CHAPTER - IV

THE INDIAN INTERLUDE
(TRANSITIONAL PERIOD II)

Awareness of the qualities of Indian traditional art dawned amongst the art-critics and the artists of Bombay in the last decades of the 19th century. However, the influence of the Western realism was so great on the minds of the Indian painters that they could not fully imbibe the spirit of Indian Art. Their awareness was confined to the copying of the frescoes of Ajanta. The activities in the field of history and archaeology were also partly responsible in arousing the curiosity amongst the people regarding traditional Indian Art.

The first accounts of Indian Art and architecture were written between 1874 to 1924 and these were of two types, some of them were in the form of archaeological surveys like those by Henry Cole and James Fergusson.[1] Cole's catalogue of the objects of Indian art in the South Kesington Museum (the present Victoria and Albert Museum) and Fergusson's comprehensive History of different styles in Indian Architecture were significant in this sense. Gradually similar attempts by other writers followed. The second type was related to the transcendental aspect of Indian Art. The authors who brought this into focus were mainly Principal Havell, Ananda Coomarswamy and later on followed by Arobindo Ghosh.

The European Princials of Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay were also partly responsible in arousing interest amongst the Indian

painters and the art-students about the ancient Art of India. Late Raobahadur M.V. Dhurandhar, the renowned painter of Bombay in the early decades of 20th century, gives the credit of bringing the Ajanta paintings to light and creating curiosity by copying them, to Bombay School[2] and especially to Principal Griffiths who was the then Principal of Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay. When the British Government entrusted the work of making copies of Ajanta paintings to him he sent a group of selected students of his school to Ajanta for this job, under the leadership of Pestonji Bamanji. Also a student of Sir J.J.School of Art, Pestonji carried out this work with much competence. It took 10 years for completion in the year 1884. The work of this batch was wholeheartedly praised for their perfect drawing, handling of colour and the delicacy in execution. In 1895 again second batch of students was sent. This included Dhurandhar, Pithawala, Satavlekar, Taskar, Agaskar and Sokarji. This work of copying Ajanta paintings brought the students in closer contact with Indian traditional art.

With these attempts in different directions there were also some organizations like that of "The Indian Art Society" established as early as in 1898, with the motive of encouraging and preserving Indian Art and handicrafts.[4] Naturally it contributed to the exhibition held in the Crystal Palace.

However, with all these, we cannot get a definite evidence about whether these associations and the persons concerned were trying to propagate the spirit of Indian Art and the philosophy behind it together with its formal qualities. For, when Birdwood

was talking about Indian art and its preservation he had in his mind the motive to preserve only the technical skill and craftsmanship which was imbibed by the Indian craftsmen as a result of a long tradition. Birdwood did not seem to be aware about the symbolical significance of the Indian ornamentation or its formal beauty. Even Principal Havell, who was made a tremendous effort in the propagation of traditional Indian style especially while at the Calcutta School, had been exhibiting his own paintings as early as in 1898 which were in the western realistic style. Both these were landscapes.[5]

It is surprising to find that Principal Griffiths, who encouraged the Indian students to make copies of Ajanta paintings and wrote a valuable survey on Ajanta Art,[6] was of the opinion that to introduce Greco-Roman ideas to Indian students was necessary. He opposed the suggestion by Sir E.C. Buck, Kt. C.S.I. Secretary to the Government of India's Department of Revenue and Agriculture, that the examples of Indian Art should be introduced to the Indian students to bring about Indianness amongst their art works. It will not be improper to give the reference of Sir Buck's letter to Brigade-Surgeon Lt.Col. T.H. Hendley, C.I.E., who wrote, "... Primary aim of the schools of Art should be to extent a knowledge of drawing on oriental models so as to preserve oriental ideas and instincts among classes upon whom an education to advance the architecture and artware manufacture of this country will depend. The time will probably come when all professions and trades connected with art will draw upon the ordinary schools

and institutions for their craftsmen and it would seem important that the directors of Art schools and Museums should co-operate in introducing, while there is still time, a system, which will lead to the maintenance of the distinct oriental features which have hitherto characterised the best Indian Art"[7] and he rightly suggested that it would be an injustice to thrust the western art upon Indian students and specifically mentioned that it was necessary "to preserve oriental ideas and instincts".

However, Griffiths opposed it strongly in his report dated 13th Sept.1892 in which he wrote, "The students who attend the schools of Art are drawn from all classes, so that it would be unreasonable to confine a European student to study solely from examples based only on Indian Models. I certainly see no objection to putting before an Indian student a good example of Greek or Italian ornament which has much in common with Indian ornament any more to give an Indian student of literature; Shakespeare and Milton as Text books. If the student has anything in him, he will assimilate and evolve something new. This is what India has done in the past as each consecutive wave of invasion passed over the country and there is no reason why she should not do it again" and thus Griffiths was successful in convincing the authorities to continue the syllabus on the Western lines.[8]

However, the curiosity was sufficiently aroused by such exhibitions as those of Industrial arts in India. The Industrial art exhibition in Bombay in 1890, on the occasion of his Royal Highness Prince Albert's visit to Bombay, was admired wholeheartedly.[9]

This show exhibited excellent pieces of woodcarving including cabinets, screens and other furniture pieces, valuable jewellery, from Bhavnagar, a beautiful silver set of chessmen from Kolhapur, gold stamped fabrics from the collection of Nawab of Radhanpur, collection of arms and screens from Pahlanpore, damscened work from Shialkot, perforated brass pillars from Jaipur, clay figures from Poona, Lucknow, Kishangarh, fabulous embroidered fabric of rich gold and silver kinkhabs from Bhavnagar and Surat, cleverly designed phulkaries, patolas, sarees, shawls, ceramics, pottery etc. This exhibition displayed the talent of Indian craftsmen in various fields.

In 1902 on the occasion of the famous Delhi Durbar, a magnificent Industrial exhibition was held on all India level and the Bombay school of Art made a significant contribution by arranging a beautiful hall named 'Indian-Room' by decorating it with plaster-casts, paintings, carved wooden couches and chairs, silver decorative objects, brass tabletops, pottery with repousse work, hand printed curtains and hangings etc. done by the students of the school of art.[10] The Indian Room was appreciated and it attracted the crowd. At the opening of the Delhi Durbar, Lord Curzon, in his speech recommended the necessity of encouragement to traditional Indian Art. This was at once welcomed and it was advised everywhere that in the Art Schools, Indian Art should be taught. However, the measures taken for this differed.

Prof. Havell took this opportunity and stopped teaching the Western art style in Calcutta School and started encouraging his

students to copy Moghul miniatures. He also published his work 'Ideals of Indian Art' and other articles in order to propagate Indian Art. In Bombay School of Art, Principal Cecil Burns tried to take similar steps. But he was not fully capable to understand the spirit behind Indian Art ~~fully~~ completely. It seems that he had some vague notions about it in his mind.[11] The result was that he encouraged the students to copy the old Indian paintings or carpet-designs or even to make some miniature drawing from a huge plaster cast. Sometimes he also advised the students to draw a thick outline around a figure from life. Such attempts proved haphazard though the desire to have some attempts for encouraging Indian Art was apparent.

Prof. Havell not only started on his own in the Calcutta School of Art, to popularize Indian Art style but he also wrote a letter to Lord Lamington, appealing to introduce 'Indianness' and not to encourage European atmosphere. The result was seen at the Annual Prize distribution function of the Bombay School of Art presided by Lord Lamington. In his speech he had urged to bring Indianness in Art.[12] But what he meant by that was not actually using the principles behind the traditional art but to encourage to paint Indian subjects i.e. the topics from Indian life. The indigenious quality was also mentioned by the art critics in their reviews of the exhibitions of the Bombay Art Society. The critic of Times of India, while criticizing M.V. Dhurandhar's painting 'The Bridge' exhibited in the same year, wrote, ".... in not a single instance can a distinctively Indian note be found in

point of view of treatment and that the above painting was lacking an 'Indian note' in treatment.[13] But he only makes a vague statement about this 'Indain note' as being the quality of painting with details and decorative arrangement of masses as well as vivid but harmonious colours.

Similar reviews refering to the paintings of Dhurandhar, Pithawala and others noted that'unless these gentlemens' names were there to testify to their pictures being the works of the natives of India, they might have been taken for those of European painters' and it was in vain to search for masters of the miniature portraitures which are one of the finest treasures of the East.[14] The same critic admired paintings of Abanindranath Tagore for their "Decorative arrangement of line and harmony of colour, so much prized in the ancient Persian and Indian pictures". This shows that such critics were aware of these two qualities of Indian paintings but not of the others which actually were more significant. The review expressed the regret about the low standard of taste of the Princes and the wealthy merchants of India who "at the time when the voice of Swadeshiwallah is heard so loud in the land, the walls of their palaces and houses should be lined by third class European originals or with cheap reproductions of the vulgarities of Indian or French painting, while imaginative and beautiful works inspired by the mythology and fairy lore of India, by painters like Tagore and Gangoly are neglected".

It seems that in the statements by the critics, the decorative arrangement and harmonious colour scheme as the qualities belonging

to Indian art were repeatedly emphasised. Yet nowhere the expressive quality or symbolism was mentioned. With the desire that the Indianness should be seen in the paintings, now the need of synthesising the western and Indian elements in art was also presupposed. At the time of the annual exhibition and the function at Sir J.J. School of Art, both Cecil Burns and the Governor had mentioned in the speeches, the necessity of bringing out a synthesis of Western and Eastern qualities in art.[15] It was the first time in 1908 that such an idea was introduced. Afterwards several personalities supported the same. However, here also the opinion of each individual differed regarding the exact nature of the synthesis of western and eastern art.

It seems from the speeches that Cecil Burns and also the Governor were thinking of such a synthesis which was possible to achieve by painting the Indian subjects in Western style. Thus they admired J.P. Gangooly's painting as it assimilated 'the spirit of the western art and added to it something caught from the glowing East", and that it was desirable that "the boldness and freedom of the west grafted upon the colour and sense of the East" and was merely not the reproduction of the foreign style. Later on Principal Gladstone Soloman who succeeded Cecil Burns, put across the idea of having such synthesis more cogently and concentrated his attention on encouraging and popularising the Indian style.

Cecil Burns' attempts proved fruitful as before his retirement in 1918, one of the students of Bombay School i.e. Ravishankar Raval won the Gold Medal of the Bombay Art society in 1917

for his 'Indian Style' painting "Bilvamangala". This was the first time in the history of the Bombay Art Society that an Indian style painting was selected for the most coveted prize.

Ravishankar Mahashankar Raval was born on 1st August, 1892 in Bhavnagar (Saurashtra). His father was serving in the Post Office and because of his transfers, Ravishankar, in his childhood saw many cities like Porbandar, Rajkot, Wadhwan Camp, Mahesana etc. and also came across several types of people in the neighbourhood. In his early childhood he was attracted to Drawing and at his leisure time he used to go to his father's office where with red or black pencil he would make rough sketches in his note-book. Later on his father was transferred to Mehsana. Ravishankar came across people of various tribes and costumes as Mehsana was a big junction. There was a Dharmashala in front of the post office. It was here that he saw plays like 'Madhavo Nal' or 'Gumansinh Gando', and in the Jain temple had seen the beautiful image of Parshvanath. He also developed the habit of reading 'Laghu Ramayan' and 'Bhagawat'. At the same time the Vanjari maidservant Jamni, who came daily to work in his house, used to tell the children stories of princes and princesses, the miracles of the nymphs and the ghosts. Her stories took them to some far away dreamland and their minds were wonder-struck

Ravishankar at last fulfilled his desire of joining the J.J. School of Art. In 1916 after completing his training there, he won the Mayo Medal in painting. Ravishankar then came to Ahmedabad and decided to use his knowledge of art to train the students in

Gujarat. At the same time he had won the first prize for his 'Gurjar Sundari' in the Surat Sahitya Parishad.[16] Encouraged by it he enthusiastically continued to paint in Indian style and in 1917 he won the most coveted award, that is the Gold Medal of the Bombay Art Society for his painting 'Bilvamangala'.[17]

Like the guru of the ancient ashrama system, Ravinshankar also picked up the deserving students who lived with him, studied under him and whenever he found that they deserved further training he made provision for it. He also established the magazine 'Kumar' in which he wrote articles on art and published the reproductions of paintings of the famous artists. N.S. Bendre writes, "Not only he created a school but through it and through his own efforts brought about a general awareness of aesthetic appreciation among the masses of Gujarat".[18] Shaivax Chavda also has expressed similarly his admiration about Ravishankar for his great contribution for making Gujarat art-conscious through his writings in 'Kumar' and other magazines.[19] Sculptor Karmarkar says, 'What Abanindranath did in Bengal in the art-education, the same Ravibhai did in Gujarat". Like Abanindranath, Ravishankar's students achieved significant place in the art field of India. He was responsible for the founding of many art institutions and propagated importanc e of art through these institutions.

Ravishankar's dedication to Indian traditional style was obssessive. He like a religious-minded painter, depicted several subjects from Indian mythology and history in the 'Indian style' and portrayed Gujarati way of life through representing costumes as well as the social customs. His real achievement was that he

instilled in the young artists of Gujarat a new spirit and new approach. Ravishankar had watched keenly the development of Bengal School and felt that the movement in Gujarat must have an individuality of its own and for this, as Karl Khandalavala rightly puts it, "he turned to the culture, the people and the landscape of his hometown province which can be best described as the Gujarat-Saurashtra complex and thus he remained a great visionary who inspired Gujarat into a love for her heritage and gave the impulse to an entire generation of Gujarat artists to interpret their own life and surroundings."[20]

Ravishankar's style though was inclining towards 'Indian Decorative' type, it was different than the Bengal School style or the style of Ajanta. The training in realistic style which was basically taught in Bombay was indirectly reflected in his paintings in the solidity of human form, instead of emphasizing flatness. However, in innumerable paintings which he painted we also see the experiments he tried with simple colour areas and flowing outlines.

In his painting, illustrating the Gujarati version of the story of the "Sleeping Beauty" (Plate 27; Fig.59), he painted the figure of the Prince riding on the horse in the foreground, while the sleeping princess is depicted in the interior of palace.[21] However, though he showed the combination of different view-points in the manner of Indian miniature paintings along with flat tones, but he has rendered the perspective so realistically that it creates the effect of vast space instead of suggesting two-dimensionality. In his use of perspective, his training in western realistic style

revealed its impact. Another of his paintings, 'Harishchandra and Taramati', (Plate 27; fig.58) shows more clearly the realistic influence in the way in which he had rendered the moonlight on the figures and the hazy shadow of Harishchandra on the ground. Even the intense emotional expressions on the faces of Harishchandra and Taramati are not according to 'Indian Decorative' style, but more like realistic painters. The Indian miniature painters or the Ajanta painters instead suggested the emotions through the gestures of the figures, through the environments around the figures and even by the colourschemes. In Raval's painting even the treatment of the scene in the background is treated in realistic manner. Significant amongst the galaxy of students trained under Ravishankar, were Somalal Shah, Rasiklal Parikh and Chaganlal Yadav.

The idea of synthesis of the Western and Eastern art-style was popularised and strengthened in Bombay during the time of Principal Gladstone Soloman who succeeded Principal Cecil Burns. He proved to be an ardent admirer of Indian Painting. He studied the Indian paintings of Ajanta and the miniature paintings as well as the sculpture and published several articles in Times of India Annuals and other magazines and papers. He explained in these articles the beauty of Indian traditional style and its merits. It was he, who started a special 'Mural painting Class' in J.J.School of Art in the year 1919 in which Indian traditional style was practised. A start was made by the students by decorating the walls of the School of Art building. On Dec. 14th 1920, Sir George Lloyd, Governor of Bombay, unveiled the first mural painting in the

School of Art.[23] Government of Bombay offered a sum of Rs.5,000/- for embellishing the walls of the School of Art with paintings, in order to encourage their attempts, for the revival of Indian Art. Marduke Pickthall, editor of the Bombay Chronicle wrote articles supporting the efforts of the government to help the School of art. This contributed to mould a large section of public opinions of all creeds. Thousands of people flocked to see the first display of the Mural painting in the School of Art.

The year 1919-20 was busy for the School of Art students of Mural painting as they were engrossed in painting the walls of their own school. To increase their enthusiasm the commission of decorating the Durbar Hall, in the Government House, Bombay was given to the school. The students performance in this section lead the Governor Lloyd to encourage the students by offering eight government scholarships of Rs.30/- for the selected students in this class. Principal Soloman, Sir Lesly Wilson, Barrister Jaykar, Sir Phiroz Sethna had joined in the matter of convincing the authorities for the necessity of encouragement for this section.

As the result of this encouragement more number of students started painting in the traditional style. Their subjects were either the gods and goddesses from the Hindu mythology or the incidents from Indian History. Variations emerged in the style of rendering i.e. painting the figures with realistic drawing and then rendering the outlines with thin and flowing lines, or rendering all possible details like ornaments, drapery-folds and other decorative objects. Further, the Governor also instituted a

special Gold Medal and Silver Medal for the Mural Painting. He expressed that a successful art must be national and that he was much impressed by the distinctly Indian character developed in the work of the students of School of Art, Bombay. He also said that he was pleased to see that 'this Indianisation has not taken the form of a return to a hide-bound convention, but is acquiring a real sense of form and colour and at the same time developing the decorative instinct, which is so strongly national in character".

It will be interesting to note Principal Soloman's viewpoint about this Indianization. According to Soloman the Western realistic training was most proper for the Indian students as it provided sound basis before the introduction of Indian Art. He says in his book 'Revival of Indian Art', "It would be very easy to abolish the study of life which forms the basis of all art, and to resort to the copying of old pictures, or to painting archaic style without the knowledge which the originator's of that style had acquaired by the close and devoted study of nature. But we do not wish to see Indian Art repeating with weakened interpretation iteration of the copy but one or two phases of its past history. We believe Indian Art to be capable of a range of expression certainly not less wide—though manifestation itself in different ways perhaps—than that of the widest National Art in existence".[24] Thus the idea of combining the esstern qualities and Indian traditional style and to form a modern Indian style was expressed by Soloman repeatedly.

Thus under Soloman the students received the encouragement to paint in the traditional style and combine various elements of

Western Art in it. In this Lord Lloyd also had an important share. It was said about Sir George Lloyd that 'what Lord Curzon did for Indian Archaeology, Sir George Lloyd had within the limits of his jurisdiction tried to do for Indian Art.'[25]

Under Soloman the students of Bombay Art School executed a number of examples of Indian Art and Crafts displayed at the famous Empire Exhibition held in London at Wembley Park in 1924. In this exhibition, a special Indian Room was arranged. Its walls were covered with colourful Indian Kinkhabs. The room was decorated with carved furniture, exquisite silver ware and beautiful carpet manufactured in the Ray Workshop of the J.J.School of Art. Along with these objects, revealing beautiful craftsmanship of the students, the walls were covered with mural paintings on the subjects of painting, poetry, agriculture, industry, music and sculpture (painted by Apte, Joshi, Fernandes, Kamadoli, Nagarkar, Samikhan). The painting showing a 'Procession of Ganapati' was painted by A.A. Bhonsale. This Indian Room became the center of attraction and received wide praise from the English public. Soloman has written one chapter on this 'Indian Room' in his book 'Revival of Indian Art'. One plate in this book shows the view of the Indian Room and the paintings hung on the wall, where we can note how the effect of bright sunlight is combined with the traditional painting style in the painting, 'Sculpture' by Shenoy.

The next important work executed in 1928-29 by the students and staff of the J.J.School of Art was the decorations for Delhi.

Principal Soloman has described it in detail in his book 'Mural Painting of the Bombay School'.[26] The work of decorating the walls of the Secretariat buildings and the ViceroyIs House was given to various painters. The walls of the Committee Room were painted by the Bombay School. The central dome was decorated with eight winged figures, seven of these represented various famous periods of Indian Art and the eighth represented the present i.e. modern India. Below each figure was painted the characteristic sculpture representing that particular period. The whole design symbolised an inverted lotus with a figure on each petal.

Below the cornice was painted a frieze of fine Indian decorative designs containing ornamental lettering. It showed the famous lines of Keats 'A thing of Beauty is a joy forever'. Its loveliness increases, it will never pass into nothingness'. This was the keynote of the whole programme of paintings on the walls. Below the frieze the two largest lunettes were filled with compositions allegorically representing 'Painting' and 'Drama' with life-size figures. While other five smaller lunettes depicted 'Sculpture', 'Music', 'Dancing', 'Architecture' and 'Poetry'. All these were executed in full size on canvas from the water-colour sketches which were approved by the committee appointed by the Government of India. These were stuck properly on the walls and then the finishing was done. This work was completed in August 1929.

The figures in the dome were painted by Shenoy, Rane, Vaidya, Nagarkar, Badigar and Bhonsale.[27] The eight lunettes were painted by Ahiwasi, Minazgi, Dhopeshwarkar, Shenoy, Colaco, Kawli. All these paintings were published in the book 'Mural Paintings of the

Bombay School' by Soloman. As the hall of Committee Room 'A' was given to the 'School of Art Bombay', the other halls were given to other painters including the Bombay painters M.V.Dhurandhar, G.P. Fernandes, Nagarkar and Siodia.

Both these projects of the School of Art, Bombay, at the Wembley Exhibition and the Decorations at Delhi, won for it the admiration and praise not only of Indian public but from abroad also. In this brilliant success the Indian Art Class of J.J.School played an important role.

The artists who emerged from this class and exerted a dominant influence of their style on the students of J.J.School of Art were G.H. Nagarkar and Jagannath Ahiwasi.

G.H. Nagarkar was the past student of Sir J.J.School of Art and won the Governor's Gold Medal for Mural in 1922 in the annual exhibition of the School of Art. In the same year the examination of Government Diploma in Art was introduced for the first time and G.H.Nagarkar was one of the four students who appeared for it and passed. After it Nagarkar was appointed as a teacher for Indian style murals. Nagarkar painted several murals. It was in 1927 that he won the Gold Medal of the Bombay art Society for his painting in Indian Style, 'Draupadi Swayamvara'. A few year later Jagannath Ahiwasi also was appointed as a fellow in 1931 on the class of Indian Style murals. As the methods of Ahiwasi and Nagarkar were quite contrary to each other, this class was divided into two batches and students worked separately under both these painters. In the memoirs published in

the Marathi book 'Rapan', the author and ex.Dean P.A. Dhond, describes the method of Nagarkar and Ahiwasi as he studied in the mural class in those days. The author, through the descriptions of his experiences in his school-career in the art-school, creates a vivid picture about the training in the School of Art and its staff members. Nagarkar used transparent water colours unlike Ahiwasi, who used tempera and opaque colours. Nagarkar insisted that the students should prepare the drawing first with a zero number brush in brown-madder colour. Then the colours were to be filled in. After colouring the whole surface, the picture was given a wash of pure water to take out the extra colour. Then again second quote of washes of different colours were given and once more the wash of pure water was given. This made the colour fully absorbed in the paper which was not spoilt even though washed. Then finally one graded wash was given to the whole painting. The last stage consisted of the finishing of the drapery, its border or design pattern and the ornaments. The ornament were painted by using the chinese white. He never allowed any other white to be used in painting.

Nagarkar himself executed several large sized murals which were admired considerably. Nagarkar's human figures though depicted with Indian drapery, yet their drawing was based on Greeco-Roman proportions with a tall stature. The influence of academic realism was conspicuous. His mural 'Draupadi Swayamvara' shows the use of perspective also, which created a three-dimensional effect, contrasting with the Indian traditional way of emphasizing flatness. This painting had won the Gold Medal, and was admired for its craftsmanship, but was criticised in the reviews for haphazardly modifying Indian

conventions although it was "the work of considerable imagination and magnitude executed with great skill".[28] Here the experiment of the synthesis of the western and Indian Art was tried in a different way.

Nagarkar's mural painting reveal the distinct qualities of his technique. The method of using a graded wash made the whole painting darker at the base and lighter at the top. However, this change in tonal values is gradual and subtle. The figures were tall like those with the Greeco-Roman proportions. The stances were often showing similarity to those in Ajanta frescoes. His mural 'Draupadi Vastra-Haran' illustrates the story from Mahabharata (Plate 30; fig.65). The figure of Draupadi, the queen of the Pandavas, attracts the attention by her pose suggesting her helplessness as well as the way in which Duryodhana, the Kaurava king, is pointing his finger towards her. The outlines are drawn with thin lines. The architecture of the Darbar Hall is treated in soft tonal values. His other mural 'Ram-Sita Vanvas' illustrated the incident from 'Ramayana' (Plate 31, fig.). King Dasharatha is in a pose suggesting his sorrow and helplessness, the ladies are crying and one of them is swooning. In the midst of this sorrowful and sad atmosphere figures of Ram, Sita and Lakshman are standing with a restrained emotional expression. The architecture in the background shows Indian type of decorative pillars compared to the mural 'Draupadi Vastra Harana'. This mural is painted in darker colour scheme probably suggesting the sad situation. However, its treatment is more decorative. The ornaments and drapery borders

are treated with white and so are revealed prominently. Compared to this, the mural 'Draupadi Vastraharana' is ~~more~~ simply in its treatment.

Ahiwasi was another prominent painter of what became known as the Indian Decorative Style. Jagannath Murlidhar Ahiwasi was born on 6th July 1901, at a small village near Gokul. His father was a Vaishnava Kirtankar at Porbunder and so Ahiwasi's childhood was spent there. Seeing his inclination towards painting, his father introduced him to his friend Maldevaj Rana, a drawing teacher in Porbunder. Ahiwasi's father wanted him to study at Porbunder but Ahiwasi took a firm decision to join Sir J.J.School of Art, Bombay. At last after his marriage, at the age of 21, he fulfilled his desire to join Sir J.J. School of Art for his training. He completed the four years course of painting within two years and went back to Porbunder. In 1925, he again came back to Bombay to complete his studies. He stood first in the Diploma Examination winning the Mayo Medal and the Dolly Cursettji Prize. In 1930 he was appointed as a fellow. Ahiwasi also won awards in various exhibitions at Bombay and Simla. His paintings were exhibited in Royal Art Society, London also. His painting 'Message' in Indian style (Plate 30, fig.66) became very famous. This was specially painted for and exhibited in the exhibition, 'Modern Indian Art' arranged by the India Society of London, in Dec.1934 by Principal Gladstone Soloman. Ahiwasi was soon appointed as an assistant lecturer in J.J.School of Art and was given a special batch of the 'Indian Painting' class.

Ahiwasi was well versed in the Braja-Bhasha and was deeply interested in its literature. He came into contact with folk style of Gokul and Mathura. He had studied Sanskrit very well. His style of painting having the combination of Rajasthani miniature and the Ajanta style became very popular. His method of teaching was quite contrary to that of Nagarkar. He made his pupils squat on the floor and paint in the Indian style. He used opaque tempera colours like the Indian traditional style painting. The rendering in his painting is lyrical. The human figures are drawn with rhythmic postures. His colouring methods emphasize the two-dimensional mode. His murals on the subject of 'painting' and 'Drama' (Plate 28 and 29; fig. 60 and 63) which were executed for the decoration of the Delhi Secretariat building, are fine examples of his style. The figures and the furniture are rendered with decorative treatment and exquisitely finished line and flat colours are applied. The colours are bright, similar to the colour-schemes of Rajasthani miniature paintings. At the same time the whole setting is based on contemporary houses of Gujarat with Sankheda furniture in bright colours. In the same book his drawings for these paintings are given which display his mastery over drawing. His painting 'Message' (Plate 30; fig. 66) showed a soldier riding on the camel back, near the balcony of his beloved's house. A love letter on the tip of his raised spear is offered to her which she is about to receive. The rhythmic and forceful movements of both the figures and the camel are extremely charming. Such a romantic episode leads one at once to the medieaval period and its aristocratic habits. The line is extremely sensitive and the

colour-scheme sophisticated like a Mughal miniature.

Though both Nagarkar and Ahiwasi painted in Indian decorative style and both displayed high technical skill in rendering, Ahiwasi's style was closer to Indian ideals and ideas. He got silver medal for his 'Bhakta Naridas' in Bombay Art Society in 1929.

Ahiwasi worked in Sir J.J. School of Art till 1956 after which he was appointed as a lecturer in painting in the College of Music and Fine Arts at Banaras Hindu University in 1957. Ahiwasi's energy for work was tremendous. He visited several places like Ajanta, Ellora, Elephanta, Karle, Kanheri, Bagh, Badami and Sittanvasal for studying Indian Art and the mural techniques.[29] In 1955-57, he was commissioned by the Lalit Kala Akademi to copy frescoes from Badami and Sittanvasal. Lalit Kala Akademi also gave him a special gold medal for his success in this assignment. He executed murals in Rashtrapati Bhawan, Parliament House and the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha building. His paintings are preserved in the collection of Her Majesty the Queen, The Prince of Wales Museum, Bharat Kala Bhawan and National Museum. Like Ravishankar Rawal, Ahiwasi also contributed in the field of literature on Art. He published a book 'Rekhanjali', a book on '60 motives in Indian Art' and 'Hundred Hands'. He was the editor of 'Kirtan Sangraha' in Braja Bhasha. His deep interest in Braja Bhasha literature earned for him the honour of being the President of Gujarat Sahitya Sammelan at Junagadh and Calcutta and that of Braja Bhasha Sahitya Sammelan at Meerut. ~~Ahiwasi died in the year~~

His real contribution to the field of painting was the way in which he combined various elements of ancient traditional paintings with Rajasthani and Pahari miniatures and also few aspects of the folk art in his style. With it he also tried to create a contemporary environment in his expression. His figures also were based on Indian models. This paved the way for the next generation when the painters made a deep study of various styles in Indian art and combined the elements with the contemporary subject matter to create an expression of their own.

The other painters who came immediately after this period and essentially painted in the Indian Decorative Style, wer R.G.Chimulkar and R.D. Dhopeshwarkar. Both received the prizes for their paintings during their school career. In the year 1931, R.D.Dhopeshwarkar got silver medal and award for his painting 'Divine Flute' as the best picture in Indian style and Chimulkar received Hudson prize earmarked for the best picture by the student of Sir J.J.School of Art. Dhopeshwarkar's style showed combination of realism and Indian decorative style. He used sometimes a suggestion of shade and light which created solidity in the forms of his painting. His painting on the subject 'Music' which was executed for the Delhi Secretariat in the year 1929, shows a figure with musical instrument. The figure is painted with a flat body colour but the drapery folds instead of being executed with parallel folds in rhythmic lines of the traditional manners are rendered with broken lines in western realistic style. The hills in the distance too show the effect of chiaroscuro. Similarly the foreground shrubs suggests realistic

treatment.

Chimulkar on the other hand painted in a different way. His paintings show the real character of modern Indian style in that period. It had the decorative element as well as the ease in handling. Chimulkar would have been the foremost in this field if he would have maintained a consistency. However, being an eccentric by nature, he did not continuously exhibit his paintings and remained aloof from the publicity. He died a premature death. His paintings are in collection of the Goa Art College at Panjim, Goa.

The encouragement provided for the Indian style painting and the provision for its training led to the gradual increase in number of the painters who painted in Indian style. By 1936, the number was so large that the Bombay Art Society decided to earmark a separate section and the silver medal for the Indian style painting. Thus it was the first time in the year 1936 that the water colour section was divided into two sections (1) for Western style and (2) for Indian style. This year also proved important as Barrister Oak the Secretary of the Bombay Art Society brought out the first pictorial catalogue of Bombay Art Society. The catalogue was of a small size for the first three years, subsequently a beautiful thick catalogue giving nearly 100 clear photographs of the important exhibits, was published every year. These catalogues are valuable for evaluating the development of art in Bombay.

Before proceeding to know about the later artists who painted in Indian style it will be appropriate to evaluate the Indian style developed by the Bombay School in comparison to that of Bengal School. It is repeatedly acknowledged that the outlook of the Principals like Griffiths, Cecil Burns or Soloman was to maintain the sound basis in the art-training by insisting on learning the realistic skills which they hoped would help in the creation of individual art-styles in combination with other elements of Indian Art. Naturally in the Indian style paintings produced from Bombay the influence of realistic training was clearly visible. It was more so in the painting of Ravishankar Raval and Nagarkar or Dhopeshwarkar. But there was no trace of influence of a Japnese style or the Pre-Raphaelite style, as was seen in the paintings of the Bengal School. Naturally the line was never a nervous line like that of the later Bengal School style nor did it become excessively decorative. On the other hand it never emphasised the flatness of the Indian style as was done by the Bengal School. The colourschemes also were bright compared to the light colourschemes of the Bengal School. Along with the wash technique the technique of opaque tempera colours also were used, which was rare in Bengal as the wash method was a favourite one. The realistic training of Bombay School made its appearance sometimes in the landscape backgrounds or in the chiaroscuro or perspective or even in the broken folds of the drapery and the solidity of the figures.

Ahiwasi's style was more indegenous in this sense. Instead of showing the influence of realism, his study of ancient sculpture as well as frescoes and miniatures was revealed vividly. His paintings

presented a harmonious synthesis which is so apparent clearly revealed in 'Message' or 'Painting'.

The later painters who adopted Indian style can be classified into two types: (1) The painters who consistently painted in Indian style with minor variations. In this catagory we can place Rasiklal Parikh, Somalal Shah of Gujarat and Bijubhai Bhagat, Rasik Raval, A.A. Almelkar and Raiba from Bombay. (2) The second catagory may include a large number of painters who started their career with Indian style but rapidly changed afterwards towards other styles using distortions and impasto colour applications etc. Thus Indian style served for them as a stepping stone. Amongst such painters we can name Hebbar, Chavda, Palsikar, Samant, Gaitonde and Pai. These painters were influenced in their phase of Indian style by the Jain, Rajput or Pahari miniatures. Some of the second catagory of painters had in one or other way a deep influence of Amrita Shergil as well who proved to be a sensitive pioneer in treating the subjects from Indian life. It was Amrita who combined the contemporary Western technique with the Indian subject-matter as well as the compositional arrangements.

Rasik Raval, was born in a very poor family in the year 1929. He could not complete his school education. His had an ardent desire to study in Sir J.J.School of Art. He had to struggle hard for it and even work under the municipal light. Fortunately a generous Parsi, Farrok Mullah, offered him patronage for his studies in the School of Art. His talent and sincere work made it possible for him to get scholarship to study in Mural class. The training there

brought probably in his painting broad flat surfaces and harmony of sober tonal values. Raval evolved his own style with elongated figures and fine thin outline drawn with black colour. He used darker tones for the complexion of his figures. The simplified forms and the purity of form and design brought a striking effect in his painting. His colourschemes with a skillful use of greys and dark-green, red and black, created a pleasant effect, (See his painting "Eve" - Plate 32 Fig. 71).

His paintings became so popular that there was an increasing demand for his paintings. Raval usually exhibited in Bombay and rarely outside. He held in all five one-man shows — two at Jahangir Gallery and three at the Taj Art Gallery. The awards at Gujarat and Calcutta exhibitions brought him name and fame. His real achievement was of winning the award at the very first National exhibition of Lalit Kala Akademy. After his last show in 1975 at Taj he did not exhibit and remained silent for full five years. He was perhaps trying to break away from his old style. His painting 'Fossil', suggests a change in the style. In this painting he showed a tendency to break the form instead of keeping it as one whole unit. His painting 'Adam and Eve' also suggested that he was moving from his old style towards total abstraction.

Many critics as well as art-lovers were eagar to see the further development. Unfortunately this could not come into reality as he died a premature death in 1981, at the age of 52.

Another notable figure in the Indian style painting was A.A. Almelkar.

Abdulrahim Appabhai Almelkar was born in 1920 at Sholapur. After a convential education at the Sir J.J.School of Art, he launched out into the world of exhibitions. He won several awards in the exhibition of Bombay Art Society as well as those of the Art Society of India. Under Ahiwasi's able training in J.J.School of Art, Almelkar learnt the craft of drawing fine line and filling up the areas with precision. The stylized Indian painting reached at it peak in the days of Ahiwasi and Nagarkar.

Almelkar evolved his own style and started painting the subjects of the common folk, tribal people, fishermen, village people etc. Almekar won Bombay Art Society's Gold Medal in the year 1953-54 He also travelled widely and held one-man shows of his paintings in the South-East Asian countries. His paintings with the graceful figures, treated with fine sensitive line and the decorative patterns of the jewellery as well as the costumes, became very much popular. His paintings on the people of these countries were admired and immediately sold. Sometimes people insisted for copies of the same paintings from him. But at the height of his career unfortunately a calamity struck him. His studio was destroyed in fire, in which his paintings and his gold medal too perished. Almelkar displayed tremendous courage at that time. Instead of suffering from a depression, he again prepared for his next exhibition. It took 10 months' hard work for Almelkar to prepare for the show. His one-man show, 'From Ashes to Life'

was a brilliant success. In the forward of the catalogue N.T.Roy called him "The phoenix of Bombay". His painting "From Ashes to Life' symbolised his new life after the fire disaster. For this exhibition, he changed his painting methods and he started using water colours and pen and ink. The sizes too became smaller compared to his earlier paintings. With this he also tried simple paper and experimented with cardboard as the base of his works. Sometimes he even used the brown wrapping paper and by dabbing the colour with fingers he applied the colour. Of course the fine outlines were given by brush. This process saved his time and gave an unusual effect too. Sometimes he used cowrie to impart a shine to the surface. The spaces left of the original ochre surface of the carboard enhanced the beauty of his paintings done in opaque colours.

The first major assignment after the calamity of fire was the execution of paintings of Indian animals for the calender of Volkarts. Almelkar accepted it as a challenge and spent hours together in the library of the 'Natural History Society' to study the animals. He also visited gardens and the zoos for this purpose. This calender became the most appreciated one worth keeping in precious collections.

This experience provided him the inspiration to travel in the remote jungles of Vidarbha for observing and sketching the birds, trees and the tribal inhabitants with their colourful costumes and jewelleries. Almelkar's drawings and paintings on tribal life became the hallmark of the later period of his career.

After celebrating his 60th birthday with the restrospective show, he also exhibited at the house of Soviet Culture in Bombay. Along with other paintings in this show, he exhibited one painting in oils which depicted a field that has been burnt for sowing new crops, surrounded by the trees and flight of birds. A streak of lightening was also depicted, the light of which was reflected on the bellies of the birds painted appropriately with magenta colour. Almelkar afterwards revealed that this painting titled 'Magenta', represented his own life symbolically. The lightening symbolished the fire which burnt his studio. There is a belief that due to lightening the fields becomes more fertile for better crops. Thus he also accepted the challange and worked harder and achieved a greater success. The calamity proved to be the turning point in his life.

Almelkar's recent paintings like 'Drummers' or 'Cheetah' suggested that he was breaking away from his old style and coming closer to nature. In some of his recent paintings he prepared the ground with amber colour and painted with cool colours over it, which was a completely new characteristic. His line too has been showing a better sensitivity.

Unfortunately last year Almelkar's sudden death by a heart attack came as a shock. Almelkar in a way was perhaps the last painter trained in the Bombay School who continued the Indian decorative style, started in the days of Ahiwasi which was also acknowledged in the obituary held on the Bombay T.V. on 21st Dec. 1982.

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