b)** – Details from the ‘Life of Buddha’ mural done by the students of Kala Bhavan in the North-west wing of the Boy’s Hostel, under the supervision of Biswarup Bose. Image Source - Author



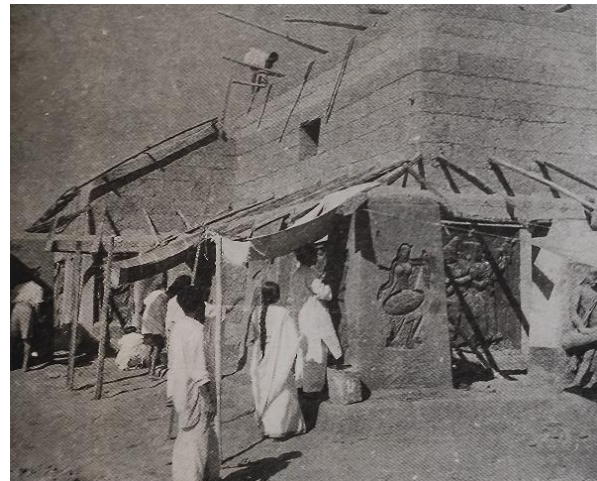
**Fig 6.19 a, b)** – Details from the ‘Life of Christ’ mural done by the students of Kala Bhavan in the South-west wing of the Boy’s Hostel, under the supervision of A. Perumal and VinayakMasoji. Image Source - Author



**Fig 6.20 a, b)** – Details from the ‘Hindu Mythology’ mural done by the students of Kala Bhavan in the West wing of the Boy’s Hostel, under the supervision of GouriBhanja. Image Source - Author



**Figure 6.21 a)** – Black House, Kala Bhavan. Photographer unknown. Image collection and Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati



**Figure 6.21 b)** – Black House in its building stage. Image Collection - Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati. Image Source – *Black House Kalo Bari*



**Figure 6.22 a, b)** – Details of Black House relief sculptures on the walls of the mud house structure, depicting the Indus Valley Bull and the Yakshiakshi relief sculpture is a much recent addition by a student of Kala Bhavan. Image Source - Author

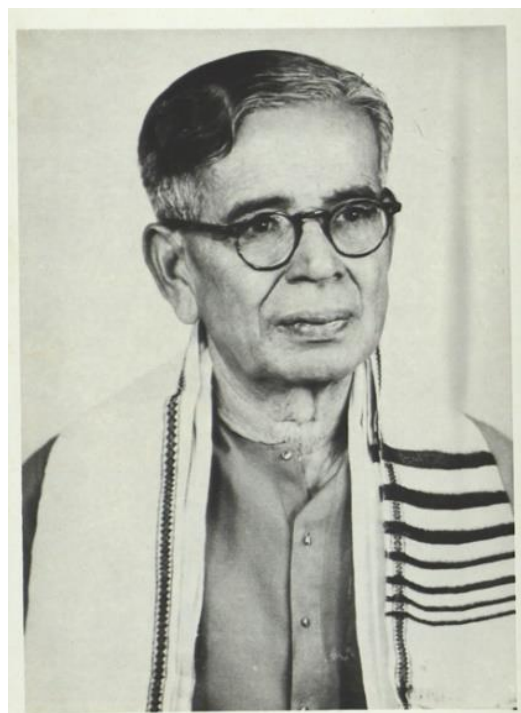


**Figure 6.23 a)** – A portion of the ‘Copy of Bagh Mural’ inside the south end extension of ‘Old Nandal’ or the Havell Hall as it is now known. Image source - Author

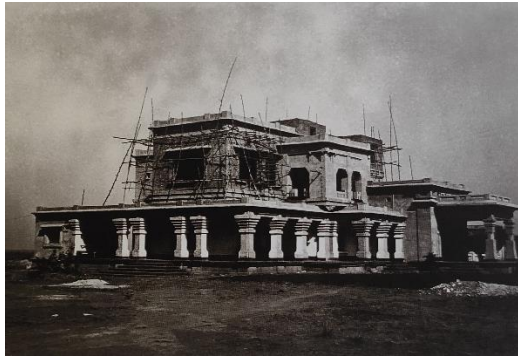




**Figure 6.23 b, c)** – Inside Havell Hall, opposite to the Bagh mural copy, is a description and demonstration patch of the mural techniques imbibed in Kala Bhavan. Image Source - Author



**Figure 6.24** – Surendranath Kar. Image collection and Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati



**Figure 6.25 a)** – Udayana house under construction. Image Collection and Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati



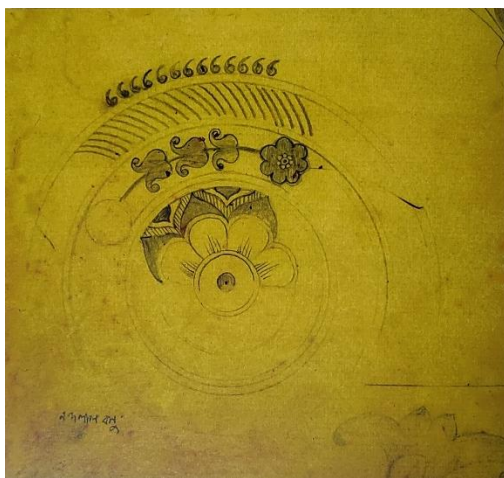
**Figure 6.25 b)** – Patha Bhavan (Old Library) building. . Image Collection and Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati



**Figure 6.25 c)** – Konark house. Collection - Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati. Image Source - *Architecture of Santiniketan: Tagore's Concept of Space*



**Figure 6.25 d)** – Punascha house. Collection - Rabindra Bhavan Archive, Visva-Bharati. Image Source - *Architecture of Santiniketan: Tagore's Concept of Space*



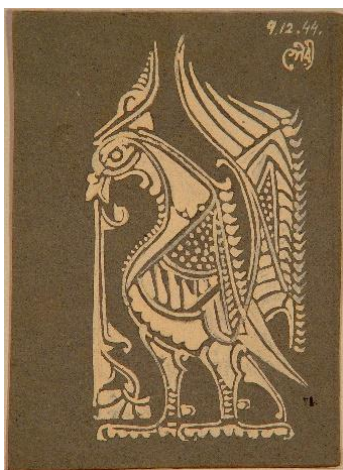
**Figure 6.26 a)** – Class demonstration of Alpona motifs and patterns by Nandalal Bose. Image Source – Design Movement in Tagore's Santiniketan



**Figure 6.26 b)** – Female students of Kala Bhavan drawing ceremonial alpona on the campus. Image Source – *Design Movement in Tagore’s Santiniketan*



**Figure 6.26 c)** – Nandalal Bose instructing male students of Kala Bhavan, including Ramkinkar Baij at the far right, while they draw alpona. . Image Source – *Design Movement in Tagore’s Santiniketan*



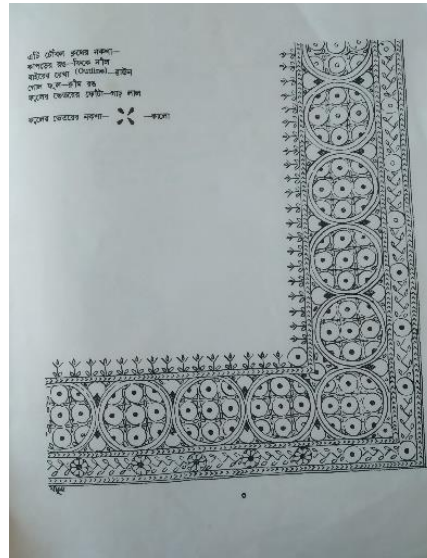
**Figure 6.27 a)** – Ornamental drawing of a Bird by Gouri Bhanja. . Image Collection and Source – Kala Bhavan Nandan Museum



**Figure 6.27 b)** – Ornamental drawing of a Bird by Gouri Bhanja. Image Collection and Source – Kala Bhavan Nandan Museum



**Figure 6.27 c)** – Cover of the Book Shelaiyer Naksha or Embroidery designs by Jamuna Sen. Image Collection & Source – Subarnarekha Archives, Santiniketan



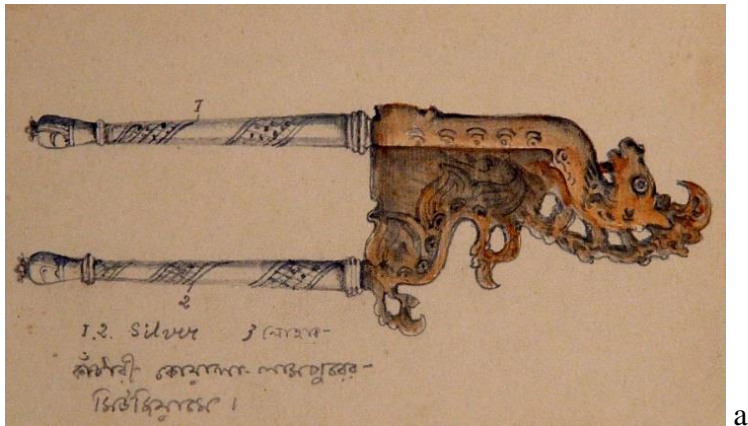
**Figure 6.27 d)** – Embroidery pattern drawn by Januma Sen in the Book Shelaiyer Naksha. Image Collection & Source – Subarnarekha Archives, Santiniketan



**Figure 6.28** – Female students of Kala Bhavan drawing Alpona, as Class-work. Image Collection & Source – RabindraBhavan Archive, VisvaBharati



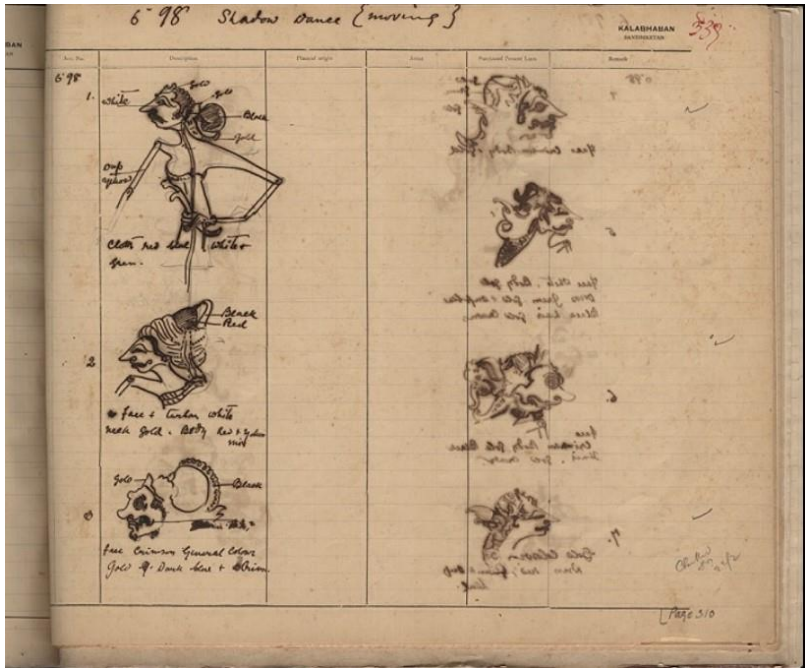
**Figure 6.29 a, b)** – The 'Old Nandan' Museum interior and display system. Image Collection & Source – Rabindra Bhavan Archives, Visva-Bharati



a



**Figure 6.30** a) Drawing of an Ornamental Nut Cracker. b) Drawing of Malaysian Kite and Cow Bell. c) Drawing of Silver Betel Leaf container. Postcard Notes by Dhirendrakrishna Dev Burman, during his visit to Kuala Lumpur Museum, Malaysia. Collection & Image Source: Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum



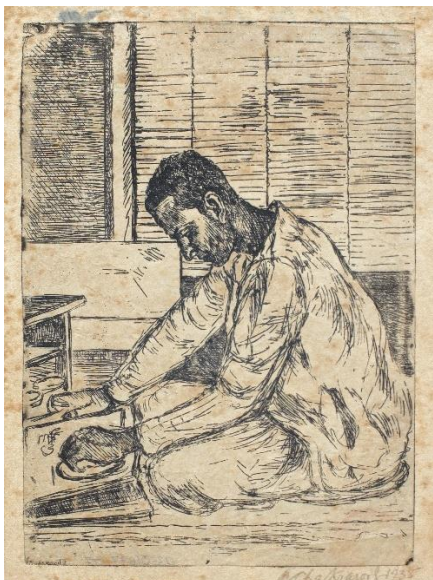
**Figure 6.31** – A page from the first catalogue of the Nandan Museum, Kala Bhavan, with illustrated entries by the Nandalal Bose, who was also the first Curator of the museum. Collection & Image Source – Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum



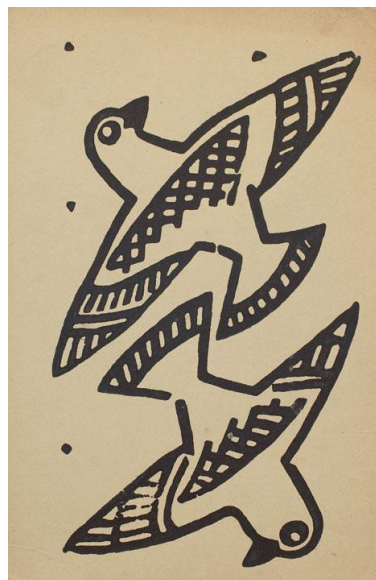
**Figure 6.32 a)** – Bagh Mural tracing by Rani Chanda. Collection & Image Courtesy – Nandan Museum, Kala Bhavan



**Figure 6.32 b)** –Figure Composition in linocut print by Jaya Appaswamy. Collection & Image Courtesy – Nandan Museum, Kala Bhavan



**Figure 6.32 c)** - Figure Composition by Dhirendrakrishna Dev Burman. Collection & Image Courtesy – Nandan Museum, Kala Bhavan



**Figure 6.32 d)** - Two Birds. Linocut by Benode Behari Mukherjee. Collection – Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum. Image Courtesy – Visual Archives, CSSSC



**Figure 6.33 e)** – ‘Santhal Family concrete sculpture by Ramkinkar Baij, positioned in the Kala Bhavan campus in 1938. Image Source - Author



## **Interconnections and Exchanges – The Government School of Art and the Art Worlds of Calcutta 1930s - 1950s**

“The desire to construct an aesthetic form that was modern and national, and yet recognizably different from the western, was shown in perhaps its most exaggerated shape in the efforts of the early twentieth century of the so-called Bengal School of art. It was through these efforts that, on the one hand, an institutional space was created for the modern professional artists in India, as distinct from the traditional craftsman, for the dissemination through exhibition and print of the products of art and for the creation of a public schooled in the new aesthetic norms. Yet this agenda for the construction of a modernized artistic space was accompanied, on the other hand, by a fervent ideological program for an art that was distinctly ‘Indian’ that is, different from ‘Western.’”<sup>1</sup>

- Partha Chatterjee, “Whose Imagined Community?” *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 1992

Invoking Benedict Anderson’s concept of ‘Imagined Community’<sup>2</sup>, Partha Chatterjee explains, “The most powerful as well as the most creative results of nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a difference with the modular forms of the national society propagated by the modern West. How can we ignore this without reducing the experience of anticolonial nationalism to a caricature of itself?” Chatterjee argues that the reasons and the uniformity of ‘nationalism’, as theorized by Anderson, do not apply to the colonial experience of continents like Asia or Africa, as the configuration of national identity is not merely political, but ‘spiritual’ as well as cultural. Chatterjee writes, “In fact, here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion

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<sup>1</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict Anderson’s book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and spread of Nationalism* (1983) is considered to be a key publication in the field of nationalist histories of the world and it observes three fundamental causes which lead to nationalism – spread of vernacular literacy, resistance to heritable monarchy and Print-capitalism.

a ‘modern’ national culture that is nevertheless not Western.”<sup>3</sup> Drawing from this assertion of undoing colonialism, Chatterjee looks into the distinct histories and trajectories of language and literature, visual art and cultural nuances, restructuring of pedagogic curriculum, existing tradition of joint household systems, all of which contested the colonial pattern of assorting identity to a community.

Across the last six chapters this thesis has studied the developing trends of art education histories of two primary institutions – the Government School of Art, Calcutta, and Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan. This concluding chapter will analyse the more composite configuration of ‘modernity’ through the overlapping lives of these and other art institutions of Bengal during the early and mid-twentieth century. As Chatterjee proclaims, the ideological formation of a ‘modern’ and ‘national cultural’ repertoire was most visible and ‘exaggerated’ in the case of visual arts, most specifically in the paintings of the Bengal School. Even as Abanindranath Tagore himself moved on in other directions, the stylistic traits of Bengal School travelled to other regions of the country through his students like Nandalal Bose, Sailendranath Dey, Asit Halder, Samarendranath Gupta, and Promode Kumar Chatterjee who became teachers in different art schools across the country.

The legacy of Abanindranath Tagore’s art movement left its permanent mark through the establishment of the Department of Indian Painting in the Calcutta art school, in 1930-31, under Mukul Dey.<sup>4</sup> In retrospect, the Indian Painting department, which came into existence with the fundamental agenda of establishing a visual language and a national identity for modern Indian art, can be seen to have lost its vision and got stuck in a formulaic loop of stylization. Ironically, during the writing of this chapter of the thesis, the current students of the Indian Painting Dept.

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<sup>3</sup> Chatterjee, *Whose Imagined Community?* p. 6

<sup>4</sup> Eighth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal 1927 – 1931. Bengal Book Secretariat Depot, Calcutta, 1933. pp. 118-119; The Annual reports does not mention the exact date of the establishment of the ‘Department of Indian Painting’, but this Quinquennial Review records the Indian Painting department was among the other seven departments arranged by Mukul Dey, after his joining.

of the Government College of Art & Craft, Calcutta, have been demonstrating their dissatisfaction through mass protest and class boycott, due to the lack of permanent faculty in the department.<sup>5</sup> Chatterjee closed his observation on Bengal School asserting that “Although the specific style developed by the Bengal School for a new Indian Art failed to hold its ground for very long, the fundamental agenda posed by its efforts continues to be pursued to this day, namely to develop an art that would be modern and at the same time recognizably Indian.”<sup>6</sup> Following his argument, this concluding chapter asks – how did the two pivotal art schools in Bengal, the Government School of Art, Calcutta, and Kala Bhavan (that have been at the centre of this thesis) attempt to align pedagogic orientations and each claim its own singular national identity? What were the in-between facilitating modes and agencies which enabled institutional, intellectual and artistic negotiations between the two art schools, beyond the scope of colonial interventions?

## **Section I**

### **Government School of Art, Calcutta, and its Institutional Intersection, 1920 – 1951**

Percy Brown, as discussed in Chapter Three, was in charge of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, from 1909 to 1927. During this long period of eighteen years, the pedagogic orientations of the institution was shown to have been tested and challenged culturally as well as bureaucratically. Though the insertion of Indian aesthetics had challenged the western methods of art education and art production, the Fine Arts department, after Abanindranath, and the department of Indian Painting that functioned within it, did not seriously benefit nor derive an fresh momentum from the prestige of Abanindranath’s art movement that had by then

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<sup>5</sup> Reported on February 10, 2022, *Sangbad Pratidin* <https://www.sangbadpratidin.in/kolkata/no-teacher-in-indian-painting-department-in-govt-art-college-students-stage-protest/>

<sup>6</sup> Chatterjee, *Ibid.* p. 9

secured its stronghold in institutions and circuits outside the boundaries of this art school. In 1917-18, the only noticeable change which was made to the Fine Arts department was its division into a 'Life Study' class and an 'Indian Painting' class.<sup>7</sup> Most of the founding proponents of the new movement of Indian-style painting were moving in new directions in their careers and would be taking up positions in art schools across the country, where they progressively evolved their individual pictorial language and pedagogic perspectives. However, the Indian Painting class at the Calcutta art school continued to follow a measured pattern of instruction and application of the 'style', like in the case of industrial and commercial art training, turning the artistic possibility into a lesson in pictorial archetypes. Constituting 'original composition' as the core of artistic practice was not explored in the curriculum of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, until the 1930s. (Fig 7.1 a, b) On the other hand, the foundational distinctness of Kala Bhavan's pedagogy was in the purview of individual perceptibility of the students. The approach to project and execute artistic imagination was based on instinctive value in education at Kala Bhavan, as opposed to the pedantic approach of representational formats in the Calcutta art school.

The transfer of the Calcutta art school to the Industrial Department of the Bengal Government for four years in the 1920s, does not find a mention in J.C. Bagal's account of the Art school's history, nor in Sovon Som's *Art Education in Colonial India*. However, this brief departmental shift, demonstrates the constitution of the colonial education policy, which continued to prioritise all fields of education for developing functional capacities which would be validated through employment and revenue – in a similar way to other technical training schools such as the Serampore Weaving Institute or special Industrial schools which imparted training in carpentry, basket weaving, pottery, etc. which had the explicit aim of developing small industries across the country. In case of the art school, as we have seen, a similar training

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<sup>7</sup> Annual Report, 1917-18

structure was devised, using exception of drawing as the primary tool of foundational training. It is the same priority of generating functional and employable artistic skills and livelihoods that still remained the driving policy of the school, even as it was moved back to the earlier administrative aegis of the Department of Public Instruction.

Therefore, in 1924, when the Government School of Art, Calcutta, was transferred back to the Education department, Percy Brown initiated a new department of Commercial Art the following year, initially as an ad hoc unit “to train students in subjects like designing, poster drawing, advertising and illumination”.<sup>8</sup> Irrespective of his opinion expressed in the book of *Indian Painting* (first published in 1917; cited and discussed in Chapter 3) regarding the urgency of further research and engagement with the traditions of Indian painting forms and styles, and the pedagogic relevance of the collection in the Indian Museum, Percy Brown did not propagate this perspective through the curriculum and other pedagogic programmes in the Government School of Art, during his tenure. A former Indian student of the Calcutta art school, Kushal Mukherjee, was appointed as the in-charge of the Commercial Art class, after studying the ‘Art of Poster Design’ in England for several years.<sup>9</sup> But he soon left to join the Jaipur Art School as its Principal and in his place another alumnus, Prahlad Karmakar, took over the responsibility.<sup>10</sup> Due to its remunerative prospects, the Commercial Art department gained popularity and would soon be given the importance and a permanent separate place in the course structure of the institution, the semblance of which has persisted until today.

During Abanindranath’s resignation in 1915, the question of assimilating Indian art teachers into the school was put to test through the appointment of Jamini Prokash Ganguly as the Vice Principal. The faculty formation of the art school witnessed further additions of Indian art

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<sup>8</sup> Seventh Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education In Bengal 1922-27, p. 108

<sup>9</sup> J C Bagal. p. 42

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

teachers in the years that followed. The post of the Head Master was abolished by the 1920s and in its place 'Head Assistant Teacher' was created. T Aroomagam Achary was appointed in that position. In 1927, when Percy Brown resigned from the Principalship of the school to join Victoria Memorial as its Curator, Jamini Prokash Ganguly took over the responsibility temporarily. However, the following year, in 1928, government approval was given for the appointment of Mukul Chandra Dey as the first Indian Principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta.<sup>11</sup> (**Fig 7.2**) This was also the first instance of a Santiniketan Ashram alumnus and a direct student of Abanindranath at the Bichitra Studio and Society of Oriental Art, entering the art school, as its primary administrator.

However, this triggered a set of internal tensions within the institution. Soon after, Jamini Prokash Ganguly, who was also singularly in charge of the Indian Painting class, went on an indefinite furlough resulting in resignation after three years. This resulted in a substantial pedagogic gap for the students of Indian Painting, and equally in the legacy of the department. The students of the department called for a strike and convinced students of other departments to refrain from joining their classes. This led to a drastic decision by Mukul Dey to shut down the entire school and the hostel for three months with the government's approval. Some of the students were also rusticated and the school was reopened with strict rules in place. To ensure discipline and order in the school, Mukul Dey took back the students only after a fresh admission of the students and a 10 rupees deposit of caution money along with an undertaking that they will abide by the rules of the institution.<sup>12</sup>

After the school gained back its regular pedagogic pace, Mukul Dey invited Atul Bose to join the Fine Arts department, to look over the Western as well as the Indian painting classes. But Atul Bose's stint as faculty at the art school would be a short one. One of the best products of

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<sup>11</sup> Annual Report, 1928-29

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

the break-away unit of the Jubilee Art Academy set up by Ranada Gupta in 1905, and by then a celebrated portrait painter, Atul Bose was commissioned by the Government of India to prepare copies of Royal portraits at the Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace for the Viceroy' House in New Delhi.<sup>13</sup> (**Fig 7.3**) With Atul Bose's departure for England, Basanta Kumar Ganguly was appointed as the Fine Arts teacher in the art school in 1930.

There were further rapid changes in the teaching faculty that followed in the 1930s. T. A. Achary also resigned from his post of Head Assistant teacher and Mukul Dey asked Ramendranath Chakravorty to join the Government Art School in the vacant position in 1930. Chakravorty was a former student of the Calcutta school of art, who further extended his art education under Nandalal Bose in Kala Bhavan. He was a proponent of introducing modern subjects like scene from daily life of the surrounding locale, instead of adhering mythological subjects, to project the Indian context in his art practice. He was also a keen observer of western artistic techniques, which allowed him to supervise the all-encompassing pedagogic programme of the art school, and provided Mukul Dey with the requisite administrative support.<sup>14</sup> (**Fig 7. 4**) Manindra Bhushan Gupta and Satyendranath Banerjee, both alumnus of Kala Bhavan, also joined the Art School in the early thirties. Another former student of the Calcutta art school and a prominent illustrator and mythological painter, Satish Chandra Sinha, joined the faculty of the institution as the Head Designer and eventually became the Head assistant teacher. With this sweeping reconfiguration of the faculty, which now comprised of former students from both the institutions – Government Art School and Kala Bhavan, Mukul Dey consolidated his position to facilitate an atmosphere of mutual artistic and pedagogic dialogue which was moderately liberated from colonial control.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Sovon Som, *Art Education in Colonial India*, pp. 253-254

An analogous rearrangement was also done to the curriculum of the institution, which balanced the demands of pedagogic achievability and ambitions, under Mukul Dey. The students were now admitted to the school after a preliminary test and the complete course could extend from five to six years. The entire programme was divided to eight separate departments - Indian Painting, Fine Arts or Western Painting, Commercial Art, Wood-engraving, Lithography, Draftsmanship, Clay Modelling and Teachership.<sup>15</sup> Dey, being an exponent of print making mediums like dry point etching and aquatint, initiated a private class on etching in his own studio to examine the interest and viability of the process, among the students. He also enhanced the lithography department as a practical class, where students of the institution would learn and execute their own prints. Until then, students would only draw or transfer images on the litho stone while the technical assistant would administer the print. **(Fig 7.5)** This was a significant progress in pedagogic and artistic scope of printmaking in the country. The other vital and necessary reorientation process was carried out in the department of Indian Painting. Having endured a loop of dispassionate engagement in painting subjects and styles of ancient Indian history, mythology and literature, copies of Mughal and Rajput miniatures and ornamental decorations, which did not entirely express the artistic synergies of the 1930s, the department failed to establish its artistic and pedagogic relevance, beyond guarding the legacy of the 'Bengal School' movement. With the support and involvement of Ramendranath Chakravorty, and the recruitment of Satyendranath Banerjee in 1932,<sup>16</sup> Mukul Dey established a direct pedagogic association with Kala Bhavan's methodology, as students of Indian painting were now encouraged to execute original themes, drawing essentially from everyday life. Some of the prominent proponents in Indian painting style from this phase of the school were Indu

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<sup>15</sup> Eighth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal, 1927-32

<sup>16</sup> Bagal, p. 54



Rakshit, Jyotirindra Roy, Abdul Moin, Heramba Ganguly, Biresh Ganguly, Sudhir Munshi and Maniklal Bandopadhyay. (Fig 7.6 a, b, c)

In 1930, a school magazine called *Our Magazine* was initiated at the Government School of Art, Calcutta, with the intention of documenting and reporting various activities of the school along with reproductions of work done by teachers and students of the institution. Mukul Dey was of the opinion that the teachers appointed should be regular artists themselves who would be in tune with the shifting professional and creative challenges of the time. He also reformed the annual art exhibition of the school, where along with students, the teachers too would have to display their works. This culture of equal participation with its potential for a teacher-student dialogue, can also be traced back to the pedagogic influence of Kala Bhavan and Nandalal Bose.

To further amplify the requirement of art teachers to be primarily art practitioners, Dey recommended through a government report, that “teachers should be practicing artists appointed for a term, and not permanent whole-time teachers.”<sup>17</sup> The viability of such a measure was understandably not suited to a government institution such as the Government School of Art, Calcutta, but the larger aspiration which Dey was trying to establish was the prominence of an artists’ position over and above the questions of livelihood and employment. Dey understood that the role of the art teacher was not limited to his instruction methodologies within the classroom but had to be more meaningfully expanded through their personal artistic aspirations. On that front, a collection of Ramendranath Chakravorty’s twenty original woodcut prints brought much appreciation and acclaim to the artist as well as the institution. (Fig 7.7 a, b, c) Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, in his review of this collection wrote, “Although it is expressive of the direct impact of the most recent influences from Europe on the art of India, it is at the

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<sup>17</sup> Tenth Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal, 1937-42

same time a resuscitation in a novel form of an age old artistic craft of the country – that of the wood block for calico printing – seeking to record our artists’ impression of the life around him in a way never done before in India.”<sup>18</sup> In 1935, the artworks of teachers and students of the school were exhibited at Burlington House, London. Through this exhibition, a work by Chakravorty was selected for the Coronation Exhibition in London.<sup>19</sup> Such appreciation was gradually affirming a more credible artistic position of the Calcutta art school in the region.

Mukul Dey also started a regular programme of lantern lectures in the school since the early 1930s. The range of subjects covered through these lectures ranged from scientific anatomical description to art expeditions to Indian and western painting traditions. The first of these lectures were delivered in 1931 by Dr. D.N. Maitra on his recent tour of Europe. In 1932, Mr. A. Ghosh discussed fresco painting in India and the art of textile dyeing, showcasing his rare collection of printed and embroidered fabric specimens and a collection of original Kangra school of paintings. In the same year, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee delivered a lecture on Greek art; while Dharendra Krishna Dev Burman shared his practical experience of working at the India House, London, along with some of the cartoons for the frescoes he executed there. D.N. Maitra gave another lantern lecture that year on the growth of the republic of Czechoslovakia and its ‘Sokol Movement’. In 1933, Dr. Anil Kumar Chakravarty was invited to deliver a series of twelve lectures on human anatomy.<sup>20</sup> These discourses were however meant mainly to inculcate a greater awareness amongst the students about different forms of artistic practice and did not add to any concrete scheme of bringing art history into the curriculum.

In the process of tracing some of the nuances of Kala Bhavan’s pedagogic ideology in the Government School of Art, Calcutta, the explicit link of Rabindranath Tagore with the Calcutta

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<sup>18</sup> Suniti Kumar Chatterji, “The Art of the Woodcut in India – A Review”, *Modern Review*, August 1931

<sup>19</sup> Ninth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal, 1932 -37

<sup>20</sup> *Our Magazine*, 1932-33

art school has seemingly been wrapped in controversy. In 1932, Mukul Dey organized an exhibition of Rabindranath Tagore's works, a collection which Tagore exhibited in France, U.K., Germany, Denmark and Sweden; but was apprehensive about showing in India. This was the first exhibition of Tagore's paintings in India, which showcased a comprehensive collection of two hundred and sixty-five works consisting of drawings, paintings, engravings, pottery and leather work. (Fig 7. 8 a, b) The exhibition was received enthusiastically, to say the least, but soon after this, a fall out can be observed through the correspondence between Rabindranath Tagore and Mukul Dey, regarding the non-payment of his sale proceeds. Rabindranath writes

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“I never had a word with you regarding the sale proceeds of my paintings. I thought I would remain silent on this matter. But the difficult times forced me to write..... I am compelled to remind you about my due payment. You had repeatedly told me that while dealing with you I would never have to bother about the payment. It is useless to worry now. I will appreciate if you would willingly settle the account. I will dislike entering into any controversy with you regarding this.”<sup>21</sup>

Ironically, in February 2011, almost seventy nine years later, another exhibition of his paintings was organized by the Government College of Art, titled “Rabindranath Tagore's Paintings” to commemorate the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary, which became one of the most conspicuous controversies of recent times in Calcutta's art fraternity. It is alleged that majority of the paintings on display were fake, which eventually tarnished the authority and standing of the institution.<sup>22</sup> Regarding the original exhibition, despite the subsequent acrimony over non-payment, , Mukul Dey's strategy of showcasing Tagore's art works in his institutional premises in 1932 positioned the school as an influential cultural entity. Earlier in 1929, Dey had

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<sup>21</sup> Personal correspondence between Rabindranath Tagore and Mukul Dey. Letter dated July 2, 1932

<sup>22</sup> The exhibition 'Rabindranath Tagore's Paintings' opened to public on February 27, 2011 at the Government College of Art & Crafts, Calcutta. It immediately garnered much controversy, leading to multiple litigations and suspension of the Principal of the institution.

organized another exhibition of similar ambitious scale of the works of Jamini Roy, which is said to be one of the earliest expositions of his folk revivalist style.<sup>23</sup>

Since the beginning of his tenure, Mukul Dey advocated the entry of female students into the Government School of Art, and eventually in 1939, co-education was introduced in the institution. Aparna Roy, a student from the first co-ed batch of the school, later went on to become a faculty of the art college. Mukul Dey during his incumbency as the Principal of the school, accomplished certain other vital shifts in the aim and purpose of the institution, the manifestation of which can still be encountered in some of the institution's continuing pedagogic programmes. To encourage art education among the backward classes, in 1933, the institution introduced schemes of scholarship and discounted fees for eligible candidates. Stipends were also arranged through districts and local boards, Indian states and private bodies.<sup>24</sup> Dey also approved the proposal for the Commercial Art section to become a permanent department of the institution in 1936.<sup>25</sup> By the end of 1936-37, the student strength of the art school had risen to two hundred and eighty-five. In 1940-41, Ramendranath Chakraborty vacated his position as Head Assistant Teacher, to pursue further studies at the Slade School of Art in London, where he would train in etching, aquatint, and dry point under Muirhead Bone. After Mukul Dey's retirement in 1943, Ramendranath Chakraborty returned to Calcutta and joined as the acting-Principal of the school for the next three years. He was then offered the position of Senior Art Master at the Delhi Polytechnic and left for Delhi. Chakraborty was succeeded by Atul Bose, as the acting principal, but his appointment was a temporary one, lasting only from 1945 to 1948.

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<sup>23</sup> J.C. Bagal, *A History of Govt. College of Art and Crafts, Calcutta*. p. 48

<sup>24</sup> Ninth Quinquennial Review

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

This period of three years, with Atul Bose at the helm, turned out to be a vacillating one for the institution, as the school had to shut down for a year during the final phase of World War II. This was followed by the declaration of Independence from British rule in 1947, a vital transitory phase which did not allow Atul Bose to make substantive changes to the workings and the curriculum of the institution. Ramendranath Chakravorty was called back to the institution to join as a full-time Principal, after Atul Bose left the school in 1948.<sup>26</sup> Chakravorty's curriculum rearrangement perhaps remains closest to what the existing pedagogic structure of the institution resonates with. The revised curriculum charted out five distinct departments – Fine Art department (European Style), Indian Painting department, Applied Art department (Commercial Art) and Sculpture department. (**Fig 7. 9**) Chakravorty grouped wood engraving, lithography and etching to form the department of Graphic Art. Another department created under Ramendranath was the craft unit, which was established to teach leather work, batik, decorative wood work, weaving and ceramics. This configuration of the craft unit was a clear departure from the earlier industrial art curriculum of the colonial government and had a different focus on local rural craft objects and techniques, which Kala Bhavan amplified through its design department – Karu Sangha and Shilpa Sadan. This composite pedagogic structure of the institution was now identified as Government College of Art & Craft. The art institution started functioning as a college from the beginning of July in 1951.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Atul Bose was invited to decorate the Indian Pavillion at the Wembley British Empire Exhibition. After Atul Bose, Satish Chandra Sinha, the Head Assistant Teacher, officiated as the Principal for a few months, until Ramendranath Charavorty took charge. However, it is speculated that the working relation between Mukul Dey and Atul Bose were strained. It has been accused through the *Shilpi* journal that, to control the student protest in the Govt. School of Art, against the Indianisation of art practice in the institution, Mukul Dey strategically offered Atul Bose the responsibility of the Western art class of the institution. This was considered a huge betrayal by his friends and fellow protestors.

<sup>27</sup> Bagal, p. 52

## Section II

### Calcutta and the Shaping of a New Public Sphere in Indian Art

Having established the inner workings of the institution from 1920s to 1951, the chapter now surveys the broader cultural milieu of the city, which was developing outside the premises of the Calcutta School of Art. With two distinct pedagogic methodologies at play within the institutions of the Calcutta School of Art and Kala Bhavan, a third key pedagogic intervention was made through the establishment of a formal art school within the Indian Society of Oriental Art (ISOA) in 1920. The prospectus explained that the intention of the school was to impart knowledge of Indian art and to provide an informed understanding of its heritage.<sup>28</sup> The main ways in which ISOA attempted boosting the threshold of Oriental aesthetics and the Indian art movement was through its exhibitions, lectures and its journal. The course of study which was laid out here across a three years curriculum, was designed as a gradual maturation of the student's engagement with numerous aspects of Indian art.

Each year of the programme was divided into two terms of six months. For the first term of the first year, students were instructed to - draw and paint basic forms in charcoal, brush and pencil; draw and paint objects and living forms from memory on the basis of the previous exercise. In the second term of the first year the curriculum was – drawing basic forms, modelling in line, modelling in colour and copying of selected ancient Indian paintings. The second year of the course included composition, copying of ancient Indian sculptures, figure drawing according to Indian canons of proportion, basic exercises in linear form, modelling and colour for the first half of the year. In the following half of the second year, instructions were imparted on figure drawing from memory, perspective drawing, nature study from memory and copying of

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<sup>28</sup> Sovon Som, *Shilpa Shiksha O Oupaniveshik Bharat*. p. 276

selected examples of ancient Indian painting, especially using the copies that had been made of Ajanta paintings by Nandalal and Asit Halder . In the final or the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, students were instructed in physiognomical studies, copy of ancient Indian sculpture and painting, mural and miniature techniques, pattern development from basic forms, composition, book illustration and craft forms, and study of costume, architecture and general history of Indian art.

This defined direction of equipping art students with the grammar of the *Shilpa Shastras*, adopted within the ambit of the Bengal School, formed a linear pedagogic formula. As opposed to the possibilities of interpretation and contextualization of Oriental aesthetics weaved in the methodology of Kala Bhavan, ISOA's pedagogic plan reverberates more with the colonial approach of result-oriented training, validating the outcome of European funds. In the formative years of this school, Nandalal Bose and Kshitindranath Majumdar were given the responsibility of tutelage of the institution. However, with Nandalal's vacillating interest between the formative methodologies of Kala Bhavan and of ISOA, and the inevitability of his shift to Santiniketan, the preponderant responsibility of ISOA remained with Kshitindranath. The Society also started its journal *Rupam*, edited by O.C. Ganguly in 1920, further constituting the oriental canon as a counterargument to colonial axioms.

Essays and illustrations published through *Rupam* created a scholarly discourse on Indian art and tradition, which no earlier art publications had achieved on this scale. Art history as a discipline did not emerge in India as a defined teaching department within art schools, until the decade after Independence. During this period, its scope evolved through museum collections, archaeological excavations and studies of art objects, analysed and written through external agencies and independent scholars and not through art institutional programmes. Until now, this thesis on art pedagogy in Bengal has demonstrated that instruction in art was exclusively dedicated towards the 'practice' of art, and not the historical or aesthetic analysis of art.

Therefore, none of the art schools in Bengal, until the mid-twentieth century, included the module of ‘Art Appreciation’ or ‘History of Art’ as a taught subject.<sup>29</sup>

The earliest art historical attempt of producing a comprehensive knowledge base on the traditions of Indian art was Shyama Charan Srimani’s book *Suksha Shilper Utpotti O Arya Jatir Shilpo Chaturi* (Evolution of Fine Arts through the Aryan Race) written in Bengali in 1874. Being a former student and a teacher of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, Srimani had experienced the colonial ambivalence towards understanding the nuances of Indian art. Therefore, the book stands as a form of nationalist resistance and reclaims for the first time, a lineage of Indian art and architecture traditions. Rajendralala Mitra’s survey of Orissa’s temple architecture too, offered a comprehensive art historical study which had the potential to invigorate the study of art historical methods within an institutional framework. The Calcutta art school’s engagement with surveying the field, documenting and copying the architectural and sculptural styles could have paved the way for introducing art historical study within the curriculum of the institution. However, colonial art pedagogy did not have that analytical bent in its curriculum. The other scholarly voice which evaluated and asserted the potential and range of Indian art outside the institutional ambit, was Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. His comparative analogical method of studying art has been a cornerstone in Indian art historical practice. Some of his books like *The Indian Craftsman*, *Introduction to Indian Art*, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, *Art and Swadeshi*, were revolutionizing the trajectory of writing on Indian art. His advocacy for the oriental aesthetics, joining voice with Havell, significantly augmented the nationalist recasting of Indian art history and modern art practice. It was through Coomaraswamy’s as well as Havell’s persistent scholarly activism, that the narrative of early Indian art as “terribly grotesque”<sup>30</sup>, which lacked “pretention to taste or accuracy of

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<sup>29</sup> A discussion on the collection and setting up of the Department of Ancient History and Culture and Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art in Calcutta University, will follow as this chapter progresses.

<sup>30</sup> W.H. Jobbins. Papers relating to Maintenance of Schools of Art in India as State Institutions, 1893-96. P88



representation”<sup>31</sup> was displaced. However, none of these art historical shifts in opinion and values were facilitated by art institutions.

In the emerging scope of art journals and art criticism, there were several publications which promoted writings on Indian and western art and cultures. *Shilpo Pushpanjali*, *Probashi*, *Dawn Magazine*, *Silpo O Shahitya* and *The Modern Review* were some of the prominent publications which advanced the domain of art writing and visual circulation through their individual editorial priorities. *Probashi* and *The Modern Review* edited by Ramananda Chatterjee became a vital proponent in popularising the intellectual moorings of the nationalist movement of art in Bengal and the agencies of cultural confluences which unfolded in Bengal. The twin publication also propagated the position and scope for art writers in the larger cultural context and encouraged a sustainable professional position for the new breed. Bengal was one of the most prominent regions in the country which produced a significant number of art writers, as well as artists and art historical standings. ‘Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy’ was an notable art historical primer, written by Abanindranath Tagore and translated by Sukumar Ray, and published by the Society of Oriental Art in 1914, soon after the original Bengali text ‘Murti’ by Abanindranath, illustrated by Nandalal and Venkatappa and first published in two parts by *Probashi* in 1913.<sup>32</sup> (Fig 7.10 a, b, c, d)

Thus, it can be seen that the Indian Society of Oriental Art was gradually expanding its institutional range by introducing Indian art historical scholarship through various publications, with *Rupam* becoming the mouthpiece of a new intensive discourse on Indian cultural studies. Edited by Ordhendra C. Gangooly, the journal’s enquiry into the field produced articles like - ‘Art and Craftsmanship’ by Coomaraswamy, ‘Two Chola Temples’ by Percy Brown,

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<sup>31</sup> Alexander Hunter. Establishment of the Madras School of Art. *Indian Journal of Art Science and Manufactures*. Madras. 1<sup>st</sup> May 1850. pp. 1-3

<sup>32</sup> *Probashi* Vol 13 3rd & 4th Issue. Poush - Magh 1320. (1913); Sukumar Ray’s translation of ‘Murti’ was first published by *Modern Review* and then reprinted by ISOA.

‘Sculptures and Bronzes from Pagan’ by Niharranjan Roy, ‘Kalinga Temples’ by Stella Kramrisch, ‘Painted Saras of Rural Bengal’ by Gurusaday Dutta, ‘Problems of Indian Art’ by William Cohn, ‘A Disciplinary Prologue to the comparative Study of Painting’ by J.H. Cousins, ‘Paintings of the Bagh Cave’ by Asit Haldar, etc. which are some arbitrarily selected titles from the journal to demonstrate the range of cultural studies and cultural writers that contributed to the discourse. This “chiefly Indian” illustrated journal was published for ten years from 1920 to 1930. However, after a short hiatus, the Society revived its publications with the bi-annual ‘Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art’ from 1933, which was edited by Abanindranath Tagore and Stella Kramrisch with similar range of field enquiry and writers.

ISOA’s institutional components like ‘exhibition making’, ‘art collection’, ‘seminars and discussion groups’, ‘art library’, ‘art historical publication’ and a ‘pedagogic programme’ have formed the template for art organisations in the country to follow, till date. Apart from Kala Bhavan, this was the only art institution in Bengal in the early twentieth century, which actively and intensely pursued discourse on traditional and modern forms of Indian Art. However, there are two more active institutional spheres which emerged in Calcutta during the 1930s.

The Academy of Fine Arts was established as a Society in 1933 by Pradyot Coomar Tagore, an avid art collector and philanthropist. The academy’s mission was to organise annual exhibitions and lectures, and distribute prizes for the art works submitted for the exhibition. The chief patron of the Society was the Governor of Bengal, Sir John Anderson, and vice-patrons were Bir Bikram Kishore Deb Burman of Tripura, Maharani of Cooch Behar, Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad Amir-ul-Omra Sir Kameswar Singh of Darbhanga, and Sir Rajendranath Mookherjee. Other illustrious names associated with the Society were Percy

Brown, Atul Bose, Stella Kramrisch, Bhabani Charan Laha, Probirendra Mohun Tagore, Lady Ranu Mukherjee, Surendranath Laha, and their likes.<sup>33</sup>

The Academy of Fine Arts Society used to hold their exhibitions at the Indian Museum until 1960, when the current structure of the Academy of Fine arts was built on No. 2, Cathedral Road. (**Fig 7. 11**) Its first annual exhibition showcased works by Gobardhan Ash, Radha Charan Bagchi, Atul Bose, Nandalal Bose, Ramendranath Chakraborty, Dharendra Krishna Deb Burman, Sachindra Bhushan Dhar, M.V. Dhurandhar, Monindra Bhushan Gupta, Henry Marshall, Sailoz Mukherjee, Indu Rakshit, Saroda Charan Ukil, Lady Chenivix Trench, Saibala Bhattacharya, Miss P. Bennet, Mira Aikat to name just a few among two hundred and sixty artists represented through the exhibition. About eight hundred and eight art works were on display and sale, and forty five prizes were awarded from the exhibited collection. However, there was another exhaustive assortment of art works exhibited by the Academy, in their first exhibition, from the personal collection of multiple patrons under a section called the ‘Loan Collection’. This assortment included works by Van Dyke, William Daniel, Oswald Malura, Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, Alice Coats, Alfred Parsons, Luca Giordano and their likes. This collection was exhibited with the intention of showcasing the range and diversity of art works possessed by the patrons of art in the region and also to attach institutional value to the Academy through the collection’s legacy. Outside the Government School of Art, Calcutta, or Indian Museum’s ambit, Academy of Fine Arts became a vital institution, which facilitated the chain of collection, exhibition and circulation of art works between artists, art connoisseurs and patrons. Sans ideological, stylistic, method and material segregation, the Academy was facilitating a market system for art in Calcutta. After 1960, the scope of the Academy vastly expanded when Lady Ranu Mukherjee took

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<sup>33</sup> *Catalogue and Price List of the First Annual Exhibition of Academy of Fine Arts 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1933-7<sup>th</sup> January 1934, Calcutta.*

charge of the institution and permanent galleries were gradually set up with vision of a Museum.

Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art was another significant institutional initiative taken by the Calcutta University in 1937. It was the first public museum of art in any university in India. This was also the first attempt to establish a base for art historical scholarship through the process of museum collection. The aim of the museum was “preservation, presentation and study of objects of Indian art and antiquity particularly of Eastern India.”<sup>34</sup> The museum and its collection were permanently housed in the Centenary Building of the University’s College Street campus in 1967. Prior to that, the collection had shifted multiple locations for thirty odd years due to various socio-political and infrastructural circumstances. Still, the university’s intention of boosting scholarly work in the field sustained. Soon after the establishment of the museum, the university organised a certificate course in Art Appreciation for teachers in Secondary schools.<sup>35</sup> However, even prior to the establishment of the museum, Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee the first Indian Vice Chancellor of the university established the Chair of Indian Fine Arts and Abanindranath Tagore became the first Bageshwari Professor of Indian Fine Arts. After independence, the University constituted a Post Graduate Diploma course on Museology in 1959, which was the first effort from any institution in India, to academically recognise the discipline of art history.

The collection of the Ashutosh Museum features a sculpture of ‘Vishnu Vasudeva’ in black basalt from Jessore, various other stone sculptures from parts of Bengal, Orissa and Bihar, sculptures from Pala-Sena period, etc. which demonstrate the artistic development in Bengal during the medieval period. The museum also boasts a rich collection of terracotta objects, seals, ritualistic and votive objects sourced from various “noted archaeological sites of Bengal

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<sup>34</sup> *Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art- An Introduction*, University of Calcutta

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*

like Chandraketurah, Harinarayanpur, Tamluk, Panna, Tilda, Bangarh, Mahastangarh, and Paharpur.”<sup>36</sup> (Fig 7.12 a, b, c) The museum also holds a vital collection of painting traditions of the country like Mughal, Rajasthani and Pahari Miniatures, Pata paintings, Kalighat pata, painted Lakshmi Saras, manuscript paintings, Katha, mystical banner paintings from Tibet and Nepal, Ceylonese mural paintings and folk toys and dolls. With this exhaustive gamut of traditional art forms, the Ashutosh museum, like in the case of Nandan Museum, re-casted the colonial trajectory of museum collection and augmented the breadth of the field of Indian art history.

Following the thesis objective of understanding the parallel spheres of the emergence of art history, my study briefly turns to the ways in which Calcutta University was growing into a key centre of art historical learning, especially with the setting up of the Bageshwari Chair of Indian Fine Arts, and with Abanindranath Tagore becoming its first most prestigious appointee. The set of lectures he delivered as Bageshwari Professor stand out as a critical foundational moment in the laying out of a field of art theory and art writing in Bengali – and it is worth underlining and reflecting on how and why Calcutta University, and its department of Ancient History and Culture, would supercede the Government School of Art, Calcutta, in this process. The book *‘Bageshwari Shilpo Prabandhabali’* (Bageshwari Essays on Art) published by Calcutta University in 1941 became the famous compilation of twenty nine lectures delivered by Abanindranath Tagore at Calcutta University from 1921 to 1929. The book became a seminal point of reference in Indian aesthetics for future generations, engaged in Indian fine arts and performance studies. Analogous to Abanindranath’s endeavour of demonstrating Indian sculptural forms through his Bengali essay ‘Murti’, the Bageshwari lectures expand on the theories of oriental philosophy and nuances of traditional forms of visual arts in India – which explain the objective scope of these discourses. However, ‘Murti’ or ‘Some Notes on

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid

Indian Artistic Anatomy’ address a specific purpose of responding to “certain criticisms against the many unreal forms and conventions which have been adopted by Indian masters in sculpture and painting and which now constitute the basis of Indian artistic anatomy.”<sup>37</sup>

At the beginning of this thesis, Chapter One quoted Alexander Hunter in his understanding of the ideal human sculptural form as - “The best and the purest taste has unquestionably evinced in the Greek statues.”<sup>38</sup> Responding to claims such as this, several decades later, Abanindranath drew from two foundational Sanskrit texts – the *Sukranitisara* and the *Vrihat Samhita* - and interpreted the canonical directive of form and formation and adapted it to a more affable demonstrative narration. Being an artist and a teacher, Abanindranath constantly negotiated with the absoluteness of traditional form and the absoluteness of creative independence. As an artist standing in the present and as a teacher in the preparation of tomorrow, Abanindranath was contextualising the past forms to bridge the gap with the present and create an aesthetic lineage for modern art practice. Therefore, his discussion on Indian artistic anatomy is positioned as a rejoinder to western interpretations and not as artistic regulation. On the other hand, Bageshwari lectures provide a broader advisory domain for artists and writers to hone their ethical, aesthetical and visceral positions through their respective crafts. The delicate spiritual, social, personal, perceptual, moral and symbolic nuances which one discovers in the process of viewing art as well as in the process of doing, finds its form in Abanindranath’s lectures.

In one of the lectures titled ‘Moth o Montro’ (From Opinion and Principle) Abanindranath quotes Auguste Rodin – “It is a false idea that drawing in itself can be beautiful. It is only beautiful through the truths and the feeling that it translates... There does not exist a single

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<sup>37</sup> O.C. Ganguly. Forward, *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy*. Calcutta: Indian Society of Oriental Art, 1968

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter One – Subsection Alexander Hunter and the Journal of Art, Science and Manufacture (Hunter, Alexander. 1<sup>st</sup> May 1850. (IJASM, Madras).

work of art which owes its charm only to balance of line and tone and which makes appeal to the eye alone.”<sup>39</sup> This he quotes to explain that there is no absolute ideal, and that an opinion or perception of an individual is a personal standing backed by subjective experience or ideology, and cannot be an absolute canon for someone else’s reality. This discourse intensifies in case of art practice, because beauty or truth and its translation, is contextual. Abanindranath’s use of the quote also plays a witty dig at the colonial perception of art and beauty. In another lecture of the Bageshwari series titled ‘Drishti O Srishti’ (Vision and Creation), Abanindranath discusses the methods of viewing art in relation to conditions of viewing.<sup>40</sup> This is a compelling pedagogic text on art practice in which Abanindranath advises to first develop the sensory faculties which can receive more than what is visible, deeper than what is audible – only then can one articulate the imperceptible. Nandalal in one of his conversations with Kanai Samanta, shared an anecdote where Abanindranath says –

“Artists are like silk work. In the beginning they eat and eat; study, practise, learn; then they stop at one point. They bring fibres out of themselves and wrap themselves round with these... Do not paint as soon as you have had an experience or are driven by an impulse; hold on to it. Then as an embryo grows in the mother’s womb ... the original impulse of the artists’ mind will grow and find expression...”<sup>41</sup>

The thesis is positioning these quoted texts with an attempt to highlight the contrasting rhetoric of pedagogic instruction between colonial art pedagogy and new oriental nuances in art practice and discourse, revived through Abanindranath’s teaching. This contrast also demonstrates how distinct pedagogical methodologies generate distinct artistic proliferations. Though Nandalal shifted from Abanindranath and Bengal School’s pictorial configurations and pedagogic

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<sup>39</sup> Abanindranath Tagore, “Moth O Mantra”, *Bageshwari Shilpo Prabandhabali*; Auguste Rodin, ‘Art’ Translated to English from French by Mrs. Romilly Fedden, 1912

<sup>40</sup> Nandalal Bose’s book titled *Drishti o Srishti* is a separate compilation of texts, essays and letters written by him and translated to English by K.G. Subramanyan. Visva-Bharati Publishing Department, 1999

<sup>41</sup> Conversation with Nandalal Bose, recorded by Kanai Samanta, 1941, Santiniketan. *Vision & Creation*, translated to English by K.G. Subramanyan. Visva-Bharati Publishing Department, 1999

methodology, he carried with him the essence of Abanindranath's aesthetic principles to Kala Bhavan.

This larger institutional and discursive sphere of art that came into place in Calcutta during the 1920s, 30s and 40s offered new aesthetic conditions for the field of practice, which cannot be evaluated as recorded data, but as enhanced dynamic prospects of considering institutional systems as a work in progress, where the core of an institutional purpose can only survive when it is in dialogue with others around it. It is the same for pedagogy, where its scope is defined by the curriculum, by the process of selection and demarcation, which limits knowledge as well as experience. Therefore, the argument of 'hidden curriculum' in pedagogy, as invoked in the above cited recollection of Nandalal about Abanindranath, plays a vital role in establishing the relevance and applicability of pedagogy to practice.

In the process of weaving institutional and intellectual interconnections between the two art institutions, one has had to constantly deal with an unofficial condition of conflict between the Government College of Art and Craft and Kala Bhavan. This sense of conflict has existed in the minds and memory of generations of art practitioners and cannot be argued through records of any sort or be justified as a casual competitiveness for greater creative merit. It is a myth which has survived to become a bequest. Through the entire length of this thesis, with its key theme of a comparative analysis of the two institution's pedagogic moorings, the research has shown that institutional and interpersonal negotiation had played a vital role to prioritize ideology over the burden of history. With every change of Principal in the Government School of Art, Calcutta, there has been a space for negotiations with the curriculum, and for loosening the grip of colonial education policies which have negotiated the terms and aims of the instruction provided. However, the most significant negotiations which have impacted the fabric of modernity in Bengal art were between Rabindranath Tagore and Abanindranath Tagore.



Rabindranath, despite being one of the strongest proponents of the Bichitra Studio in Jorasanko, soon foresaw the restricted scope of the “Indian style of painting” which was being handed down to younger generation of artists to preserve and promote the oriental identity of the movement. The ambit of modernity which Abanindranath explored through his individual practice had moved on to more “dense” and complex compositions, with his ‘Phalguni’ series, followed by portraits, masks, finally climaxing with the layered intervention seen in the ‘Arabian Nights’ series and ‘Khuddur Jatra’. But the wash technique was cemented to the oriental identity of the Bengal School. This restricted vision of the Bengal School movement was further institutionalized with the establishment of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, under Abanindranath’s supervision and European patrons and stakeholders. This led Rabindranath to take up the mantle of visual art practice and its pedagogic orientation, to liberate it from the canonical burdens. Therefore, the Kala Bhavan pedagogic experiment led to artists’ evolving their individual visual languages, and at the same time fine-tuning their collective chorus through mural paintings and other community art projects. This newfound liberty to practice ‘art’ which doesn’t adhere to western academic schema, nor duplicate on loop a singular aesthetic possibility allowed space for a modernity which made room for liberated expressions in Indian art, entering the larger world stage, instead of subscribing to a regional identity in art.

In order to put action into his vision, Rabindranath invited the Bauhaus artists to exhibit their work along with the artists from Bengal on one singular platform, in Calcutta. This pivotal exhibition was hosted at the Indian Society of Oriental Art in 1922, as its fourteenth Annual Exhibition. (**Fig 7. 13 a, b**) Stella Kramrisch in the catalogue essay of the exhibition described the Bauhaus group as, “Neither masters nor students are the followers of any ‘isms’ although they are bound to make use of them to a greater or smaller extent.”<sup>42</sup> The philosophy of this

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<sup>42</sup> “Exhibition of Continental Paintings and Graphic Arts” Catalogue of the Fourteenth Annual Exhibition. As reproduced in *The Bauhaus in Calcutta: An Encounter of Cosmopolitan Avant-Garde*. Ed. Regina Bittner & Kathrin Rhomberg.

new formed school Bauhaus strongly echoes with Rabindranath's attempt to emancipate art practice and art pedagogy from canonical loyalty. Anshuman Dasgupta and Grant Watson record -

“The exhibition was divided into two discrete groupings. On the left wall were paintings by artists from the ‘Bengal school’ such as Ksitindranath Mazumdar, Asit Halder, R.N. Chakravarty and others, all members of the Indian Society of Oriental Arts. Most of these artists painted in a manner, which would have been recognizable as that school’s invention, a particularly Indian signature style, with mythology as preferred subject... Hung on the other side of the hall was a large selection of works from the Bauhaus. These works were not entirely a novelty in Calcutta, as several visitors to the exhibition would have seen similar things in reproduction—brought back to India by Tagore and kept in his library at Santiniketan. However such a comprehensive range of material, experienced first-hand, must have made a strong impression on those present and provoked some interesting reactions. On loan from the Weimar was an extensive display of watercolours, drawings, woodcuts and other graphic works from several leading Bauhaus members, including Klee, Itten, Feininger, Macke and Kandinsky (as well as a selection of projects produced by their students)—representing the largest and most comprehensive exhibition of that school seen anywhere outside of Europe.”<sup>43</sup>

This brief overview of the exhibition demonstrates the distinct difference in the artistic temperaments, in that of the Bengal School and the Bauhaus artists. This situation presents itself not entirely for creative comparison between the artists of the two distinct continents, but rather showcases the opportunity of detaching one’s artistic practice from provincial identity to a more universal and at the same time personal expression of thought.

In a span of four decades, it is possible to plot an exhibition history in Calcutta from the Calcutta International Exhibition of 1883-84, to the Bauhaus show of 1922, to see how this history has traversed multiple institutional predicaments to arrive at the juncture where the social and intellectual position of Indian artists has been woven through trans-cultural binaries.

Regina Bittner and Kathrin Rhomberg sum up this cultural intersection by affirming –

“What makes the exhibition in Calcutta a fascinating early example of the globalized production of art and culture is the fact that the European and Indian avant-gardes, in the rejection of the bourgeois painting tradition of art academies and in the complex language of

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<sup>43</sup> Anshuman Das Gupta and Grant Watson, “Bauhaus Calcutta” *Take on Art – Curation*, 2011. The essay Bauhaus Calcutta was first published in ‘Curating Subjects’, edited by Paul O’Neill, published by de Appel & Open Editions, 2007 (reprint 2011).

abstraction, found a common projection screen for a criticism of the industrial modern age, which prevailed in both the East and the West”<sup>44</sup>

There have been several attempts to locate the moment of postcolonial modernity in Indian visual culture by artists and scholars alike. Those studies have broadly covered individual artistic practices and cultural nuances which locate their individual manifestations. Drawing from these transcultural binaries which have had multiple facets witnessed over centuries in India, the thesis ends with one failed attempt of locating one’s inherent culture in the form of a museum, in the colonial metropolis.

In 1936, Mukul Dey prepared an extensive proposal to establish a Bengal National Museum in Calcutta. He categorically charted the gap in the collection of art and craft heritage with the existing museums of the region, like the Indian Museum and the Victoria Memorial Hall. And he proposed in his draft that “Calcutta was and still remains the real capital of India so (as) far as modern culture is concerned. It is therefore a fitting site for a Bengal National Museum.”<sup>45</sup> This draft also contained categorical breakdown of the museum’s mission and outreach components which can conveniently pass as a blue print for any art museum today. Dey proposed that the scope of the art collection in the Bengal National Museum should “contain the specimens of Indian pictorial art from 2000 B.C. including art work of the period of the great Mughals and Rajputs as well as Art work done up to the present time.”<sup>46</sup> The museum was intended to provide – dedicated facilities for women in general to access the collection of the museum which can inspire their ‘domestic recreations’; an Art Library of rare and relevant books, permanent sale counter, quarterly or monthly art magazine, regular national and regional art exhibitions, lantern lectures, art workers guilds and so on.

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<sup>44</sup> Bittner and Rhomberg, “World Art since 1922: On the Topicality of an Exhibition”, *The Bauhaus in Calcutta*

<sup>45</sup> Mukul Dey Private Papers – Draft Scheme of the Museum, shared through correspondence with Rabindranath Tagore. Rabindranath Tagore Papers – Rabindra Bhavan Archive.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

This six page long wide-ranging proposal was sent to Rabindranath for his feedback, to which Rabindranath admitted that “I agree with you that an organized Centre such as you suggest could do much to educate our public in the value of the indigenous arts and crafts of this province and create a genuine interest in their promotion.”<sup>47</sup> There is no record why the Bengal National Museum could not be actualized. A likely reason is that, with much the same aspirations and a large collection already in place, the Ashutosh Museum of Art was established in 1937 as the first university and teaching museum of the time in India to have developed outside the colonial government, just after Mukul Dey’s draft proposal was circulated. However, this drafted document of the museum scheme indicates two aspects – firstly, the necessity to develop a national narrative outside the colonial scheme of collection and classification; and secondly, to build an institution which would assimilate, preserve and foster its regional cultural heredity and locate modernism through its self-sufficiency, for its own community. Referring back to Partha Chatterjee’s quote at the beginning of this chapter, the attempt to develop a Bengal National Museum was “The desire to construct an aesthetic form that was modern and national, and yet recognizably different from the Western”<sup>48</sup>

### **Section III**

#### **1951: Conclusion**

This thesis began with the objective of mapping art institutions and their pedagogic evolution in Bengal during the nineteenth and twentieth century, to argue that twentieth century modernisms in Indian art cannot be exclusively deliberated through tropes of artistic individualism or stylistic genealogy. It has shown the need instead for a , but also demands critical engagement with the institutional configurations and pedagogic orientations of the late

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<sup>47</sup> Private correspondence from Rabindranath Tagore to Mukul Chandra Dey, as a response to the previous letter cited. Letter dated March 7, 1936

<sup>48</sup> Partha Chatterjee, “Whose Imagined Community?” in *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 1992

nineteenth century and early twentieth century, which defined ‘art’ as a new field of study and practice, and radically redefined the identity of the artist and the nature of artistic professions existing in India. This thesis began (in the Introduction) with an invocation of Irit Rogoff’s argument –

“If this (art schools) was a space of experimentation and exploration, then how might we extract these vital principles and apply them to the rest of our lives? How might we also perhaps apply them to our institutions? Born of a belief that the institutions we inhabit can potentially be so much more than they are, these questions ask how the museum, the university, the art school can surpass their current functions?”<sup>49</sup>

Therefore the thesis has revealed that the twentieth century idioms of modernity in art practice, have fundamentally emerged from the evolving discourse of art pedagogy and art institutions in Bengal. This phenomena largely recasts itself in twenty-first century India, and should be contested through the lens of ‘pedagogy as a method’ and ‘pedagogy as a site’, instead of ‘pedagogy as a regulation and standardization’ in the field of arts. The thesis also affirm the precarious position of the discipline of Art History, within art institutional and art pedagogic scope. Among all the existing art colleges in India, only two institutes’ offer specialized degree in History of Art.<sup>50</sup>

To ascertain the scope of modernity in art practice and art pedagogy, the two factors of ‘method’ and ‘site’, have been tested throughout this thesis to demonstrate the varying artistic results and cultural impacts that were achievable through different pedagogic methodologies in art, in different art institutional sites. This comparative study of the formative history of the main art institutions in Bengal, not only allowed for establishing the genealogy of these institutions, but more importantly tested pedagogic variables, ideological evolutions and artistic pedigrees frequently and traditionally associated with them. This testing was necessary,

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<sup>49</sup> Irit Rogoff, “Turning”, *E-Flux Journal*, November 2008. p. 2

<sup>50</sup> Kala Bhavan initiated Art History as a taught course in 1958; followed by the establishment of the Department of Art History and Aesthetics in M. S. University, Baroda in 1965.

in light of the expanding gap between standardised structure of art education across the country and the contemporary artistic practices which are constantly pushing the boundaries of artistic articulation.

The thesis and the study of these art institutions and its pedagogy concludes at the 1951 mark, as both these art schools move on that year to an altered institutional prospect of college education. The Government School of Art, Calcutta, was designated as the Government College of Art and Crafts, Calcutta on July 1, 1951 under Principal Ramendranath Chakravorty. To mark this transition, Chakravorty organised a crafts exhibition in the institution collating exhibits from the local government bodies, the Department of Industries, Central Government as well as Visva-Bharati. Being a former student of Kala Bhavan – Visva-Bharati, Chakravorty imbibed the pedagogic confluence of ‘art and craft’ invoking the Santiniketan model in the Government College of Art and Craft. The year 1951 also marks a crucial break in the history of Kala Bhavan, Nandalal Bose retired from Kala Bhavan in 1951, leaving open the future of Kala Bhavan to take its own pedagogic course.

However, as discussed through Chapters Five and Six, and through Benode Behari Mukherjee’s observation, after Rabindranath Tagore’s demise in 1941, Nandalal Bose was moving towards regulating the curriculum of Kala Bhavan, with the objective of preserving his pedagogic ideals with the future of artistic possibilities of Kala Bhavan. He made *alpona*, ‘leather batik’ and other forms of craft classes a mandatory set of instructions for all elementary students.<sup>51</sup> He also strategically prioritised Indian styles of painting in the pedagogic structure, to guard the art students from modern western -isms, which were gaining popularity among the students in Kala Bhavan. In 1945, when M. K. Gandhi visited Visva-Bharati to oversee the workings of the institution, Nandalal expressed his apprehension about the legacy of Kala

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<sup>51</sup> Benode Behari Mukherjee, *Modern Art Education (Adhunik Shilpa Shiksha)* pp. 183- 185

Bhavan after his retirement and whether the spirit of a collective art studio in a full-fledged art institution is foreseeable. However, Nandalal's pedagogic methods, notwithstanding their flexibility and openness to innovation, had already transformed Kala Bhavan to an art school much before his retirement. It is substantially evident from the prospectus, which Nandalal Bose devised in 1950, which the Kala Bhavan model of art education, through this prospectus should function as a canon and edifice of his pedagogic perspective for Indian art.

Succeeding Nandalal, Surendranath Kar in his supporting act of being the principal of Kala Bhavan did not make any drastic institutional shifts, apart from establishing the Certificate Course in Design. He was followed by Benode Behari Mukherjee, Dhirendrakrishna Dev Burman, Biswarup Bose and V. R Chitra in the role of acting principal of Kala Bhavan, in various time brackets. Then, Dinkar Kowshik officially took over the mantle in 1967. By this time, both Kala Bhavan and Visva-Bharati were moving in a different direction and entering the Central university College Education scheme. The Visva-Bharati Act of 1951 declared that "The University shall, in organising its activities and the implementation of its academic programmes, have due regard to the pattern of education envisaged by Rabindranath Tagore in his writings."<sup>52</sup>

The first all India Conference on Art was held in Calcutta on August 29 and 30, 1949. The conference delivered fourteen resolutions on the future prospects of art education in art colleges and primary schools across the country, its curriculum, on museum development projects in different states and their districts, expansion of research on art historical studies, financial support for deserving artists of the country, proposed scheme of National Art Gallery, encouragement of art publications for knowledge circulation about Indian art, within the country and abroad and so on. Stella Kramrisch moved one of the resolutions, proposing "To

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<sup>52</sup> Visva-Bharati Act, 1951 Clause '5B – Principles to be followed in organizing activities of the University', p. 5

consider what other fields of ancient Indian art require further research and deserve special consideration”<sup>53</sup> to which the committee moved in agreement with the recommendation that “steps should be taken to collect photographs of architecture, sculpture, painting, arms, utensils, pottery, textile etc. in order that a conspectus of old Indian art may be followed.” Another noteworthy resolution proposed by Devi Prosad Roy Chowdhury was “to examine the courses of study for Art Schools in India” to which it was agreed by the committee that “the courses of study and methods of instruction followed in Art Schools should be revised to include a sound basic knowledge of Indian arts and technique. In view of the fact that the All India Board of Technical Studies in Applied Arts have drawn up a syllabus of art studies, this Conference recommends that the syllabus may be given a trial by art schools in the country.”<sup>54</sup> These two resolutions sanctioned by the Government of India, reveal that the future of art education and art institutional prospect of independent India, continued to echo the colonial standardisation of ‘art practice’ and ‘art pedagogy’ as a technical and professional construct and not as field of “aesthetic education”.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Report on All India Conference on Arts. Calcutta, 1949. Ministry of Education, Government of India, p. 27

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 24

<sup>55</sup> Eleventh Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in West Bengal, for the period 1942-43 to 1946-47, placed Arts, Crafts, and Performance Art under ‘Aesthetic Education’. This was the only instance when Art education was not categorised under ‘Technical Education’.





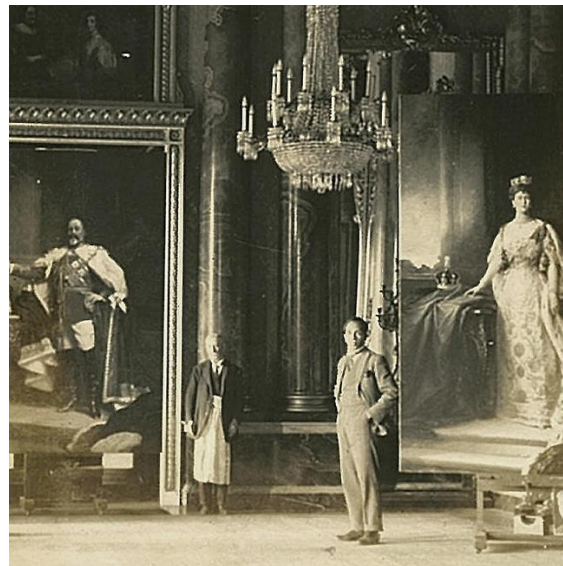
**Figure 7.1 a)** – ‘Spring Dance’ Mural by Indu Rakshit, on the wall of Government School of Art, Calcutta library. Image Courtesy: Soujit Das



**Figure 7.1 b)** – Indu Rakshit working on the Mural. Image Source: Our Magazine. Image Courtesy: Rasa Gallery Archives



**Figure 7.2** – Mukul Dey. Image Source: Rabindra Bhavan Archives, Visva Bharati



**Figure 7.3** – Atul Bose at the Royal Academy. Image Source & Courtesy : Princesps Auction Catalogue 2020



**Figure 7.4** – Ramendranath Chakravorty at his studio in the Govt. School of Art, Calcutta. Image Source: Our Magazine. Image Courtesy: Rasa Gallery Archive



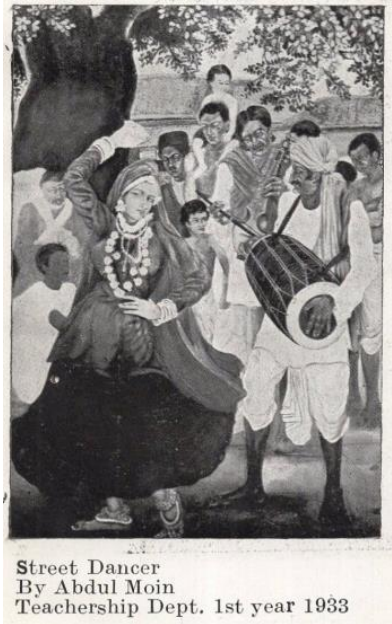
**Figure 7.5** – “Interior of a Studio.” Karuna Saha, student of the Govt. School of Art. Lithograph. Collection: Govt. College of Art & Crafts, Calcutta. Source: CSSSC Archives, Calcutta



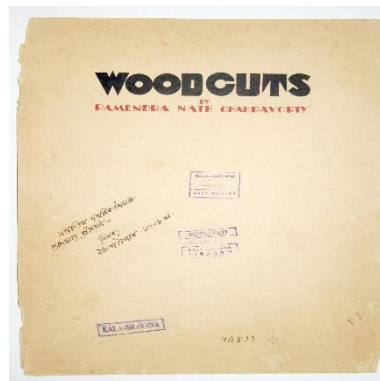
**Figure 7.6 a)** – ‘Untitled’ Indu Rakshit. Gouache on paper pasted on cloth pasted on ply board. Collection & Image Courtesy: DAG



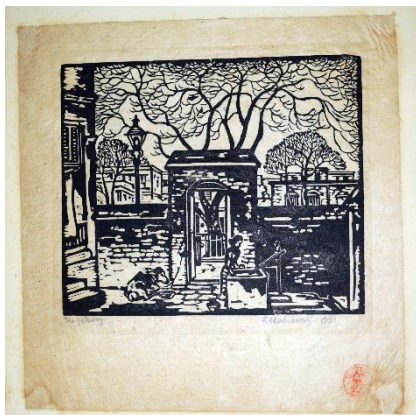
**Figure 7.6 b)** – ‘Untitled’ Maniklal Bandopadhyay. Collection & Image Courtesy: Janus Art Gallery



**Figure 7.6 c)** – ‘Street Dancer’ by Abdul Moin. Image Source: Our Magazine. Image Courtesy: Rasa Gallery Archive



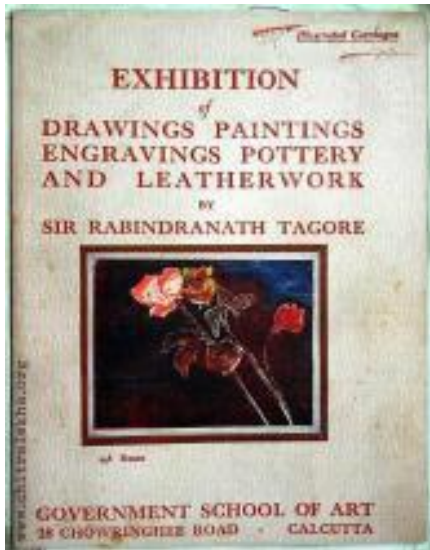
**Figure 7.7 a)** – Woodcut exhibition of Ramendranath Chakravorty. ‘Catalogue Exhibition Cover Page. Image Source: Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum Archives



**Figure 7.7 b)** – ‘The Gateway’, Woodcut print by Ramendranath Chakraorty. 1931. Signed Bottom right. Image Source: Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum Archives



**Figure 7.7 c)** - ‘Mother’ Woodcut print by Ramendranath Chakraorty. 1931. Signed Bottom right. Image Source: Kala Bhavan-Nandan Museum Archives



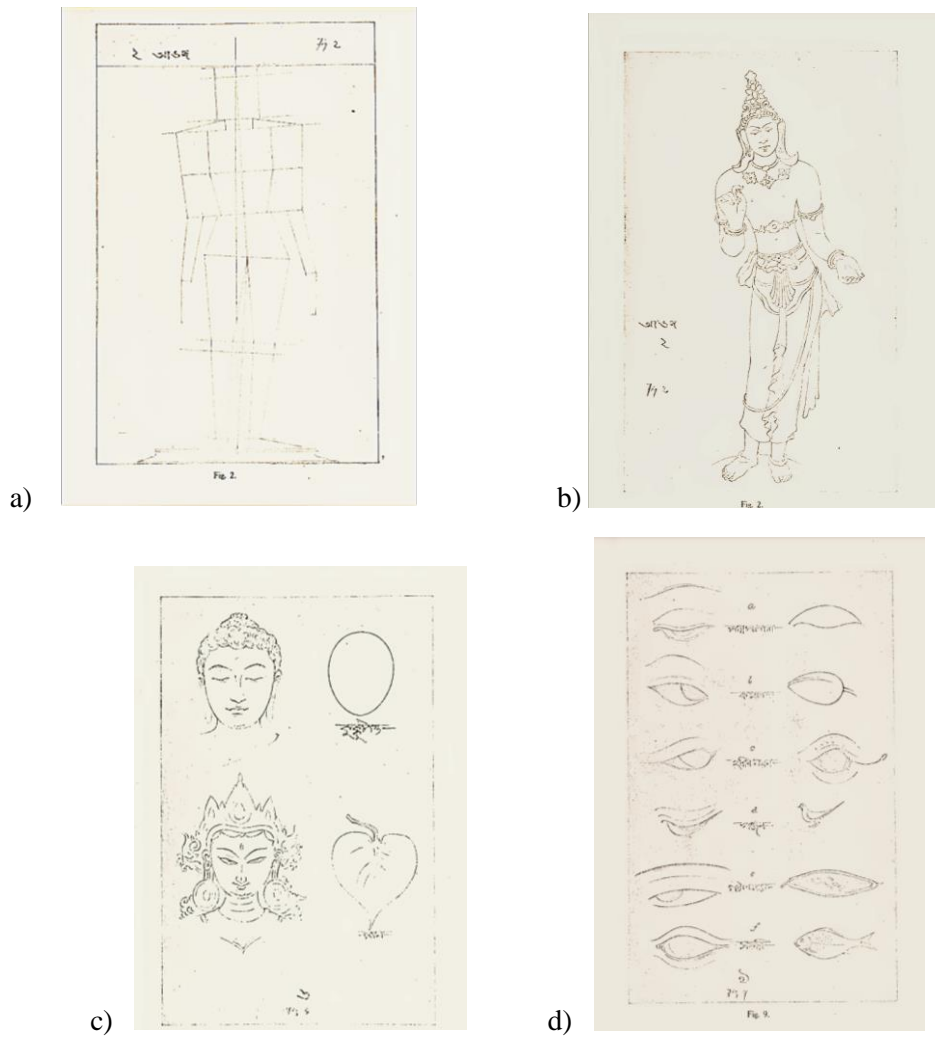
**Figure 7.8 a)** – Cover of the Catalogue. Image Source: Rasa Gallery Archives.



**Figure 7.8 b)** – Poster design for Rabindranath Tagore's Exhibition at the Government School of Art. Poster designed by Sartish Chandra Sinha. Image Courtesy: Rasa Gallery Archives



**Figure 7.9** – Students of the Clay Modelling Dept at the Government School of Art, Calcutta. Image Source: Our Magazine. Image Courtesy – Rasa Gallery Archive



**Figure 7.10 a, b, c, d)** – Descriptive Drawings by Nandalal Bose and K. Venkatappa for Abanindranath Tagore’s ‘Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy’. Image Source: *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy*



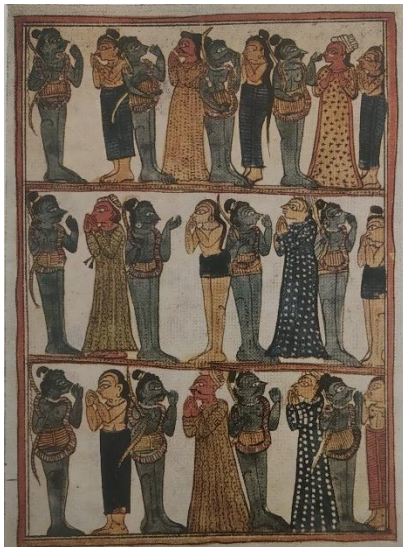
**Figure 7.11** – The Building of the Academy of Fine Arts. Source: Author



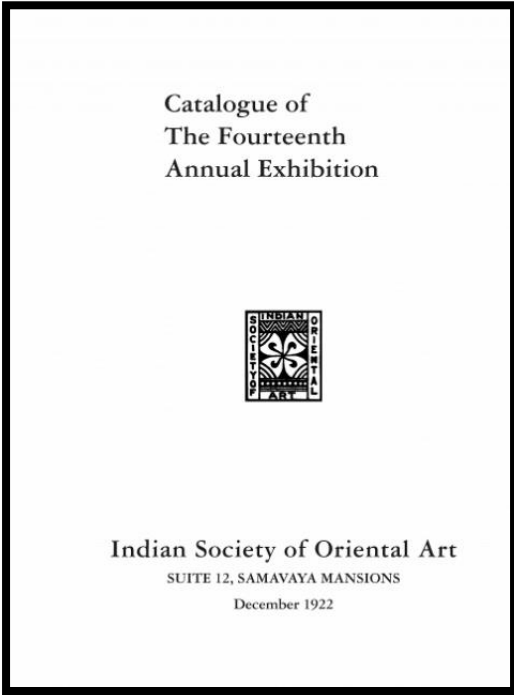
**Figure 7.12 a)** – ‘Surya’ Black Basalt Sculpture. Kasipur 24- Pargana. 7<sup>th</sup> Cen A.D. Collection & Source: Ashutosh Museum of Art, Calcutta University.



**Figure 7.12 b)** – ‘Head’ Black Basalt Sculpture. West Dinajpur. 9-10<sup>th</sup> Cen A.D. Collection & Source: Ashutosh Museum of Art, Calcutta University.



**Figure 7.12 c)** – ‘Tulsi Ramayana Pat’. Mahishadal Midnapur. 1772. Collection & Source: Ashutosh Museum of Art, Calcutta University.



**Figure 7.13 a)** – Title Page of the ‘Exhibition of Continental Paintings and Graphic Art’ Catalogue of the Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of ISOA, 1922. Image Source & Courtesy: *The Bauhaus In Calcutta – An Encounter of Cosmopolitan Avant-Garde*.



**Figure 7.13 b)** – Group photo of Bauhaus and Calcutta artists on the occasion of the Exhibition. R- L Nandalal Bose and Stella Kramrisch. 1922 Image Source & Source: *Bauhaus Imaginista*

## List of Appendices

### **Appendix 1 – Department of Science and Arts Curriculum**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Module</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Department</b>
1	Geometrical Perspective and Architectural Detail		Drawing
2	Outline from Flat examples	Ornaments	
3	Outlined from round examples		
4	Shaded from flat examples		
5	Shaded from round examples		
6	From Flat Examples		
7	Outlined from the Cast	The Figure	
8	Shaded from the Cast		
9	Anatomy		
10	Flowers outlined from Nature		
11	In Monochrome	Ornaments	Painting
12	In Colours		
13	From Flat Examples	Flowers	
14	From Nature		
15	Composition of Objects as Studies of Colour	The Figure	
16	From Casts		
17	In Colour		
18	Ornament	Modelling	
19	The Figure		
20	Flowers and Objects from Nature		
21	Studies from the Life		
22	Elementary Design	Composition in Design	



## Appendix 2 - H.H. Locke's Curriculum – Govt. School of Art, Calcutta

Stage	Subject	Module
I	Elementary Linear Drawing	a. By aid of Instruments: elementary practical geometry
		b. Freehand: outlines of simple rigid forms from "the flat" (that is from copies or flat examples)
II	Higher Freehand drawing	a. Outline from the flat: Ornament flowers, foliage, human figure, and animal forms, from copies.
		b. Outline from the round or solid objects: model drawings, outline or ornament, figure etc., from casts.
		c. Outline from nature: flowers foliage etc
III	Freehand Drawing in Light and Shade.	a. Shading from the flat: Ornaments, flower, foliage, human figure etc., from copies.
		b. Studying from the Round: Models and solid objects, ornament, figures etc., from casts.
		c. Shading from Nature: flowers, fruits, foliage human figure etc
IV	Geometrical Drawing by aid of Instruments.	a. Higher practical geometry; the use of scales and other mathematical instruments.
		b. Projection: orthographic, perspective and isometric; and the projection of shadows.
		c. Architectural drawing: The method of getting out block and fair plans, sections, elevations, etc., to scale; the study of the orders and chief styles of architecture; the forms of mouldings and other decorative details and the making of working drawings of the more important details of architectural construction.
		d. Mechanical and machine drawing: the delineation of spur and bevil wheels, cams, screws, etc.; the use of the odontograph in drawing the teeth of the wheels; and the practice of making working drawings complete and in detail, of the ordinary kinds of machinery.
		a. Simple tinting and use of the brush in water colour and tempera.
		b. Painting from the flat in watercolour and tempera.
		c. Painting from the round (In oil, water colour, and tempera) in monochrome.

VI	Painting (Higher Course)	a. Painting from Nature: Flowers Fruit, Foliage and Still Life
		b. Painting from Nature: Human Figure
		c. Exercises in Composition.
VII	Modelling	a. From Casts: ornaments, flowers, foliage human figure, etc.; Instruction in casting and moulding.
		b. From sketches, working drawings, etc., and from Nature.
		c. Exercises in composition.
VIII	Elementary Design	a. The study of conventional treatment of natural forms, the element of ornament etc.
		b. The study of arrangement of arrangement of form in ornamental composition; the filling of given spaces with ornamental arrangements in monochrome.
		c. The study of colour in ornamental design; the filling of given spaces with ornamental arrangements in colour.
		d. The study of the various historic styles of the ornament.
IX	Technical Design	a. Surface: Design applied to printing and weaving of textile fabrics; Glass and Pottery; Decorative mural painting; Mosaic work etc.
		b. Relief: Design applied to carving, chasing jewellery, metal work, casting, etc.
X	Lithography	a. In pen and Ink
		b. In Chalk
		c. In colour: Simple chromolithography
XI	Wood Engraving	a. In Monochrome (one block)
		b. In colour ( two or more blocks)
XII	Photography	a. The use of the camera, chemicals etc., the taking of negatives.
		b. The printing process

### Appendix 3 - Kala Bhavan Student List 1921 – 1951

Year	Name	Notes
<b>1921</b>	Hirachand Dugar	
	Ardhendu Banerjee	
	Warior	
	Dhiren Krishna Dev Burman	
	Ananda Majundar	
	Benode Behari Mukherjee	
	Ramendranath Chakraborti	
	V.S. Masoji	
	Bir Bhadra Rou Chitra	
	Haripada Roy	
	Kiran Bala Sen	
	Sabita Tagore	
	Sukumari Devi	
	Krishna Chandra Das	
	P. Hariharan	
	Bamon Serodkar	
	Moni Pradhan	
	Satyendranath Bisi	
	Kanu Desai	
	Basu Dewan	
	Krishna Murty	
	Sohag Mal	
	Gostha Behari Das	
	Satyendranath Bandopadhyay	
<b>1922</b>	Sukumar Deoskar	
	Sudhir Khastagir	
	Prabhat Mohan Bandyopadhyay	
	Bishnupada Bandyopadhyay	
	Anukana Dasgupta	
	Indushudha Ghosh	
	Mandakini Sen	
	Gouri Bhanja	
	Basu Dasgupta	
	Biswarup Basu	
	Bone Behari Ghosh	
	Moni Roy Chowdhury	

	Sarodindu Singha	
	Sutaan Harrap	
	Haimanti Devi	
	Nivanani Chowdhury	
	Jadupati Basu	
	Kesab Rao	
	Hiren Ghosh	
	Ruddrappa Hanji	
	Raju	
<b>1923</b>	Satyendranath Bishi	
	Madhavan	
	Prabhat Mohan Bandyopadhyay	
	Kanu Desai	
<b>1924</b>	Anukona Dasgupta	
	Indushudha Ghosh	
	Kironbala Sen	
	Veer Singh (?)	
	Mandakini Chattapadhyay	
	Goshtobihari Singha	
<b>1925</b>	Sudhir Khastagir	
	Ramkinkar Baij	
	Vasudevan	
	Gita Roy	
<b>1926</b>	Chitraniva Chowdhury	
<b>1927</b>	Hiren Ghosh	
<b>1930</b>	Saradendu Sinha	
	Hiren Ghosh	Re-admission
<b>1931</b>	Sisir Kumar Majumdar	Mentioned as Sisir Kr Ghosh in Bharat Shilpi, Part III
	Sailesh Chandra Dev Barman	
	Monoharlal	
	Jayantilal Javeri	
	Chitraniva Chowdhury	Re-admission
<b>1932</b>	Sova Sarkar	
	Kandala Satyanarayan	
	A.C. Ramkrishna Ammal	

	Devraj Sethi	
	Reva Patel	
	J.M. Martanda	
	Upendranath Madhav	
	Kissen Chand Kakkar	
	Jayantilal Thakurdas Parekh	
	Sujata Nahar	
	Niharranjan Choudhury	
	Esmi Perera	Sri Lanka
<b>1933</b>	Maitri Shukla	
	Kiranshashi Dey	
	Kamala Sen	
	Mrs. Mehra Mehta	
	Rameswar Prasad Shukla	
	A Perumal	
	Mrs. Brij Kumari Purushottam	
	Pauline Bolken	
	Manika Sengupta	
	Sushila Badheka	
	Anusuka Takkar	
	Roesli Jara	
	Kiranchandra Sinha Choudhury	
	Kushwant Singh	
	M.S. Dewadas	
	Nabakishore Mandal	
	Jitendra Kumar Bose	
	Binapani Banerjee	
	Lila Wellingkar	
	Hu Ming Chun	China
<b>1934</b>	Jotinmoyee Sen	
	Shogra Amir Ali	
	Ashoka Roy	
	Abdul Ghani Khan	(son of Gafar Khan)
	Vinodini Parekh	
	Renuka Bala Kar	
	Sri Krishna Mishra	
	ShibKumar Dutta	
	Shantimoy Guha	
	Shubhadraben Thakorbbhai Desai	
	Selina Wickramratne	Ceylon

	Shah Sukhlal Monilal	
	Shudhanshu Kr Palit	
	Kundan C. Bhatt	
	Ramkanai Samanta	
	Niranjan Kr Banerjee	
	Hariharlal	
<b>1935</b>	Rashida Banu **	
	Hamida Banu **	
	Akhtar Banu **	** (three sisters)
	Samarendranath Sinha	
	Sulekha Guha	
	I.D.A. Weerawardana	Ceylon
	Sujit Kr. Roy	
	Puspa M. Mehta	
	Maharaj Kumari Ila Devi	
	Indira Roy	
	Mokshada Prasad Barua	
	Anupchand Rojapal Shah	
	Provin Chandra A. Doshi	
	Mrs. Esther Jayawanti Appaswamy	
	Nand Keshava	
	Paresh Chandra Sinha Roy	
	Kamala Roy	
	Alo Sanyal	
	Prafulla Kr. Das	
	Gour Chandra Das	
	Anwa Agarwala	
	Mehta Jaypal	
	Sukriti Roy	
	Maitri Shukla	
	Piragi Amritrao Gawade	
	Pramila Basu	
	Indulekha Ghosh	
<b>1936</b>	Debabrata Some	
	Kamala Mukherjee	
	Santosh Kr. Roy Choudhury	
	Santi Ranjan Bose	
	Harivadan Keshavlal Bhatt	
	Gobardhanlal Joshi	
	Mrs. Rutly K. Khandalwala	
	Dhirajram Harjiram Patel	
	Durga Kumar Roy	

	Kamala Paduval	
	Pushpa M. Mehta	
	V.P. Ratnakar	
	Usha Rani Sarkar	
	Jogendra Mohan Sil	
	Roma Gupta	
	Anusuya Thakkar	
	Mrs. Kotia Sarkar	
	Sukhomoy Mitra	
	Labanya Lata Basu	
	Grace A. Muthuvale	
	Abul Kalam	
<b>1937</b>	Monohar Singh Sahani	
	Sakhyaraja Ganapat Rao Kadke	
	Himmat Singh Daru	
	Etelka Bogler	Hungary
	Sudhir Gopal Roy	
	Purnima Roy Choudhury	
	Jayanta Kr. Desai	
	Harichha P. Nirmal	
	P. Mukhuvansh Narayan Singh	
	Prema Peeris	Ceylon
	Kamala Dey	
	K. Madhava Warrior	
	Madanlal Vallabhdas Mehta	
	Madhukar Mohanlal Seth	
	Mena Parmanand Kapadia	
	Anil Kr Sinha	
	Amala Bose	
	Lila Thadani	
	Raj Bhadanta Manjushri	Ceylon
	Usharani Kar Roy	
	Naresh Krishna Dev Barman	
	Mohini Devi Pandey	
<b>1938</b>	Bhanu Smart	
	Prabhash Ranjan Sen	
	Mrs. Y. Chitty	
	Kanwal Nain	
	Jagannath Prasad Rout	
	Sachindra Nath Dasgupta	
	Suhash Chandra Dey	

	Kunti Lalchand Kanya	
	Bhagaban Das	
	Trilochan Dutta	
	M. Muthu Swamy	
	Kanubhai Someswar Dave	
	Kumari Sudevi Basu	
	Miss Mukhi Gopi Mangharam	
	Vidhyapati	
	Sarala Devi Pandya	
	Sita Bulchand Gidvani	
	Miss Malkani Ruki Ghanshyam Das	
	Suniti Ranjan Majumdar	
	Vanraj Shankar Malli	
	Bhagavati Devi	w/o Hazari Prasad Dwiwedi
	Deviprasad Gupta	
	Dhirendra Gandhi	
	Sanakrishnan	
	Guli Ramchand Kripalini	
<b>1939</b>	Preeti Kumar Pandey	
	Annyapurna Bhattacharya	
	E. Prassannu Raghava Rao	
	Goulnmis	Greece
	Francis S. Kallinga	Ceylon
	Sudhakana Dutta	
	Renuka Kar	
	Ajit Kumar Bose	
	Shanti Kr Damodar Suraiya	
	Bijan Chandra Sinha	
	Brojalal Bhaishankar Trivedi	
	Mrs. Miran Vazirani	
	Mrs. Ratna J. Bhavnani	
	Prithish Chandra Neogi	
	Monorama Sen	
	Sudha Wagle	
	Sundari R. Bhavnain	
	Chitragada Mehta	
	Kurangi Mehta	
	Biswanath Khanna	
	Lalita Ray	
	Kamala Krishnan	



	Madanlal Bhallave Das Mehta	
	Nivedita Paramanand	
	Mridula Takkar	
	Mahadeva Narayan	
	Naranarayana Chowdhury	(Shankho Chowdhury)
	Biba Modinder Kaur Bedi	
	Jyotirmoyee Ghosh	
	Aparna Gupta	
	Soma Kumari Joshi	
	Sudarshana Kaur	
<b>1940</b>	Damayanti Hasrat	
	Monmatha Kr. Das	
	Bimala Neogi	
	Sudha Banerjee	
	Md. Hassan Ali Mia	
	Harbhajan Kaur Madan	
	Suniti Kr. Mitra	
	S.P. Sakalasurya	
	Bankim Chandra Mukherjee	
	Anupama Roy	
	Rama Dutta	
	Satyajit Roy	(Ray)
	Biva Dutta	
	Jamuna Sen	
	Sushila Jasra	
	Santi Sarma	
	Ajit Kishori Roy	
	Sati Lilaram Chandi Ramani	
	Sulabha Gunjkar	
	Jaya Appasamy	
	Niranjan Kr. Mishra	
	Rabindranath Chattopadhyay	
	A.Kumudini	
	Supriya Mukherjee	
	Nilima Barua	
<b>1941</b>	C. Veerabhadraya	
	Anil Kanti Majumdar	
	Israni Gopi Issersingh	
	Ranee Dasgupta	
	D. R. Kausik	
	Xogendra Desai	(Y)

	Kusum Kumari	
	Bani Mukjerjee	
	Nagendranath Hembram	
	Archana Dasgupta	
	Dhiru Desai	
	Veerabhadra Haji	
	Puspa Tiwari	
	Fuu Tongyoo	Thailand
	Miss Nanki Balani	
	Pranesh Chandra Bhowmik	
	Ruby G. Mandiwala	
	Devidas Singha	
	Ella Dutta	
	Sabita Maitra	
	Dayananda D. Mal	
	Jaya Shukhlal Amir Chand Shah	
<b>1942</b>	Shanti Lal Patel	
	Anima Das	
	Prakriti Das Gupta	
	Usharanjan Dutta Gupta	
	Upali Ekanayaka	Ceylon
	Santpal Avashsthi	
	Sati Kaul	
	Suven Bhattacharya	
	Arunmoy Dasgupta	
	Maya Ghosh	
	Amala Bose	
	Ajoy Kumar Chakraborty	
	Manashi Chatterjee	
	Mira Mukherjee	
	Nara Vankata Ratnam	
	Kanti Sen C. Shroff	
	Dolly Sarkar	
	Phani Bhusan Das	
	Shubhash Chandra Kar Roy	
	Birendra Pandey	
	Krishna S. Chandra	
	Abani Kr. Sinha	
	Bhutnath Pal	
	L. Pankajam	
<b>1943</b>	Monorama Mitra	
	Suriti Sarkar	

	Sulekha Guha	
	Banku Behari Das Roy	
	Radhika Prasanna Roy	
	Amiya Ghosh	
	Dwijendra Kr Sengupta	
	Kalyani Barua	
	Sumitra Rakshit	
	Lila Mansukhani	
	Bimalendra Nath Singh	
	Induprabha Roy	
	Mohini Pandey	
	Aditi Sarkar	
	Brij Mohan Bhanot	
	Krishna Bala Asthana	
	Jitendra Kumar	
	L. Iswar Reddy	
	Kripal Singh Sekhawat	
	Huikao Yin	China
	Muktipada Banerjee	
	Viranchilal Dayabhai Shah	
	Ashis Kumar Maity	
	L.T. Karyawasan	Ceylon
	N. Krishna Reddy	
	Mira Chattopadhyay	
<b>1944</b>	Sankha Chowdhury (Naranarayan)	Re-admission
	Ramnivas Verma	
	Dipti Ghosh	
	Sudhindra Chandra Gupta	
	Prativa Sengupta	
	Purnendu Narayan Pal	
	Baidyanath Sengupta	
	Sumita Sen	
	K.G. Subramanyan	
	Kiran Bala Barua	
	Supriti Ball	
	Sunanda Gupta	
	Paresh Chandra Bhowmik	
	Birendra Nath Pal	
	Rajani Kant Mehta	
	Nirmala Dayal Das	
	Kshama Gupta	
	Khagendranath Chakraborty	
	Shudha Roy	

	Basanta Roy Kanji	
	E.R. Kumaril Swamy	
	Gouranga Charan	
	Kanta Ratilal Mehta	
	Miss. Krishna Sarkar	
	Bankim Chandra Banerjee	
	Shanta Sen	
	Miss. W.D. Bostance De Fonseka	Ceylon
	Jyotsnamoyee Sen	
<b>1945</b>	Monorama Mitra	
	G. Kankaratnam	
	Nikhad Shamshad	
	Binodini Devi	
	V.S. Satyanarayan	
	Sambhu Singh Rathore	
	Ira J. Vakir	
	Gayaprashad Dikshit	
	Shankar Nath Roy	
	Vaijayanti Desai	
	Binodini Parikh	Left
	Sharodah Parikh	Left
	Ratneswar Ghosh	Left
	Binapani Devi	Left
	Baudhula Lokuge	Ceylon
	Savita Bhuta	
	H.S.O. Alwis	Ceylon
	Sonali Sen Roy	
	Jagadish Chandra Mittal	
	Sabita Gupta	
	Navaratna Soma Bandhu Vidyapati	
	Tarasadan Sinha	
	Anita Sarkar	
	Nandini Khaitan	
	Veena A. Thakkar	
	Mangalal Ratilal Parekh	
<b>1946</b>	Dhirabha Basu	
	Anila Sengupta	
	Ila Bhattacharya	
	S.R. Gandhi	
	Kurisetti Viswanatham	
	Nani Gopal Ghosh	

	Janaki Nath Pal	
	Gita Feram Pocha	
	Pankaj Kumar Banerjee	
	K.V. Natarajan	
	S.P. Srinivasan	
	Kali Dindi Mohan Verma	
	Ritendra Majumdar	
	Deva Rani Sarkar	
	Kuldip Singh Bhalla	
	Lakshminarayan Bhakat	
	Deoki Nandan Sharma	
	Birendranath Pal	
	Sharoma Bose	
	Rajniti Sing	
	Surinder Sodhi	
	Jaganath Das	
	Rammonohar Sinha	
	A.Vijayam	
	Sushila Jasra	
<b>1947</b>	S. Krishna Rao	
	Indira Kalia	
	Vijaya Pattabardhan	
	Ganendranath Dey	
	Sova Roy	
	Kamala Devi Gupta	
	Bimala Ahuja	
	Sudhanshu Prasad Ghosh	
	Hararay Bhagjibhai Desai	
	Syed Farlur Rahman	
	Roma Dutta	
	Arundhuti Bose	
	Dinanath Bhargava	
	Biharilal Chotalal Borbhaiya	
	Bibhash Sen	
	G.V. Subbarao	
	Arati Bose	
	Kusum Kumari Barua	
	Amal Kumar Dutta	
	Sanchita Dutta	
	Nilima Sen	
	Bharati Roy	
	Mangala Parikh	
	Renuka Bala Mukherjee	
	Charumali Mohanty	

	K. Sheshagiri Rao	
	Ila Das	
<b>1948</b>	Kiran Ganguly	
	G. Gouri	
	Sujit Kr. Mitra	
	Golak Behari Das	
	Jogendra Nath Mishra	
	Amritlal Vegad	
	Shanta Rajdan	
	Athelage Don Jayatilaka	Ceylone
	Bikshu Udahamulle Chandaloka	Ceylone
	Mujlibhai Patel	
	Jadunath Supakar	
	Bani Bhanja	
	Metharam Detaram Dharmaney	
	Monojit Dey	
	Sasanka Sekhar Bhattacharya	
	Rekha Bose	
	Sukhendralal Ganguly	
<b>1949</b>	Chan Sin Yen	China
	Archana Dasgupta	
	Sumitra Benegal	
	Sandha Mitra	
	Chhanda Mitra	
	Priti Guha Thakutra	
	Kamal Krishna Roy	
	Jyotsna Guha	
	Prananiti Chatterjee	
	Rajkumar Jaitly	
	Anima Rudra	
	Jayanta Jagjivan Das Parekh	
	Dipika Dasgupta	
	Mrinal Kanti Ghosh	
	Smt. Chandra ghosh	
	Sovan Som	
	Bankim Sarkar	
	Panchu Gopal Ghatak	
	Rathindra Dey	
	Avtar Singh Panwar	
	Kesab Das	

	Virendra Singh	
	Rabindra Krishna Pal	
	Amit Pal	
	Dilip Choudhury	
	Rita Choudhury	
	Manabendra Roy	
	Dayamayee Bhuiyan	
	Rajamoney Chuinyapillai	
	Premalaya Rajpal Singh	
	Nilima Bose	
	Uma Soni	
	Ahalya Das	
	B. Krishnappa	
	Mohini Bhandari	
<b>1950</b>	Dani Mukherjee	
	Dipali Mukherjee	
	Kartika Affandi	Indonesia
	Sibha Narayan Thakur	
	Batuk Nath Bhattacharya	
	Krishna Mohan Sahu	
	Dahiyabhai Gokaldas Bhakta	
	Himanshu Kr. Saha	
	U. Haridas	
	Rashbehari Maity	
	Sadhana Barman	
	Sita A. Malachira	
	Jyotsnamoy Dutta	
	Sandip Kumar Tagore	
	Nitty Gopal Barik	
	Surendranath Dey	
	Morgem Kelekar	
	Dilip Kr. Mansingh Mahapatra	
	Bhaktilata Benria	
	Sulekha Bhattacharya	
	Anjali Das	
	Sabritri Manacha	
	Subhachari Dasgupta	
	Rabindranarayan Naik	
	Laxminarayan Pachori	
	Vinodini Bardoli	
	Sumita Sinha	
	Miss Mathura V. Jagtap	

	Jaynarayan Choudhury	
	Prabha Verma	
	A.Rani Ahamed	
<b>1951</b>	Balchandra Ratangi Bhatt	
	Subha Sen	
	Brahmajit Singh Vig	
	Dinesh Chandra Roy	
	Vijaya Mukherjee	
	Sachida Nanda Mishra	
	Arati Roychoudhury	
	Benode Behari Rout Roy Mahapatra	
	Gargi Sethi	
	Madan Mohan Lohhar	
	Vijay Kumar Kochhar	
	Bina Lal	
	Sujata Sengupta	
	Sondhya Jana	
	Kumar Banda Kulugammanna	
	Umanath Jha	
	Manng Anng Sac	
	Promad Chandra Mahapatra	
	Rani Lahiri	
	B. Shankarrappa	
	Ramesh Chandra Ghosh	
	Sewli Bhattacharya	



#### Appendix 4 – List of Murals and Outdoor Sculptures in Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan

Date	Mural	Location	Students/Artists
1930	Halalarshan, Fresco Buono	Sriniketan	Nandalal, assisted by Benodebehari and students
1931	Panels of birds and animals, copies of traditional forms inspired by Ajanta, and dwarf figures. Tempera	Inside the hall of Santoshalaya	Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari, Chitraniha Chowdhury, Rani Chanda, Jamuna Sen, Nivedita Bose, Geetha Roy, Gouri Bhanja, Bonbehari Ghosh, Jadupati Bose, Saratendu Sinha, Rudrappa Hanji
1932	Various figurative motifs based on traditional Indian Art	North Veranda, Santoshalaya	Benodebehari, Nishikanta Roy Chowdhury, Sailesh Deb Burman, Narayan Sangam, Rudrappa Hanji, Bonbehari Ghosh, Hiren Ghosh, Jadupati Bose, and Siisr Ghosh.
1932	Themes from daily life and decorative panels, Egg Tempera	Sree Sadan Girl's Hostel	Chitraniha Chowdhury, Anukana Das Gupta, Savitri Krishnan, Gita Roy, Mondira Gupta, Jamuna Sen, Rani De, and Nivedita Bose
1933`	Seven panels on the ground floor verandah of Patha Bhavan narrating Natir puja, Khoai, Shapmochan, birth of Chaitanya, cattle and cowherds, ashram scene, and santhal girl. Jaipuri Technique	Ground Floor Veranda, Patha Bhavan	Nandalal Bose with Narsinghal, Jayantilal Parekh and other students.
1934	Santiniketan Landscape. Egg Tempera	Pearson Memorial Hospital	Jamuna Sen, Nivedita Basu,

			Anusuya Thakkar, Biswarup Bose
1934	Vriksharopan. Tempera(?) on two lime plaster slabs	East end room, Patha Bhavan	Nandalal Bose and Karushangha members
1935	Relief sculptures of local life in Santiniketan and copies of traditional art forms. Mud wall relief sculpture, painted over with Tar	Outer mud walls, Shyamali	Nandalal, Ramkinkar and KB students
1935	Sujata, Direct concrete Outdoor sculpture	Opposite to Black House Kala Bhavan	Ramkinkar Baij
1937	Copy of Bagh Mural	Old Nandan, Kala Bhavan	Biswarup Bose, Kiron Singha, Selina Wikramarante, Sukhamoy Mitra, Mridula Thakkar, Roesli, Nihar Ranjan Choudhury, Jamuna Sen, Renuka Kar, and Rev. Bhadanta Manjushri
1936-1938	Copy of figurines from a range of traditional art forms. Mud relief, mixed with cowdung, straw and tar.	Black House, Kala Bhavan	Nandalal, Ramkinkar, Siva Kumar Dutta, Santi Ranjan Bose, Nanda Keshav Babdey, Monohar Sing Sahani, Hari Vadan Bhatt, Pravas Sen, Mridula Kak, Durga Kumar Roy, Paresh Chandra Singha, Renuka Kar, A. Perumal, Chitranibha Choudhury, Anil Saha, Jaypal Mehta, Shankho Choudhury and Roesli.
1938	Santhal Family. Direct cement concrete Sculpture	Behind Design Studio, Kala Bhavan	Ramkinkar Baij
1938-1939	Copies of Oriental motifs. Egg Tempera on Lime and gesso ground.	North-east block Verandah, Kala Bhaban Boy's Hostel	Benodebehari assisted by KB students, Santi Ranjan Bose, Jayant Kumar Desai, Sukhomoy Mitra, Prafulla Kr Das, Madhava Warriar,

			Rutty K. Khandalwala, Paresh Chandra Roy, shav, Sivakumar Dutta, Pravas Sen, Rubi Malkani, Nanda Keshav, Sita Bulchand Gidwani and Mena Kapadia
Late 40s*	Seated Budhha Direct Concrete outdoor Sculpture	Opposite to Sujata and diagonally opposite to Black house. South end of KB premise	The sculpture was initially done by Rudrappa Hanji, a student of KB, later redone by Ramkinkar in the late 40s, when the original was destroyed.
1940	Birbhum Landscape, Egg Tempera	North west Block ceiling, KB Boy's Hostel	Benodebehari, A. Perumal, Monorama Sen and other students.
1940	First Floor - Decorative Motifs derived from Central Asia and Ajanta Tempera  Ground Floor – Motifs inspired from Bonkati Ratha (Brass chariot of Bonkati) Tempera.	Dinantika (Cha Chakra)	Nandalal  Prithi, Aparna, Mamata, Renuka, Kamala, Sarala, Jyothi, Gouri, Jamuna and Indu
1940	Sunflowers. Fresco	Santiniketan Building	Benodebehari
1940	The Lamp Stand, Direct Cement Sculpture	Before the entrance of Santiniketan Building	Ramkinkar Baij
1941	Copy of Dancers and Musicians from Aurangabad Caves Cement Relief	Ceramics Studio Kala Bhavan	Ramkinkar BAij, Shankho Choudhury, Prabhas Sen and Ravi Chatterjee.
1942	Natir Puja, Egg Tempera	Cheena Bhavan	Nandalal, Assisted by Mena Kapadia and Anil Saha
1942	Four relief panel, Carved on Wet Plaster	Façade, Cheena Bhavan	Ramkinkar BAij, Shankho Choudhury, Prabhas Sen and Ravi Chatterjee.
1942	The Temptation of Mara (based on Ajanta Cave I) Egg Tempera	Ground Floor Hall, Cheena Bhavan	Gouri Bhanja, assisted by Sukriti Chakraborti,

			Purnima Tagore, Sukhomoy Mitra, Santiranjana Basu, Rabi Chatterjee, Prabhas Sen, Ajit Kr Bose, and Dayananda.
1942	Chandalika. Egg Tempera	Ground Floor Verandah, Cheena Bhavan	Vinayak S. Masoji
1942	Narrative panels based on Kotha Mela. Egg Tempera	Ground Floor Verandah, Cheena Bhavan	KB Students (Fu Ha Tangiyu, Naresh Krishna Deb Burman and other) working under Nandalal
1942	Life on Campus. Egg Tempera	First Floor, Cheena Bhavan	Benodebehari, Prithi Kumar Pandey, Suniti Kumar Mitra, Jaya Appasamy, Nivedita Parmanand.
1943	Painters and Musicians (Campus Life) Fresco Buono	North west and north east Block, Kala Bhavan Boy's Hostel	Benodebehari, Prabhas Sen, Devi Prasad Gupta
1943	The Harvester, Direct Cement Sculpture	Behind Kala Bhavan Boy's Hostel	Ramkinkar Baij
1940s (R Siva Kumar notes mid 1940)	The Dandi March (based on Nandalal's print) Relief panel Cut on Wet cement surface	Back southern out wall of Old Nandan, KB	Shankho Choudhury
Mid 1940s	Tibetan Buddhist Deities. Tempera	Wall of the Design Department (Black and White Mural Studio), KB	Lama Pe-ma Dorje
1947	A scene from Ramayana. Jaipur Technique	East wall of the Entrance hall, Hindi Bhavan	Kripal Singh Sekhawat, A. Perumal, Leela Mukherjee and Jitendra Kumar
1946-1947	Medieval Saints. Fresco Buono	South, west and North wall of the Entrance Hall, Hindi Bhavan	Benodebehari assisted by K.G. Subramanyan, Devaki Nandan Sharma, Jitendra Kumar and Leela Mukherjee
1947	Decorative design panels. Tempera	Design Department (Black and White Mural Studio), KB	Amala Basu, Bani Mukherjee working under Gouri Bhanja

1949	Copies of Ajanta (Cave 1,2 and 17) Tempera	North and West Wall, Old Nandan, KB	Vinayak Masoji, A. Perumal, Kanai Samanta assisted by Jagdish Mittal, E Kumaril Swamy, Vinapani, Kanakaratanam and Sonali Sengupta
1949	Life of Budhha - Series of Egg Tempera Murals <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Birth by Ram Manohar Singha</li> <li>2. Siddhartha presenting his gift to Yashodhara by Dinanath Bhargava</li> <li>3. Four Grievous Sights by Sasanka Bhattacharya</li> <li>4. Abhinishkramana by Bihari Bhai Barbhaya</li> <li>5. Standing Budhha, artist unknown.</li> <li>6. Sujata approaching Budha by Suhash Sen</li> <li>7. Amrapali, artist unknown</li> <li>8. Enlightenment by Amritalal Vegad</li> <li>9. Budhha preaching to Bimbisara, artist unknown</li> <li>10. Dharmachakrapravartana by Harraya Desai</li> <li>11. Mahaparinirvana, artist unknown</li> <li>12. Ananda pleading with Budhha by Kalindi Mohan Varma</li> </ol>	West Block (north Wing) KB Boy's Hostel	KB students working under Bisvarup Bose
1949	Life of Christ - Series of Egg Tempera Murals <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nativity by Nani Gopal Ghosh</li> <li>2. Boy Jesus in the Temple, artist unknown</li> <li>3. Conversion of St. Thomas, artist unknown</li> <li>4. Christ Cleanses the Temple by Krishna Rao</li> <li>5. Christ Calms the Storm, artist unknown</li> <li>6. Christ among children, artist unknown</li> <li>7. The Last Supper by Golak Bihari Das</li> <li>8. Christ Arrested, artist unknown.</li> <li>9. Christ on the Mountain, artist unknown</li> </ol>	West Block (South Wing) KB Boy's Hostel	KB students working under A. Perumal and Vinayak Masoji

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Christ Carrying the Cross, artist unknown</li> <li>11. Crucifixion, artist unknown</li> <li>12. Resurrection, artist unknown</li> </ul>		
1949	<p>Hindu Mythology – Series of Egg Tempera Murals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dushyanta seeing Shakuntala by Debrani Sarkar</li> <li>2. Kanva bidding farewell to Shakuntala by Ila Ghosh</li> <li>3. Shakuntala before Dushyanta by Kamala Devi</li> <li>4. Uma Fainting by Vani Bhanja</li> <li>5. Manmatha aiming his arrow at Shiva by Natarajan</li> <li>6. Panchagni MADhyastha Uma by Jayatilake</li> <li>7. Meghaduta by Amal Kumar Datta</li> <li>8. Shiva as Vatu before Uma by Rekha Bose</li> <li>9. Pandavas bringing Draupadi to Kunti, artist unknown</li> <li>10. The burning of the Lac Palace by Rajaniti Singh</li> <li>11. Arjuna and Uttarakumara, artist unknown</li> <li>12. Bhisma on the bed of arrows by Jogendra Mitra</li> <li>13. Sudhama received by Krishna by Arati Bose</li> <li>14. Karna lifting his Chariot by Subha Rao</li> </ul>	West Block (West Wing) KB Boy's Hostel	KB students working under Gouri Bhanja
1956	Mill Call, Direct Concrete Sculpture	Behind Design Studio, Kala Bhavan	Ramkinkar Baij

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