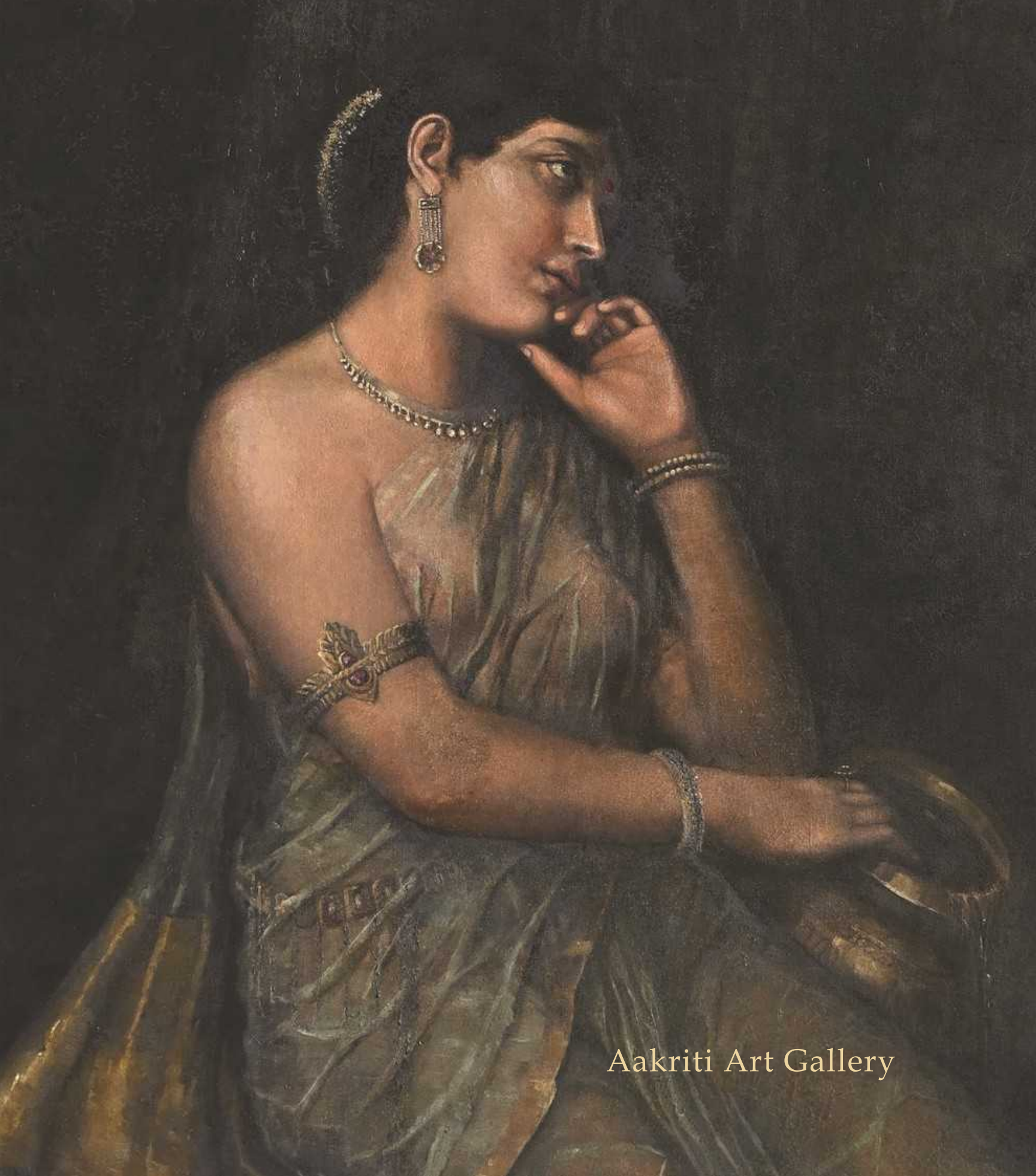


FORGOTTEN FOLD

Academic Realism, Lost Voices, and the Art Historiography of Bengal



Aakriti Art Gallery

To the artists history overlooked,
whose brilliance lay dormant beneath dust and
silence.

To Ananda Mohan Shaha –
and to every master lost in time,
until the archive breathes
and the canvas speaks again.

Published by Priya & Vikram Bachhawat for
Aakriti Art Gallery Pvt. Ltd.

Creative: Sayan Paul

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FORGOTTEN FOLD

Academic Realism, Lost Voices, and The Art Historiography of Bengal

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Table of Contents

Prelude:

An engaging opening narrative that sets the scene for Shaha's story and the mystery of his lost painting 7

Introduction:

An overview of the rediscovery of Ananda Mohan Shaha's work and its significance in Bengal's art history 8

Chapter 1:

Academic Realism in Bengal – A Historical Overview –

A survey of the academic realist movement in Bengal, highlighting its development and key artists in the early 20th century 10

Chapter 2:

Reconstructing the Life and Art of Ananda Mohan Shaha –

Piecing together Shaha's biography and artistic contributions through archival research and surviving artworks 15

Chapter 3:

Stylistic and Iconographic Analysis of Ashru-Kumva –

An in-depth examination of Shaha's painting "Ashru-Kumva," focusing on its style, symbolism, and compositional features 18

Chapter 4:

Lost Artists, Lost Histories – The Imperative of Archival Research –

Discusses the broader implications of forgotten artists like Shaha and argues for the necessity of archival research in reconstructing art history 21

Chapter 5:

Restoration and Attribution – The KCC Conservation Lab Project –

Details the conservation process undertaken by KCC that revealed Shaha's signature and led to the painting's proper attribution 24

Chapter 6:

The Indian Academy of Art and the 1920 Puja Number

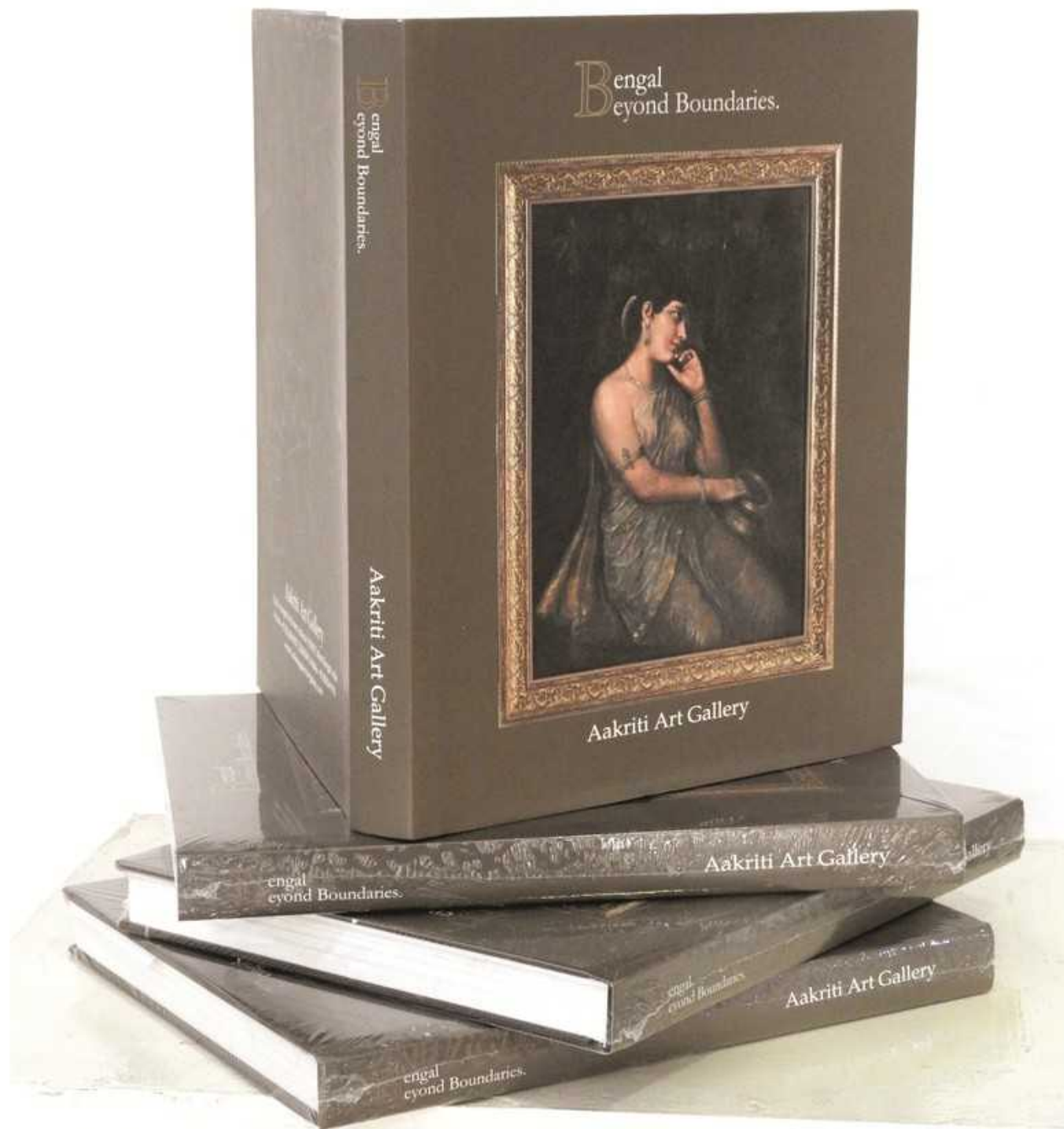
Exploring the context and content of the 1920 Puja issue of the Indian Academy of Art, where Shaha's work was published, to understand its historical importance 28

Chapter 7:

Facsimile – The Indian Academy of Art, Puja Number 1920

Provides a complete facsimile reproduction of the Indian Academy of Art's 1920 Puja issue for reference and study 30

Chapter 8:	
Variations And Academic Realism: Artistic Processes Within The Jubilee Art Academy and Bengal's Realist Tradition (c1880s-1940s).	
Summarises how Jubilee artists developed their paintings through sequential studies – charcoal, pastel, watercolour, and oil – showing how variation became a disciplined method that shaped Bengal's academic realist idiom.	84
Chapter 9:	
Draped Realism And The Jubilee Lineage: Bengal's Academic Realist Tradition, 1880-1940	
Examines the evolution of draped female imagery, the wet-sari motif, and the adaptation of European academic methods, highlighting how Jubilee painters refined figural realism within Bengal's social and cultural context.	88
Chapter 10:	
Reflections & Responses: On Rediscovering Ananda Mohan Shaha	
Brings together critical essays interpreting Shaha's practice and the rediscovery of Ashru-Kumva, reflecting on how his reinstated oeuvre reshapes the narrative of Bengal's academic realism and its historiography.	98-125
In Vacant or Pensive Mood: Reclaiming Ananda Mohan Shaha's Lost Masterpiece	
<i>by Uma Nair</i>	99
Emergence of Modernity: Bengal's Academic Naturalist Tradition In Its Broader Context	
<i>by Mrinal Ghosh</i>	101
Draped in Light and Memory: The Wet Sari Motif in Indian Academic Realism - Bengal & Beyond	
<i>by Vikram Bachhawat</i>	108
The Waiting Maiden	
<i>by Soujit Das</i>	112
Ananda Mohan Shaha and The Academic Realist Tradition in Early 20th-Century Bengal	
<i>by Debdutta Gupta</i>	115
How Meaning Travels: The Ambivalence of Identity in Ashru-Kumva	
<i>by Dr. Anuradha Ghosh</i>	120
Expanded Biography and Final Reflections Concluding Note	
Summarises the book's discoveries and reflects on how Shaha's rediscovery contributes to our understanding of Bengal's art tradition	126-128



PRELUDE

In 2023, *Ashru-Kumva* appeared for the first time before a public audience in Delhi at Bikaner House, as part of the exhibition *Bengal Beyond Boundaries*, curated by Uma Nair. At the time, the painting was exhibited without a known author – its quiet dignity, luminous palette, and emotional charge were appreciated by many, but its creator remained unnamed. It featured on the cover of the exhibition catalogue as a powerful emblem of the Bengal School’s aesthetic legacy, bearing the label “Anonymous, Bengal School.” The artist’s identity was yet to be revealed.

What followed was a journey of restoration, archival investigation, and scholarly confirmation that led us to attribute this work to Ananda Mohan Shaha, a name scarcely found in any contemporary index or survey of Indian art. This prelude is written not only to recount that process, but to underscore the importance of rediscovering the many artists like Shaha whose work, though nearly lost to time, remains central to understanding the plural histories of modern Indian painting.

As the painting entered the collection of Aakriti Art Gallery, its fine oil technique and quiet realism stood apart. We sent it to the Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC) for cleaning and conservation. During the restoration process, a faint signature – Ananda Mohan Shaha, 1918 – was discovered in the lower-left corner. This revelation prompted a focused effort to trace the artist’s identity through verifiable records. After extensive research, we located a rare publication: the Puja Number of *The Indian Academy of Art* journal (October 1920). In its pages, we found an image of the very same painting – *Ashru-Kumva* – credited to A. Shaha. This publication remains the only surviving record from the artist’s lifetime that names him and reproduces the work.

No other references to Ananda Mohan Shaha or this painting could be found in catalogues, institutional holdings, or biographical dictionaries to date – not in the volumes of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, nor in the works of scholars like Kamal Sarkar or Krishna Chaitanya. It is only the survival of *Ashru-Kumva*, the clarity of the artist’s signature, and the printed reproduction in the Academy’s 1920 journal that allows us to reconstruct this narrative.

As the director of Aakriti Art Gallery, I have long believed in the role that institutions must play in recovering silenced voices. It has been our privilege not only to conserve this remarkable painting but to participate in a process of scholarly recovery that restores the dignity of authorship to an artist whose only known surviving work had nearly vanished from public memory.

This book is the result of that commitment. Through its pages, we attempt to trace the contours of Shaha’s life and the world in which he painted. *Ashru-Kumva* is not just a rediscovered canvas – it is a re-entry point into a forgotten discourse of academic realism in Bengal, and a tribute to the countless unnamed artists who await similar reclamation.

Let this book stand not as a conclusion, but as a call – to scholars, collectors, and institutions – to continue the work of seeking, identifying, and preserving the legacy of those Indian artists who, though uncelebrated in their time, left behind works that still speak with grace and eloquence.

Vikram Bachhawat
Publisher, Aakriti Art Gallery

INTRODUCTION

The recent reattribution of *Ashru-Kumva* (1918) to Ananda Mohan Shaha (fl. c.1910–1920s, also spelled “Saha”) has profoundly reshaped our understanding of Bengal’s early modern art. Once essentially anonymous, Shaha is now recognized as part of a cohort of academically trained Bengali painters who pursued European-style realism alongside the more familiar Bengal School. *Ashru-Kumva* itself – an oil painting of a seated woman holding a brass vessel (the *kumva* or “urn of tears”) – is distinguished by its quiet yet powerful pathos. As one recent study notes, this painting has become “a rare and remarkable relic” of Bengal’s academic-realist movement. Its poetic title and restrained naturalism exemplify an aesthetic of *karunā-rasa* (compassionate emotion) rendered through careful modeling and subtle light effects. The fact that *Ashru-Kumva* survives today – with a dated signature – makes it an invaluable witness to a parallel thread of Indian modernism. Its reattribution to Shaha effectively “reinsert[s]” this forgotten artist into the art-historical canon, inviting a reexamination of the era’s stylistic diversity.

This rediscovery must be seen against the broader art-historical context of early 20th-century Bengal. By the 1910s, the Brahma and Tagore-inspired Bengal School, with its emphasis on spiritual, Indo-Persian, and folk motifs, was dominant in Calcutta’s art circles. Its leaders and institutional advocates (notably Abanindranath Tagore and the Indian Society of Oriental Art) promoted an aesthetic of wash painting and mythic allegory, consciously rejecting the realism taught by colonial art schools. Yet not all artists joined this revivalist turn. A number of academically trained painters – such as Hemendranath Mazumdar,



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Woman in Moonlight'
Oil on Canvas, 1930s

Atul Bose, and, as newly confirmed, Ananda Mohan Shaha – continued to work in oils and naturalistic mode, feeling no conflict between Western technique and Indian subject-matter. They painted Indian figures with lifelike depth and sincerity, often celebrat-

ing everyday humanity rather than mythology. In 1919, these artists established the Indian Academy of Art in Calcutta as a counter-movement to the Bengal School. Its annual Puja Number, issued each autumn, provided a platform for realistic portraits and genre scenes by young realists. Crucially, Ashru-Kumva was reproduced in the October 1920 issue of the Academy's journal – a piece of archival evidence that has been decisive in confirming the painting's date and authorship.

Stylistically, Shaha's work exhibits all the hallmarks of Bengal's academic-realism tradition. The technical finesse of Ashru-Kumva – its careful shading, controlled palette, and fluent draftsmanship – betrays the influence of European academic training but also a confident assimilation into an Indian idiom. The image's formal balance and anatomical accuracy suggest that Shaha may have studied at the Government School of Art, Calcutta, or under one of its affiliates. Compared with the opulent or sensual figures favored by some of his contemporaries, Shaha's model appears modest and contemplative. As commentators have observed, artists like Shaha and his peers "drew instead from lived experience, human emotion, and the universality of visual observation". In doing so they forged an alternative strand of modernism: one that was neither entirely Western nor overtly revivalist, but rather cosmopolitan and realist in spirit. Ashru-Kumva's dignified portrayal of an Indian woman in melancholic thought makes it a particularly eloquent example of this approach.

The scholarly significance of this finding rests largely on archival and attributional grounds. Until now, no

works by Shaha were known or documented. Ashru-Kumva is currently the only signed painting of his that has come to light. In fact, its intact signature – "Ananda Mohan Shaha, 1918" – and its publication record make it a unique case in Indian art archives. Most Indian paintings from this period lack such clear provenance. As noted by recent research, Ashru-Kumva is "published in a leading art journal, remained in private custody for over a century, and has now resurfaced in a public-facing collection" – factors that together render it a landmark rediscovery in South Asian art historiography. This combination of evidence has enabled a secure reattribution: the painting's inscription and its appearance in the 1920 Puja Number mutually confirm that Shaha was its author. In scholarly terms, the re-identification of Ashru-Kumva illuminates "the career of an otherwise unknown artist" and broadens our appreciation of India's modernist period.

In sum, the introduction to this book surveys the investigative path and the art-historical framework behind Ashru-Kumva. It emphasizes how archival validation – especially rare documents like the Indian Academy of Art journal and contemporary catalogs – together with stylistic analysis, have established the painting's place in Bengal's academic realist lineage. As one authority observes, Ashru-Kumva is more than just a newly found artwork; it is "a rediscovered voice" that enriches the narrative of Indian modernism. By documenting the research, contextual history, and evidentiary basis for Shaha's attribution, the following chapters seek to firmly situate Ashru-Kumva and its creator within the larger landscape of early 20th-century Indian art.

Chapter 1:

ACADEMIC REALISM IN BENGAL - A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The early decades of the 20th century in Bengal marked a critical juncture in the evolution of Indian modern art. While the Bengal School—led by figures such as Abanindranath Tagore—had come to dominate the cultural discourse with its revivalist idiom rooted in Indian mythology, Japanese wash techniques, and nationalist sentiment, another strand of practice quietly persisted: academic realism.

This movement was grounded in the European art education introduced through colonial institutions such as the Government School of Art, Calcutta, which had been founded in 1854. By the early 1900s,

this school had trained several artists in Western academic techniques including life drawing, oil painting, and chiaroscuro. Although Abanindranath Tag-



Hemendranath Mazumdar
Oil, 20 x 16.5 in



Atul Bose,
'Nude'
Oil, 44 x 23 in, 1925



Jamini Roy
Natural Pigments Canvas Pasted on Board, 34.5 x 18.5 in

ore, a faculty member at the school, steered its official pedagogy toward “oriental” styles from the 1900s onward, there remained students and independent practitioners who adhered to realism and European-style oil painting.

Academic realism in Bengal developed not as an ideological opposition to revivalism, but as a coexisting mode of artistic expression. It was technically rigorous, centered on observational drawing, and often explored secular or emotive subjects. While the Bengal School looked to the Ajanta murals and Persian miniatures, academic realists looked to European salon painting, often emphasizing anatomical precision, atmospheric modeling, and narrative figuration.

Artists such as Hemendranath Mazumdar, Atul Bose, and B.C. Law became associated with this tendency in the 1910s and 1920s. They embraced themes of romanticism, daily life, and portraiture, using oil as a preferred medium. Notably, their work was not in opposition to Indian subject matter but rather sought to present it with new technical finesse. The depiction of Bengali women in wet saris or quiet contemplation—rendered with depth and dramatic lighting—became iconic of this style.

By 1919, the academic realists sought to create their own institutional presence to balance the dominance of the Indian Society of Oriental Art and its journal *Rupam*. In response, they established The Indian Academy of Art in Calcutta. This collective, which included Mazumdar, Atul Bose, and Jamini Roy (in his early realist phase), launched its own illustrated art journal in 1920. The Puja Number of that year is especially significant: it presented a curated selection of works from artists working in the academic tradition across India, including a rare reproduction of the painting *Ashru-Kumva* by Ananda Mohan Shaha.

Although the Indian Academy of Art journal ran for a limited time and its records remain scarce today, its Puja Number stands as a pivotal document. It offers a snapshot of an alternative trajectory in Indian art—one that valued mastery of technique, emotional depth, and the cosmopolitanism of academic practice.

This book is a tribute to that moment and tradition: the reappearance of *Ashru-Kumva*, attributed through its publication in that very journal, underscores the need to re-evaluate academic realism not as a colonial residue, but as a modern Indian movement that shaped its own visual language through discipline, sincerity, and humanism.



Hemendranath Mazumdar
Oil on Canvas, 42 x 26 in



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Lady'
Oil & Watercolor on Card
21 1/8 x 14 1/4 in



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Smriti'
Oil on Canvas, 28.9 x 23 in



Hemendranath Mazumdar
Watercolour & Gouache on Paper
25 x 14.5 in



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Shilpi'
Oil on Canvas, 48 x 24 1/4 in



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Aradhana'



Jamini Prakash Gangooly
'Yaksha'
Oil, 1908



Ranada Charan Ukil
'At The Strain of The Flute'
Watercolour and Wash on Paper



S.A. Mirja
'Godhuli-Sandhyay'



Atul Bose,
'Female Figure'
Conte, 13.5 x 8.5 in, 1954



Atul Bose,
'A Life Study'



Atul Bose
'Cry from The Ruins'
Oil, 46 x 28 in, 1921



Atul Bose,
'Lady Ranu Mookerjee'
Oil, 61 x 42 in, 1944



B.C. Law
'Seated Young Woman with a Water Pot'
Oil on Canvas



B.C. Law
'Portrait of the Maharaja of Patiala'
Watercolor on Paper, 13³/₄ x 9³/₄ in



B.C. Law
'Sapuria'
Watercolour



Jogesh Chandra Seal
'The Bird Seller'



Hare Krishna Saha



B.C. Law
"Tarunir Laj"

B. Law

Chapter 2:

RECONSTRUCTING THE LIFE AND ART OF ANANDA MOHAN SHAHA

Ananda Mohan Shaha, sometimes spelled “Saha” in early records, remains a largely undocumented figure in Indian art history. What little is known about him comes from a single, pivotal source: the October 1920 Puja Number of *The Indian Academy of Art* journal, where his painting *Ashru-Kumva* was published and formally attributed to him by name.

This rare documentation allows for a careful but limited reconstruction of the artist’s identity and artistic milieu.

Archival Verification

The *Indian Academy of Art* journal, published in Kolkata, was one of the few early 20th-century art periodicals that attempted to showcase academically trained Indian painters. Its inaugural Puja Number was illustrated with works by contemporaries such as Hemendranath Mazumdar, Atul Bose, B.C. Law and others. Among them, *Ashru-Kumva* appeared as a full-page reproduction with the artist’s name—“A. Shaha”—clearly printed.

This facsimile, preserved in part and verified through scanned archival material, is the only surviving contemporaneous publication that links the painting *Ashru-Kumva* to its creator. No additional publications, exhibition records, or signed works by Shaha have yet surfaced in public or private collections.



Atul Bose
'Female Figure'
Conte, 13.5 x 9 in, 1954

While later research yielded speculative mentions of artists with similar names in other institutional records—including catalogs from the Indian Society of Oriental Art, the Bengal Academy of Art, and the



National Gallery of Modern Art—none of these could be definitively verified as referring to the same individual. As such, this book adheres strictly to the only authenticated reference: The Indian Academy of Art, Puja Number, 1920.

The Painting as Biography

In the absence of concrete biographical data, *Ashru-Kumva* itself offers a glimpse into Shaha's sensibility and artistic training. The painting—an oil on canvas measuring approximately 111.76 × 86.36 cm—demonstrates a high level of technical skill. The anatomical modeling, soft chiaroscuro, and subdued palette are characteristic of the academic realist tradition then prevalent among graduates of the Government School of Art, Calcutta.

It is therefore plausible—but not yet verifiable—that Shaha was educated at this institution, or trained in a similar academic atelier in Bengal. His stylistic proximity to artists like Hemendranath Mazumdar and Atul Bose suggests he belonged to this lineage, but no enrollment or faculty records currently confirm this.

His choice of subject—a solitary woman in sorrow, holding a brass urn—reveals a leaning toward emotional realism, possibly influenced by literary and devotional traditions. The composition is meditative rather than theatrical, and the execution reflects technical discipline rather than stylistic experimentation, aligning him with the academic realists of the period rather than the nationalist revivalists of the Bengal School.

Known Work and Attribution

To date, *Ashru-Kumva* remains the only known surviving signed and published work by Ananda Mohan Shaha. It is signed and dated 1918 in the lower-left corner and was rediscovered in the 21st century in the collection of an old Bengali zamindar family. It was subsequently acquired by Aakriti Art Gallery, Kolkata, and restored by the KCC Conservation Lab, during which the signature was uncovered and authenticated.

Its reproduction in *The Indian Academy of Art* journal (1920) is what enabled conclusive attribution, bridging the painting's past with its present. No other paintings or references bearing the same name or stylistic markers have been found in museum collections, archives, or auction records.

Ananda Mohan Shaha's artistic identity is built, for now, on a single masterpiece and a single printed record. In that fragile connection lies both the vulnerability and the importance of art historiography—how a name can vanish from collective memory despite demonstrable talent, and how a single verified discovery can reintroduce an artist to history.

This chapter thus does not pretend to offer a complete biography, but rather to set the frame for further inquiry. It establishes Shaha's existence, his authorship of *Ashru-Kumva*, and his participation in the broader academic realist milieu of early 20th-century Bengal. These are modest but vital affirmations—enough to give the artist his rightful place in the unfolding narrative of Indian art.

Chapter 3:

STYLISTIC AND ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF ASHRU-KUMVA

Ashru-Kumva (1918), the only known surviving signed and published work by Ananda Mohan Shaha, is a significant example of academic realism in early 20th-century Bengal. Executed in oil on canvas and signed by the artist in the lower-left corner, this painting has been documented in the 1920 Puja Number of The Indian Academy of Art and physically restored in recent years, confirming both its date and authorship. While little else is known about the artist, this singular painting allows for a rich stylistic and iconographic reading, placing Shaha firmly within the academic realist tradition.

Visual Description

The composition depicts a seated woman dressed in a translucent saree, adorned with traditional Bengali jewelry, and holding a brass vessel—the titular kumva, or urn. Her posture is relaxed yet contemplative: her head tilted gently, her gaze withdrawn. One hand supports her chin in a gesture of inward reflection, while the other cradles the urn. The background is dark and textured, possibly a dense foliage or curtain, allowing the figure to emerge in quiet relief.

Shaha's treatment of fabric, skin tones, and metallic sheen demonstrates a high degree of control over oil paint. The modeling of the body through light and shadow is carefully articulated, showing his academic training. The folds of the saree are rendered with transparency and movement, suggesting both the weight of the material and the delicacy of its drape.

The figure's jewelry—including earrings, bangles, and an armlet—are finely detailed and provide subtle highlights that contrast with the earthier tones of her clothing and the shadowed background. The overall palette remains restrained: dominated by browns, ochres, muted golds, and the reflective surfaces of skin and brass.

Stylistic Affiliation

The painting's formal qualities align closely with Bengal's academic realist tradition as it developed in the early 20th century. Shaha's style exhibits clear parallels to that of Hemendranath Mazumdar, Atul Bose, and Bhabani Charan Laha—artists who were trained in life drawing and European techniques of chiaroscuro and perspective. The emphasis on anatomical accuracy, emotional subtlety, and material texture is characteristic of this lineage.

Unlike the mythic or allegorical subjects favored by the Bengal School under Abanindranath Tagore, Ashru-Kumva belongs to a different artistic vocabulary. It presents neither deities nor nationalist icons, but an intimate and secular image of reflective sorrow, grounded in everyday life.

There is no dramatic gesture or overt narrative; the emotion is interior. This places Shaha in the subset of realist painters who chose to depict psychological states through posture and gaze, rather than through symbolic overstatement.



Ananda Mohan Shaha
'Ashru-Kumva'
Oil on Canvas, 1918



B.C. Law
'Neer-Hara'

Iconographic Interpretation

The title *Ashru-Kumva*, meaning “Vase of Tears” or “Urn of Tears,” invites an iconographic reading. The brass vessel in the woman’s hand likely carries symbolic weight—it is not merely a utilitarian object, but

an emblem of grief. While the painting offers no explicit religious cues, the motif resonates with themes found in Bengali devotional literature, particularly in Vaishnavism, where the act of crying or collecting tears is often associated with spiritual longing and separation (*viraha*).

However, the woman depicted here is not a mythological figure like Radha, nor is the scene overtly devotional. The painting’s emotional tone is secular, human, and modern. It uses the motif of sorrow as a universal state, not tied to a specific religious narrative. In this way, Shaha successfully merges cultural familiarity with emotional immediacy—a hallmark of academic realist practice.

The urn, then, becomes a metaphor for the containment of emotion. The woman’s tears are not visibly shed; they are internalized, imagined, perhaps already collected. This restraint mirrors the painting’s stylistic restraint—no melodrama, no spectacle—only quiet reflection.

Ashru-Kumva is a deeply personal and stylistically sophisticated work. It stands as a visual testament to a strand of Indian modernism rooted in observation, technical discipline, and emotional realism. Without recourse to mythology or overt symbolism, Shaha created a painting that speaks across time: a portrait of a solitary woman bearing private grief with quiet strength.

As the only authenticated work by Ananda Mohan Shaha, *Ashru-Kumva* also functions as an archival object—bearing within its surface not only pigment and form but also lost histories, aesthetic intentions, and the signature of an artist who deserves to be remembered. Its rediscovery has added a new dimension to our understanding of academic realism in Bengal, and invites continued inquiry into the lives and legacies of its practitioners.

Chapter 4:

LOST ARTISTS, LOST HISTORIES – THE IMPERATIVE OF ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

The rediscovery of *Ashru-Kumva* by Ananda Mohan Shaha is not an isolated episode, but part of a much larger problem in Indian art historiography: the systemic erasure of artists who fell outside the dominant narratives. While major figures from the Bengal School, Santiniketan, or the Bombay Progressive Group are widely documented, others—especially academic painters working between 1900 and 1940—have faded from memory. The reasons are manifold: changing institutional tastes, lack of documentation, political shifts in art discourse, and the fragility of artworks themselves.

Shaha's re-emergence, through a single surviving painting and a long-forgotten journal, underscores how tenuous and incomplete our historical records are. Had either the canvas or the printed reproduction failed to survive, the artist's name might never have been recovered. Instead, the alignment of signature, publication, and restoration created a rare convergence that brought his work—and by extension, a segment of academic realism—back into focus.

Why Artists Disappear

Artists like Shaha vanish from view for many reasons. Some never exhibited widely or received critical recognition during their lifetime. Others may have stopped painting due to personal or financial pressures, or their works may have been lost in the chaos of partition, climate damage, or neglect. Most

commonly, however, they disappear because no one writes about them. In the absence of published monographs, catalogues, institutional acquisitions, or critical reviews, even talented artists can fall through the cracks of recorded history.

Art history, like all history, is shaped by its sources. If the record is silent, so is the story.

In Shaha's case, the publication of *Ashru-Kumva* in the Indian Academy of Art, Puja Number (1920) served as the only anchor. Without that printed reproduction, and without the signature revealed during restoration, the painting would have remained unattributed and the artist unknown. There are likely many such cases where artworks reside in collections or storage rooms, their authorship obscure, their significance unrecognized.

The Role of Restoration and Research

The restoration of *Ashru-Kumva* was instrumental in reversing this erasure. The painting's surface did not merely conceal colors and brushwork; it obscured identity. The faint but recoverable signature—Ananda Mohan Shaha, 1918—was a portal into a lost narrative. Once that signature was revealed and compared with the journal's publication, it formed an irrefutable link.

But restoration alone would not have been enough.



Attribution required methodical research: tracking publications, matching compositions, consulting institutional catalogues, and verifying timelines. In this case, it also meant resisting unverified claims or speculative connections. No other works or references to Shaha have been authenticated beyond the 1920 journal, and thus, all historical claims must remain grounded in this single, verifiable source.

This careful, fact-based process is a model for how lost artists might be recovered—not by assumptions, but by triangulating conservation science, archival access, and institutional collaboration.



The Broader Imperative

Ashru-Kumva's rediscovery also reveals how many gaps remain in our knowledge of early 20th-century Indian art. While certain schools and figures dominate museum walls and textbooks, there exists a shadow archive—unexplored, uncatalogued, and unnamed—of painters, sculptors, and illustrators who contributed to the visual culture of their time but were never institutionalized.

Recovering them will require patience and rigor. It means digitizing old exhibition catalogues, re-examining storage collections, interviewing family members of artists, and building platforms for newly surfaced works. Galleries, universities, and museums must participate in this task by opening archives, enabling scholarly research, and facilitating cross-disciplinary work.

Moreover, the public must be made part of this recovery. When a painting like Ashru-Kumva resurfaces, its story should not be confined to academic footnotes. It should inspire curiosity, conversation, and recognition. Each recovered artist expands the scope of Indian modernism—enriching it with nuance, diversity, and overlooked genius.

Ananda Mohan Shaha's Ashru-Kumva is more than a painting. It is a case study in historical recovery. It shows how an artist once written out of history can be restored to visibility, not through conjecture, but through concrete archival and material evidence. And it shows how each such rediscovery is not an exception—but a call to action.

For every Ashru-Kumva found, many more remain lost.

Chapter 5:

RESTORATION AND ATTRIBUTION – THE KCC CONSERVATION LAB PROJECT

The rediscovery of Ananda Mohan Shaha’s Ashru-Kumva was not only an art-historical breakthrough but also a model of collaborative conservation and attribution. After lying in obscurity for nearly a century, the painting emerged from a private collection in Bengal, its origins unknown, its surface darkened by time, and its authorship forgotten. It was through a sequence of deliberate conservation procedures and scholarly investigation that Ashru-Kumva was restored to both visual and historical clarity.

Acquisition and Provenance

The painting was acquired by Aakriti Art Gallery from an old zamindar family in Bengal. At the time of acquisition, the artist’s name had been lost to time. Its scale, quality, and visual language suggested a late-colonial Bengal academic hand, but no identifying label, provenance documentation, or recorded exhibition history could be immediately confirmed.

In July 2023, the painting was exhibited in New Delhi as part of Aakriti Art Gallery’s major curatorial project Bengal Beyond Boundaries, under the provisional label “Artist Unknown, Bengal School.” It was prominently displayed on the cover of the exhibition catalogue, affirming its visual power and historical importance, despite the lack of verified authorship.

Shortly thereafter, Aakriti submitted the painting for restoration to the Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC), whose Conservation Lab (KCCCL) is one of India’s few private institutions dedicated to professional art restoration.

The Restoration Process at KCC Conservation Lab (KCCCL)

The KCC Conservation Lab undertook a thorough

analysis and treatment of the painting. Upon initial inspection, the surface bore significant grime and discolored varnish, obscuring key details. More critically, a segment of the lower-left corner showed faint markings that hinted at a possible signature beneath accumulated layers.

KCC Conservation Lab (KCCCL) conservators initiated a multi-phase cleaning and consolidation process, carefully removing surface dirt and aged varnish. As the uppermost layers were reduced, the original tonality of the composition began to emerge: soft ochres, warm skin tones, transparent drapery, and a richly textured background. The most critical revelation, however, was the partial uncovering of a faint but legible signature – “Ananda Mohan Saha, 1918” – in the lower-left area.

This single detail altered the painting’s entire status. The signed date confirmed its early execution; the full name provided a direct clue to attribution. Documentation was prepared accordingly, with high-resolution images and conservation reports preserved at both KCC Conservation Lab (KCCCL) and Aakriti.

The KCC Conservation Lab (KCCCL) report, later shared publicly as a case study, emphasized the ethical guidelines of the conservation process: Informed cleaning approach, minimal inpainting, visual integrity, and respect for the artist’s original materials. Most importantly, the conservation allowed the painting to be appreciated in its true form, both aesthetically and historically.

Attribution through Archival Verification

With the signature revealed, Aakriti Art Gallery’s research team initiated a focused archival search. This culminated in the discovery of the Indian Academy

of Art, Puja Number (October 1920), a rare illustrated art journal published in Kolkata. Within its pages was a black-and-white reproduction of Ashru-Kumva—identical in composition to the painting under restoration—credited to “A. Shaha”. The title, subject, and style matched conclusively.

This publication, rare but authenticated through archival scans, became the primary reference point for attribution. It confirmed that Ashru-Kumva had been published in 1920 under the artist’s own name, and that the physical painting matched the printed version in full compositional detail.

No other artworks or records by Shaha have since been verified, making this match definitive. The twin anchors of signature and publication—one visual, one printed—provided the gold standard in art attribution.

Institutional Roles and Scholarly Collaboration

This rediscovery was the product of careful inter-institutional cooperation. Aakriti Art Gallery facilitated

acquisition, exhibition, and research. KCC Conservation Lab (KCCCL) provided expert conservation and signature authentication. And the archival recovery of the 1920 journal ensured historical validation.

The resulting alignment—between physical painting, journal reproduction, and rediscovered artist—marks a rare convergence in Indian art historiography. It transforms Ashru-Kumva from an anonymous artifact into a securely attributed, academically published work by an artist once lost to history.

The conservation and attribution of Ashru-Kumva exemplifies how careful restoration and archival research can rescue not only a painting but a painter from historical amnesia. Thanks to this process, Ananda Mohan Shaha’s only known surviving signed work now re-enters the canon—not as a fragment of anonymous heritage, but as a recognized contribution to Bengal’s academic realist tradition.

This chapter also serves as a model for future rediscoveries, emphasizing the role that restoration laboratories, institutional archives, and committed researchers can play in reshaping our understanding of Indian art history.



Before treatment general view of the artwork in normal light (left: recto, right: verso)



Close ups of the painted layers showing different types of alterations on the surface and structural deterioration signs



Signature of artist discovered
"Ananda Mohan Saha, 1918"



During solvent action: A comparative view of the intervened and un-intervened area



Raking light image of the artwork Transmitted light image



Application of facing and preparing for the lining



Consolidation of the flaking paint layer



Lining of the canvas



Removal of the facing



Infilling the losses



Chromatic reintegration is underway

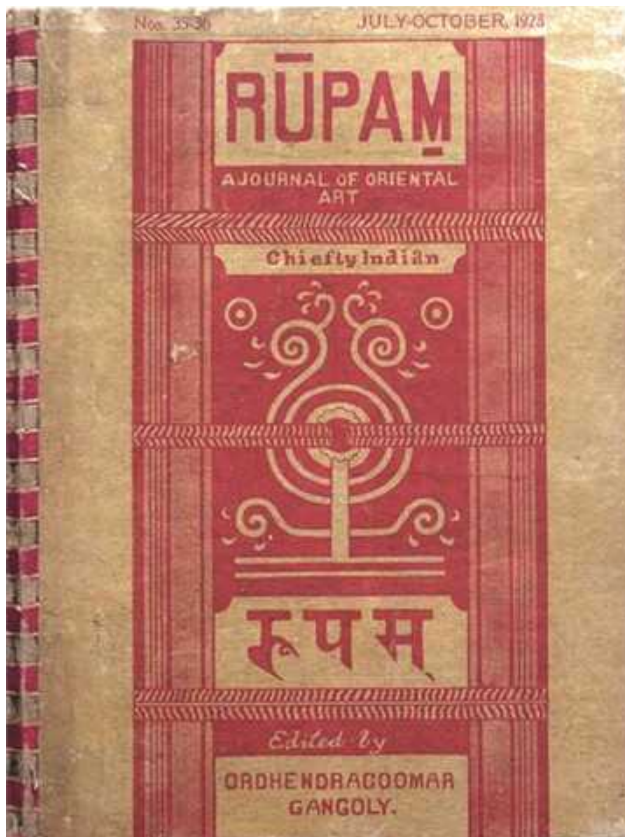


After treatment image

Chapter 6:

THE INDIAN ACADEMY OF ART AND THE 1920 PUJA NUMBER (Facsimile Excerpts)

The Indian Academy of Art journal, especially its special edition titled the Puja Number, October 1920, constitutes an important but largely forgotten node in the history of modern Indian art publishing. It stands distinct from other contemporaneous journals such as *Rupam* or *Modern Review* by its brief yet ambitious attempt to bring together both literary and artistic contributors into a single visual and textual platform. The journal was printed at the Mohen Press by Upendra Nath Roy and published by Ajit Kumar



Rupam

Sen from 24 Bowbazar Street, Calcutta – a known hub of early twentieth-century publishing activity.

A Cultural Snapshot in Print

The 1920 Puja Number was intended as a festive yet scholarly publication – evident in its multi-genre content and wide range of contributors. It contained essays on art, music, aesthetics, and the cultural life of Bengal, penned by established names like Pramatha Chaudhuri, Nitish Chandra Lahiri, R. Raghunath Row, and Prof. Amulya Charan Vidyabhushan. Artist-critics such as Atul Bose offered reflective articles like *Fine Arts*, placing the evolving Indian art scene in conversation with traditional and contemporary influences. These essays formed the core critical content, while the latter part of the issue was devoted to a curated portfolio of illustrations and paintings.

An Archive of Visual Modernism

The illustrative section of the Puja Number presents twenty-one works by artists from diverse regions and schools of thought, working in oils, charcoal, bronze, and watercolour. Among these were:

- M.A. Rahman Chughtai (*Truth Locked Out*)
- Atul Bose (*A Study in Charcoal*)
- B.P. Banerjee (*Before the Storm*)
- V.V. Wagh (*A Rapid Study*)
- H. Roy Choudhury, A.R.C.A. (*A Portrait in Bronze*)
- B.C. Law (*Last Days of Dasharatha*)
- J. Roy (*Praying for the Child, Entranced*)
- P. Majumdar, Inyat Ullah, K. Mukherjee, among others.

Together, these images serve as a rich cross-section of the evolving modernist vocabulary in Indian art—a vocabulary rooted in realism and narrative symbolism, yet distinct from both colonial salon art and purely decorative nationalist idioms.

**Rediscovering
Ashru-Kumva
by Ananda Mohan Shaha**

The most significant inclusion in the facsimile—at least from the perspective of this present volume—is the reproduction and commentary on a painting titled *Ashru-Kumva* (The Vase of Tears) by A. Shaha. The accompanying text situates the work within the poetic and visual tradition of Bengal, explicitly identifying the central figure as Radha, lost in mournful contemplation of her separation from Krishna. Her sorrow has metaphorically filled a vase with tears, negating her desire to draw water from the Yamuna—evoking a deeper emotional conflict between memory and longing.

The painting's illustration, published on a separate plate, depicts a seated, bare-armed Radha in a wet draped saree, gently holding the symbolic vase, her pose marked by subtle theatricality and subdued eroticism. The restrained chiaroscuro and rendering of fabric suggest academic training, while the subject matter aligns with the Bhakti-inflected revivalism characteristic of the Bengal School's peripheral practitioners. Stylistically and emotionally, *Ashru-Kumva* stands at the confluence of Victorian genre paint-

ing and Indian devotional sentiment.

This published reproduction confirms both authorship and date of circulation, offering definitive archival proof of Ananda Mohan Shaha's presence within the illustrated art landscape of early twentieth-century Bengal. The absence of this journal from major catalogues and institutional bibliographies only heightens the importance of this rediscovery. It marks the earliest known publication of Shaha's work and lends historical credibility to his inclusion within the canon of academic realist painters in Bengal.

Value of the Facsimile Today

Presented here are high-resolution facsimile images of the original 1920 journal: its illustrated cover, index pages listing articles and artists, the commentary on *Ashru-Kumva*, and the reproduced plate of the painting itself. Together, these pages allow a rare glimpse into an early Indian art publication that preserved the sensibilities of a transitional moment: where indigenous themes, poetic translation, and Western academic technique coalesced within the printed page.

The Indian Academy of Art – Puja Number, 1920 may have been a one-off experiment, but it remains a vital record of an emerging Indian art public—its taste, its concerns, and its early attempts at building a vernacular modernity. It is hoped that this reproduction will open avenues for future research into its contributors and inspire renewed critical attention toward overlooked figures like Ananda Mohan Shaha.

Chapter 7:

FACSIMILE – THE INDIAN ACADEMY OF ART, PUJA NUMBER, 1920

The October 1920 Puja Number of The Indian Academy of Art is the only surviving contemporaneous publication that attributes the painting *Ashru-Kumva* to the artist Ananda Mohan Shaha. It is a critical piece of documentary evidence, and without it, the attribution of the painting—despite the discovery of the signature—could not have been securely confirmed in the scholarly domain.

This facsimile chapter reproduces the relevant pages from the journal that survive today in partial but legible form. Though the issue is incomplete, the page featuring *Ashru-Kumva* and the short note beneath it are intact. This publication, printed over a century ago, stands as the definitive historical reference linking Shaha's name to his only known work.

About the Journal

The Indian Academy of Art journal was conceived as a counterpoint to the dominance of *Rupam*, the journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, which upheld the Bengal School's revivalist vision. The Academy's journal aimed to promote academically trained realist artists who were marginalized by the mainstream nationalist aesthetic. The Puja Number—issued to coincide with the Durga Puja festivities of 1920—was one of its special editions, likely designed for wider public circulation.

The journal included black-and-white and color reproductions of artworks, artist profiles, and essays. It documented works from across India, including Bengal, Bombay, Madras, and Lahore, offering a rare snapshot of the diversity of Indian realist practice during this transitional period.

Ashru-Kumva in Print

In the surviving facsimile, *Ashru-Kumva* is repro-

duced as a full-page plate, accompanied by a brief caption reading:

Ashru-Kumva
A. Shaha
Oil on canvas

This entry—though concise—is historically invaluable. It confirms the painting's title, medium, and authorship. It also places Shaha among the Academy's cohort of academically trained painters, which included artists such as Hemendranath Mazumdar and Atul Bose, whose works appear elsewhere in the same issue.

No other published writings, journals, or catalogues from the period have yet surfaced that mention or reproduce *Ashru-Kumva* or Shaha. As such, this journal page remains the only authenticated public record of his participation in India's art world of the 1920s.

Preservation and Historical Value

Only partial copies of the 1920 Puja Number have survived in institutional or private archives. The facsimile included in this book is drawn from a digitized high-resolution scan of one such surviving copy. While some pages from the original are missing or damaged, those that survive—including the reproduction of *Ashru-Kumva*—retain their typographic and visual integrity.

The historical value of this fragment cannot be overstated. It stands at the intersection of art history, publishing, and archival preservation. Without it, Shaha would have remained a name uncovered in a signature with no textual corroboration. With it, the attribution becomes verifiable and permanent.

4
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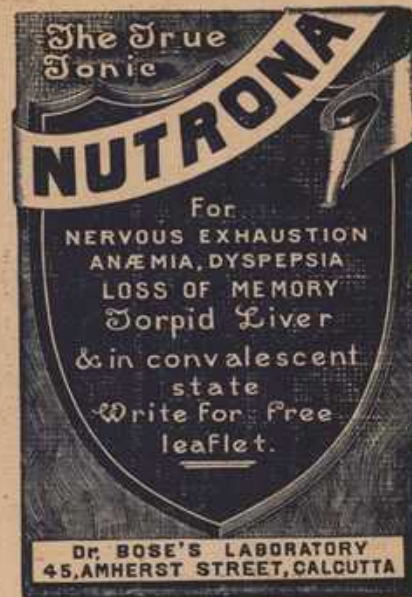
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CONTENTS

Puja Number, October, 1920.

	PAGE
ACADEMY PEN	55
ART AND LIFE—By Pramatha Chaudhuri, M. A., Bar-at-Law.	57
THE PHANTASY OF LOVE—By Nitish Chandra Lahiri, M.A.B.L.	59
THE ARTIST—By R. Raghunath Row.	64
INDIAN MUSIC—By Lala Kailash Mall, M. A. Judge.	65
FINE ARTS—By Atul Bose, Artist.	68
A PEEP INTO THE PAST—By Prof Amulya Charan Vidyabhanan.	71
ART & ARTIST	74
A RIFT IN THE LUTE	77
THE PALETTE WASH	83

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	ARTIST.
ACADEMY SUPPLEMENT	H. Mazumdar.
PRAYING FOR THE CHILD	J. Roy
ASHRU KUMBHA	A. Shaha
THE SNAKE CHARMER	B. V. Talim. (Bombay)
LAST DAYS OF DASHARATHA	B. C. Law.
KING EDWARD VII	Mrs. Talim.
EVENING GLOW	
TRUTH LOCKED OUT	M. A. Rahman Chughtai, (Lahore)
A STUDY IN CHARCOAL	Atul Bose.
BEFORE THE STORM	B. P. Banerjee.
THE CONFLICT	H. Mazumdar.
A RAPID STUDY	V. V. Wagh. (Bombay)
A CAMERA SKETCH	Dhani Ram.
ALLUREMENT	Inyat Ulla. (Kasur)
A PORTRAIT IN BRONZE	H. Roy Choudhury, A. R. C. A.
A STUDY IN NUDE FROM LIFE	K. Mukherjee.
A HIMALAYAN BROOK	P. Mujumdar.
SUNSET	M. Ata-ul Rahman B. A. (Lahore)
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*"Dark cloud! thou must pass away
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FROM the very dawn of human civilisation, one thing has stood out very clearly that man has refused to live by bread alone. He has tried with all the ardour and enthusiasm of a devotee to penetrate into the mysteries of life surrounding him every where. In doing so he has discovered many ways and means to reach his destination, till at last either consciously or unconsciously he has developed various systems to help him in his onward march. He has opened his eyes to look outside if any answer may come from the diversity of creation: he has closed his eyes to look within to find that true knowledge can only be attained by self-realisation. And when he has fully realised the discovery that his heart has become full with the richness of some great truth his mouth has begun to speak so that the message may not cease to exist with him. He has, at the same time, done his best to communicate the truth which he considered to be of some service to humanity. Thus through the process of time he has helped to build up an elaborate system of education for the benefit of the whole human race.

We cannot possibly trace the history of civilisation within the narrow compass which lies at our disposal; only we should like to point out that India before all the countries of the world has been the first to convince her people that self preservation, however strong a fact it may be in life, is not the true goal of existence. India has taught the world that if we are to attain any higher order of knowledge we must rise above the mere facts of existence and enter into the spirit of things, we may neglect the form

but we are to regard the substance with all the attention it deserves; in fine, she has taught with every earnestness that the only culture worth acquiring is the culture of ideas and the gradual diffusion of those ideas, when they are fully comprehended. We may say here that we are often accused of talking rather glibly on the subject of our glorious past, our critics point out "what earthly use is there in recalling the days that are no more? They are dead to all intents and purposes, and apparently it is of no utility to brood over the past." This may be partially true but as the past is linked with the present and has a potent influence upon the future it cannot be ignored by any means. We can even, draw from the evidence of the past that India has always been chary of identifying death with annihilation. The old times may be dead but in that death we find the promise and potency of the life of the present and the future, it is only a change from one order of things to another, the past cannot be forgotten for it never fails to give us many lessons, if we only know how to learn them.

Our contention is amply borne out by the study of Arts as existed in ancient India. Even by a casual study of the little that time has spared to us, we do not fail to notice that Art played a conspicuous part as a ready medium of conveying the noblest ideas to the people at large from the highest to the humblest in the land. Poetry has given the greatest prominence to majesty of character, the eternal struggle of good and evil which arises in the human breast. Painting has not satisfied itself by merely

giving the image of some beautiful forms which are subject to decay ; rather offered itself as a powerful contrivance of expressing the deepest emotions of humanity, and the profound truth that all Nature is one. Music has inspired the noble impulses of love and worship ; proclaiming eloquently the harmony which is behind all discord. And sculpture has been so manipulated that it may not be the object of satisfying the æsthetic taste of a distinguished coterie of archeologists merely, on the contrary, it has been so construed and designed that it may appeal straight to the hearts of the masses, even if they be uninitiated in the higher forms of Art. In short, we only want to emphasise the fact that Indian art in all its manifold ramifications, has always stood for spirituality and the solution of the mystery of Life. No body can accuse it of poverty of ideas nor lack of imagination.

In this connection our thoughts naturally turn to the Pujas which signify the worship of Shakti or the Mighty Energy pervading the whole Universe. This idea has been transformed most poetically into the worship of the Benignant Mother, with her ten arms pointing towards the ten directions, to protect her children—the created beings—from the ravages of Evil which may come from all quarters. With Ganesha representing Intellect, Lakshmi standing for Fortune, Kartic for Valour and Saraswati for Fine Arts. Do we not find here a brilliant example of the use sculpture can very properly render in the matter of popular education and at the same time act as a potent influence in the promulgation of an idea which stands good for all times? The sanctity and strength associated with Motherhood stand revealed and who can say that an idea like this has not materially helped to weave the healthy fabric of society? This is only one instance amongst a host of its kind, proclaiming in stones and clay eloquent sermons of no mean consequence.

Highly impressed with the educative

value of Art we made a bold venture to give wide publicity to the works of the present-day artists of our country and have also tried in our own humble way to foster a spirit of love and reverence towards æsthetic culture. Our present number, the last issue of the current year and the most important of all our publications, is offered to the public, and with it we come to the close of our first year's struggle. When we look back on the day the plan of this magazine was laid before the public and compare notes with the present,—the encouragement which we have received at the hands of our numerous constituents and patrons and a still larger circle of kind and enthusiastic sympathisers, we think, it would not be unseemly egotism on our part, if a sense of satisfaction prompts us to heave a sigh of relief. Our supporters are entitled to our best thanks, but at the same time we may be permitted to observe that in encouraging our new undertaking, started under trying circumstances, with no precedent of its kind, and having no beaten track to follow—they deserve the hearty thanks of our countrymen for doing full justice to the artistic spirit of the East. We do not know how far we have been able to put up before the art loving public a high class Journal to reach a commendable level nor do we know how far we have been able to satisfy the fine æsthetic taste of our critics and readers, but we may say from the kind consideration we have received from our countrymen that we have some hopes for the future to stand our trial. It is no use disguising the fact that our country in passing through a travail of transition needs the sincere service of her people, and if we have been able to do what little lies in our power to do, we may close the present year with the humble prayer—"May He who has controlled the destiny of our Motherland through centuries and enabled it to survive the ravages of time from decay and death, help us to proceed forward with His mercy as our Guide and His Grace as our Light."

ART AND LIFE

By PRAMATHA CHAUDHURI, M.A., BAR.-AT-LAW.

THE word Art has already been incorporated in our spoken language and it is gradually entering into our literature. Many of us have an idea that there is no word either in Bengalee or Sanscrit, which has the same significance as the word Art has in English. The Sanscrit word Silpa—which in Bengalee literature stood for art—does not any longer satisfy our literary conscience. We know that it means craft, and people are reluctant to use the same word for both craft and art. To confound the artist with the artisan is a blunder we are not permitted to perpetrate. The artist's work is not considered in these modern days as a kind of superior handicraft, but as an intellectual production of the same order as poetry and philosophy. A work of art to us is either something all compact of imagination, or else an idea embodied in paint or stone.

But if we only look back into the past, we cannot help discovering that the present divorce between craft and art is of quite a recent origin. The artist has been evolved out of the artisan, and it is the artisan's handiwork which is the basis of all our so-called fine arts. Both philology and history bear unimpeachable testimony to the truth of the above fact.

It is a matter of common knowledge that both painting and sculpture, the principal arts of to-day, first appeared as hand-maidens to architecture, which was not only the greatest but the unique art of the past. Pictures were painted at first on the walls of

temples, and statues formed part of their columns and friezes. And in ancient days the architect was a master-mason, and the painters and sculptors working with him and under him were all artisans and nothing but artisans. All the masterpieces of architecture all over the world were built by the class of people whom we now consider to belong to the lower rank of artists.

It is a well-known fact of European history that painting and sculpture began to separate themselves from architecture and assert their independence as the result of that great artistic movement in Italy known as the Renaissance. But even at that period some of the greatest of the Italian artists painted their immortal pictures on the walls of churches. Raphael, Michel Angelo and Titian are the three greatest wall-painters in the world. It need hardly be pointed out that they had all to submit to the limitations imposed by the nature of the work, and to subordinate their handiwork, both in design and treatment to the exigencies of architecture. So we may infer that the Italian Renaissance did not bring about a complete separation between the artist and the artisan.

If we study the lives of the Italian painters we are agreeably surprised to discover that some of the supreme artists of the world were at the same time unrivalled craftsmen. Raphael was a firstclass goldsmith, and Leonardo da Vinci was a master of every craft known at that time. Nobody can understand the real character and full value

of Renaissance art, who ignores the fact that it was not an isolated activity confined to a small group of men of extraordinary genius, but was intimately associated with the artistic activities of the people. That gave it vitality, that gave it greatness. Let me here quote a description of the surroundings of an artist's life in Florence during the Renaissance, which will show the nature of the multifarious artistic activities which a man like Leonardo summed up in himself.

At one end was the famous cook shop, still standing within the last fifty years, where all the painters and craftsmen went to get their dinner. There Squarcione, goldsmith and painter, one day to be Verocchio's master, stood side by side with Fillipo Lippi and talked of the skill of Fra Angelico's young pupil, the lad, Benozzo Gozzoli; while Rossellino and Andrea della Robbia discussed with gesticulating thumbs the merits of marble and terra-cotta, and Andrea's last effect in glazing. His uncle Luca, could not leave his Cantoria—his wide-browed singing maidens, and his boys with pipes and Taboors—the pendant work to that of Donatello for the Duomo, the pendant and the rival. Who knew if he, Luca, might not even excel him, though he was the greatest master in the world? And in their midst stood the artist who regarded himself as the greatest of all, their famous cook, their host, ladling out to each his portion of *minestra* steaming from the pot. All was shifting colour and movement and noise—purposeful noise and movement—nor did the din flag unless it were when a street singer, perhaps the popular "Rhy-

ming Barber," Burchiello, came in acclaimed by a nickname, in striped jerkin and breeches, his cithern slung round his neck, and sang some of the Tuscan *Beone*, the drinking-songs; or else city songs, or May-day songs, the age-old *Ballate*, the dance-measures of the country-side set to trenchant stories in rhyme. Everyone, cook and all, would join the chorus; some, after their stoup of good red wine, would dance, and there were jokes and there were kisses—for the flower-girls came in from the Campagna with fresh roses and sweet herbs for the mouth; and then, as the great bell boomed the hour, back to work through the blue and golden blaze of the square, with zest and no repining, for love-making was but an episode, and work was the background of life, interwoven with every part of it. (*The Renaissance—By Edith Sichel*)

The one invariable and persistent criticism of Neo-Bengalee art is, that it is a hot-house flower which cannot be acclimatised in our country. That it lacks in the freshness and vigour of life, is to my mind entirely due to the fact that it does not draw its inspiration from the artistic life of the people. And the only means of giving it life is to bring it into close relationship with the extant crafts of India. How that is to be done, is a problem to be solved not by a literary man like myself, but by the artists themselves. No great art can be born in any country amongst any people except from the joy of life coupled with the joy of work.

THE PHANTASY OF LOVE.

BY NITISH CHANDRA LAHIRI, M.A., B.L.

"I've lit my tall white candles and placed them by the bed,
Two by her little dancing feet, two by her head ;
Ah, feet that dance not, eyes that see not, Love for ever dead."

The thunder-roll of Memory !

Thoughts, myriads of thoughts, untold fancies, shroud of my unforgotten dead, dreams of my lost, ever-lost Love, all wove around my lonesome soul their misty, gloom-enveloping spells.

Throb! Throb! Throb! Such was the ceaseless, the voice-less song of my bewildered, world-shattered heart, as I threw myself on the shining sandy beach, whereon the claspings waves of the fretful sea made moanful music. An infinite desire possessed and subdued my soul—a dreamful, unconstrained longing for my Love, who was no more.

All around the universe Mother Nature proclaimed her peace,—in the gentle murmur of the moon-silvered waves, in the grey hush over the mossy slopes of the misty mountains. But—within the depths of my being, there raged a monster storm, darkening even the very face of eternity. Ah! no rest, no peace, the same unquiet breast—

That neither deadens into rest,
Nor ever feels the fiery glow
That whirls the spirit from itself away!

Heart of gold for angels framed, sweet lips, by the smiles of first love adorned,—where are they? Gone to their God, or to other lives and other loves?

The gentle breezes of the dewy, moon-blanching night wafted their mocking murmurs against my hot cheeks and throbbing temples. A cry of infinite woe shivered from out of the depths of my soul, and tingled to the responseless sky above and the echo of Her name lingered on the hill-sides and haunted my ears, like some phantom voice of other days.

Ah, God, for me was there no oblivion, but only the hell-hounds of remembrance? Come, O stars! come in your myriads, come in your countless scores and blind the ghastly eyes of memory from within me. Ah, I feel the gentle touch of your opiate wand, Spirit of Night!

Hark, whence that rushing sound? Is it but the love-lilt of the evening waves over the shingly shore, mingling with the glorious voice of the west-wind softly sighing around that lonely, dream-enshadowed ruin?

And there—there—in the distance, what is that approaching shape? Spare me, oh spare me, spirit of my Mother Earth, from the heart-less mockery of that lifeless phantom! Life-less? No, there She stood, hallowed and hallowing all around her with her fair presence, robed in human hues,—

‘slight as some cloud
That catchest but the palest tinge of day
When evening yields to night;’

her soft cheek propped against her arm resting on an overhanging ledge, the cool night breezes playing gently over her white shoulders. There was that same twinkle of unconquered joy in her long-lashed, dream-enchanted eyes, the same unplumbed depths therein as in the days of yore. Half-asleep and half awake, I approached nearer,—still nearer. There were her lovely lips—lips, like the twin petals of a half closed rose-bud, fresh, red, inviting.

‘Ah! they bend nearer—
Sweet lips, this way!’

Then her voice, her own earthly voice, gently, softly stole upon my nerveless being, quivering with the same silvery notes that had erstwhile wrought their never-ending, bitter-sweet spells around my lonesome heart.

“My faint spirit” said I, “was musing, dreaming of your looks, my Love, panting for you, even as the hind at noon for the brooks.”

“Friend of my earthly days,” said she, “what would you have? Why weary your world-crossed soul with fancy-fraught yearnings, vain longings for that which may not be?”

“Oh, heart of my heart, in the midst of a sea of tears, in the depths of a world of heart-rending, I spent my love-shorn days. My fault is grave. But what fault can my heart discern, what man-made rules can it entangle itself with, when you, my divinity, are the end and aim of all my earthly quests?”

“Love, love, love, the eternal cry of love; prate you of love? Know you not what it is?”

Shade of my earthly joys, was this then my own gentle Love?

“Fool, ardent fool,” she continued, “the quest of love is but the quest of self. What idealism is that, what religion, that can so encourage men to be wholly self-poised, self-sufficient and self-centred, ignoring, all the while, the unity, the one-ness of things. Forget, I tell you, forget love and you forget self, the dire cause mark you, of the world’s ruin.”

“The religion of love”, I checked her hastily, “the religion of love is the religion

of God. What man but has felt its potent spells and moulded his deeds by its heaven-sent message ?”

“Listen,” she replied calmly, “once when was untaught, uninitiated, I too had felt its insidious thrills—nay, vain and blind that I was, I had almost deified it, even as you do, forgetting, ignoring all other things. But disillusion, like the canker in the rose, came and taught me another and a harder, though a more inspiring lesson.

“Ah, friend of my early youth, what is Love ? Why pause for the reply ? Idealise it as much as your fancy will allow ; feel, intensely feel all its longings, yearnings, hopes and fears, dreams and disappointments. What then ? Is a human being less a human being and more of the angelic kind therefor ? Nay, nay, child of Mother of Earth, human-ness and earthliness are but other names for egoism. Human love is but a self-kindled passion, ill permitting, nay even deterring like all passions centred in self, the mighty expanse of the soul into Infinity, which, know you, is the end and aim of all things.”

Terror of terrors, was this my Life's Love, discoursing on 'high philosophy' with the unimpassioned zeal of the gods over their Nectar and Nepenthe ?

“Listen again,” she continued, “I have lived and learnt, felt and found the utter inefficiency of love.

What is love, I ask you once again, it is but the purest concentration of human egoism, the very quintessence of self-worship. The lover, self-deluded and vain, sees in his beloved but the reflection of his own being and adores the image that his self-concentred fancy constructs within him.”

“But,” I hastily interposed, “to me, my love, my divine love, it is the highest manifestation of selflessness. The lover forgets—”

“Yes, forgets all, but his beloved and himself. Call you such a passion selflessness ? In its fulfilment love centres round two souls, in its disappointment it recedes into itself. It is all but a part of earth's earth-bespattering earthliness.”

“But wherefore, then, the finer glow, the higher sentiment that emanate from love and glorify life's surroundings ? That surely is not sordid selfishness.”

“Bad alchemist, that you are, can you not comprehend what that symbolises ? In its very concentration every passion undergoes a subtle change and assumes an aspect different from its pettier forms. The higher glow, as you choose to term it, is but an illusion, a vain unsubstantial illusion that proceed from the mind, in its misdirected effort to rise from and above itself. Nature is ever prodigal in her gifts and therefore smiles even at frail human attempts which achieve nothing. And hence the finer glow.

“It is an all-abiding of Nature that all creatures including man, must rise from and above itself ; and man must strive after his higher manhood, that which comprehends all ; must merge his soul in everything, instead of pursuing a course of selfish isolation and artificial estrangement from his kind. And Love,—what is the love of a man for a woman, but the raising of barriers round two human souls, that shut off the light and refuse the warmth of the general feeling of mankind ?

"Love-marriages! It would best be seem to call them love-tangles. Of all earthly unions they are the least happy and the most selfish. At first there may possibly occur an imagined correspondence between the aims and ideals of the two, but later, dissimilarities, hitherto ignored or even non-existent, crop up and develop in the individual progress of either. What then is the result—disenchantment, a state of incompatibility, base suspicions and earth-grown affections—all accentuated by the recollection of the imagined ideals of old.

"Your poets and philosophers, in their self-centred craving after earthly immortality, have idealised love as the master passion, as the greatest among the great motive-forces of the world. But is the world any the better for these outbursts of individual feeling? Who was it that profited by your Byron's Titanic strife "of passion against Eternal Law," by the shattering of his soul against the rock of self-engendered emotions? Poets are the slaves of their own imagination, the children of morbid introspection; philosophers are but the victims of their own intellect, and of their intense self-consciousness. 'Self-swelled their feelings ebb and sway; even as those of the rest of humanity. And they too, in their search after the higher life, succeed only in giving free play to their characteristic ideas and emotions and thus they, too, deify egoism into love.

"And your warriors and those whose names are fondly treasured in your puny annals,—what have they achieved? They have but reddened the face of the Earth, in their quest of love, with blood fresh-drawn from virgin hearts; they have washed those ruby stains therefrom, with the burning tears of women. Antony of Rome, Alexander of Greece, Ravana of Lanka, Jahangir of Hindustan—high-souled heroes all, emblems of mortal sovereignty, types of mortal love,—what a sad and sordid tale do they relate?

"Once again, hearken unto my words. The end and aim of all progress is freedom, the freedom of the human soul from all the petty thralls of earth-born yearnings. What freedom can there be if man blindly and in a glad spirit, wears fetter of steel and clogs of iron? Love is, indeed, a master-passion; it is a tyrant and man its slave, in that it, forgetful of the kindlier claims of universal sympathy demands, like an all-devouring devil, sacrifices, which for a higher cause would be far worthier. Tell me, O friend of my earthly days, whose was the nobler and the least selfish sacrifice—that of Joan of Arc or that of Sappho of yore or Oenone of Troy?

"The higher cause that man should strive after is self-obliviousness, not that self-extinction, which, in escaping from itself only concentrates with far greater force on another, but that which is susceptible and responsive to the genial influences of the whole upon the individual, and of the unit upon the totality. Thus and thereby only can Nature's great ideal of freedom be realised.

"*Vanitas Vanitatum*, delude not yourself, friend of my earthly youth. Your gods are but the gods of clay with earthen limbs and earth-sodden hearts. In nature there are no mere dualities; but all is plurality; no mere strife after self, but an eternal cry after universality. Forget, once again I beseech you, forget love and you forget ME and egoism. Why live upon the frail smiles of an earth-born love, when the great woman, the

Woman in Nature stands showering her 'countless smile' upon you, ever-ready to receive you within the blissful fold of her limitless embrace?"

She ceased. And all around there was the same all-pervading peace—the same soul-subduing hush over the gray hill-slopes, the same ceaseless roll of the murmurous waves. The nectar of her words sank deep into my soul and I felt the gentle approach of calmness over my impassioned, tumult-beridden soul.

Ah, My Love, My Love Divine—

'Thou consummation of all mortal hope,
Thou glorious prize of blindly working will'

Where was she?

THE ARTIST

BY R. RAGHUNATH ROW.

HE sat there in a corner of the hall, the artist, all-day-long with a wistful look in his eyes, sad with the gloom of the gathering rain-clouds, fashioning in his own thought, the Image of Beauty, the idol of his worship.

And slowly and slowly as the rainbow formed in the sky and he beheld its delicate soft-coloured curve, his eyes shone with life, and he exclaimed almost in a rhapsody of delight, "Come, my dream-queen come! . . . show thy beloved face once more, only once more and hold up for a moment the delicate veils of thy dream-world"

And as the crystal rain-drops fell one by one, he wondered and kept telling to himself "her soul must be pure even as these rain-drops are"

The rain had ceased and the setting sun cast its magic of light over the rain-bedewed earth, and as he walked past his way among the crowds of the world, they all looked at his God-like figure with his thick black hair, and soul-filled eyes and kept asking to themselves, "how came he to be so beautiful?"

But he was gliding in a cloud of dreams, lost in his self-created image of beauty and oblivious of all else in the world; and as he looked at every beautiful face with an eager gaze, the query seemed to be half-expressed in his eyes, "are you the dream-maiden who haunts my life with her face.....are you the beloved queen of my dreams, my own pure, beautiful, spotless queen?".....

And the vulgar folk mocked and sneered at him, and winked to each other mischievously at his back as they talked among themselves, "Ah! he is only a flirt.....he is a flirt.".....

INDIAN MUSIC

By LALA KANNOOMAL, M.A., *Judge.*

INDIAN music occupies a very high place among the musical systems of the world for its exquisite beauty, all-capturing fascination, soft, and delicate melody, varied, and rich expression, and nicety, and subtlety of technique. To a Hindu, it is a talisman to exercise the spirit of the Karma—an open sesame to fling open the treasures of bliss divine—a safe and enduring bridge to cross from this world of suffering and misery to the realms of bliss celestial, life everlasting and peace never ending. Wafted away on the currents of musical sounds, his soul soars to the sphere of harmonies divine and merges into the ecstasies of bliss that comes alone from the direct communion with that Almighty Spirit, which is the *ne plus ultra* of all existence—the ultimate bed rock of all these varied phenomena—the inexhaustible fount of eternal knowledge and eternal bliss. A Hindu approaches the Goddess of Music as a pious, earnest and devoted votary caring little for his worldly success, and not as an interested professional artist who seeks her secrets to better his material prospects. Surdas, Tulsidas, Haridas, are the great examples before him. They were the men who, through the instrumentality of music saw the vision divine and reached the final goal of human evolution. Indian music has been emanated from the souls of divine beings and perfect and holy sages. They have vouchsafed it to the humanity of this world-cycle as a gift, by virtue of which the frail suffering mankind

may hold communion with God and secure emancipation from the relentless and ever revolving wheel of birth and death.

The essence of music lies in the rhythm; and the rhythm on which the sensory exciting effects of hearing finally rest, is the fundamental quality of neuro-muscular tissue. The chief physiological functions of the body, like the circulation and the respiration, are definitely rhythmical. Not only this, our senses insist on imparting a rhythmic grouping even to an absolutely uniform succession of sensations. Rhythm is certainly deeply impressed on our organisms. The result is that whatever lends itself to the neuro-muscular rhythmical tendency of our organisms, whatever tends still further to heighten and develop that rhythmical tendency, exerts upon us a very decidedly stimulating and exciting influence.

Music stimulates neuro-muscular system, exercises influence on heart, respiration and various viscera and function, affects the skin increasing perspiration and acts on other senses. It plays an important part in sexual selection and stimulates erotic impulses. Its ethical effects are well-known, while its therapeutic effects in healing maladies have been proved beyond a shadow of doubt.

Why music is a pleasurable sensation is explained as follows:—

“Pleasure is a condition of slight and diffused stimulation in which the heart

and breathing are faintly excited. The neuro-muscular system receives additional tone, the viscera gently stirred, the skin activity increased and certain combinations of musical notes and intervals act as a physiological stimulus in producing these effects."

"The roots of the auditory nerves are probably more widely distributed and have more extensive connections than those of any other nerve. The intricate connections of these nerves are still only being unravelled: This points to an explanation of how music penetrates to the very root of our being influenced by associational paths, reflex mechanisms both cerebral and somatic, so that there is scarcely a function of the body that may not be affected by the rhythmic pulsations, melodic progressions and harmonic combinations of musical tones." (Mekendrick's works).

The efficacy of musical sounds has thus been demonstrated not only on the ground of physiological stimulants but also on anatomical considerations.

There are seven primary notes in Indian Music, briefly called Kharaj, Rishab, Gandhar, Madhyam, Pancham, Dhaivata, Nishada, denoted by letters S, R, G, M, P, D and N respectively. These notes form the warp and woof of the charming and variegated web of Indian Music. There are six major tunes called Ragas arising from the combinations of these seven notes in a particular manner. The names of these Ragas are Bhairav, Malkosh, Hindol, Dipak, Sri Raga and Megh-Malar. Each of these Ragas produces five sub-tunes called Ragnis which are all dominated with the central notes of their Ragas. By a further combination of the Ragas and the Ragnis are produced numberless minor tunes, each individual in its expression but dominated

by the notes of the Ragnis from which they have sprung. It will thus be seen that while the principal Ragas and Ragnis are only thirty-six, the number of their offspring is legion. The peculiarity about these Ragas and Ragnis is this that they are recommended to be sung only in their prescribed season and time; for each there is a particular season and particular hour of the day or the night when it ought to be sung. In the light of a scientific examination this rule would appear to be fully justified. It is based upon the knowledge of sound vibrations, which require suitable environments for their harmonious expression in the outside world. The effects of the varying degrees of light and darkness upon certain combinations of sound vibrations are different. For different combinations of sound vibrations there must be different hours of the night or the day, which are most suitable for their outward expression. The subject is most interesting and awaits research at the hands of our modern Scientists.

There are few things in Art, Religion or Philosophy which Oriental Imagination has not personified. Accordingly each Raga or Ragni has been personified with a wealth of detail and a delicacy of expression. I am quoting here the personified descriptions of Malkosha Raga and Nut and Sindhwi Ragnis, which have been illustrated here by beautiful pictures.

Malkosha is a Young man fond of the company of youth-inebriated women and has a camphor like white complexion. He is generally dressed in purple or crimson garments, wears a necklace of fine pearls and holds in his hand a flower or a stick made of flowers. From the musical point of view, the predominant note in Malkosha is Madhyama and it is sung in the last quarter of the night in winter. The two notes

avoided in this Raga are Rishab and Panchama. It is said to have emanated from the throat of Mahadeva. The effect of this Raga is to excite erotic sentiments of love-union.

Nat Ragni is a young woman of golden lustre and fascinating appearance. She is dressed in crimson garments and adorned with beautiful ornaments. She is an acrobat and is seen with her hand resting on a fine horse. From the musical point of view, the predominant note of Nat Ragni is Madhyama, or Kharaj according to some musicians. It is sung in the last quarter-of the day in Summer. Its effect is to excite erotic sentiment,

Sindhwi Ragnee is an exceedingly beautiful young woman, dressed in vermillion garments. Her ears are adorned with flower ornaments and she is occupied in worshipping God Mahadeva. From musical point of view the predominant note is Kharaj. It is sung in the first quarter of the day in Spring and its effect is to excite erotic sentiment in love separation.

Similar are the description of other Ragas and Ragnis. They are very beautiful and charming in fancy. To one who has any acquaintance with the Indian science of Poetry called Sahitya, they reveal a world of significance. It is through them that a predominant sentiment of a Raga or

Ragni is determined and it is through them that a clue to the subject most appropriate for singing a Raga or Ragni is found out.

Hindu Psychologists have classified feelings into nine main varieties. They are the Erotic sentiment (Sringar Rasa), the Heroic sentiment (Vir Rasa), the Odious sentiment (Vibhatsa Rasa), the Furious sentiment (Raudra Rasa) the Comic sentiment (Hasya Rasa), the Marvellous sentiment (Adbhut Rasa), the Terrible sentiment (Bhayanak Rasa), the Pathetic sentiment (Karuna Rasa), and the Tranquil sentiment (Shanti Rasa).

The object of the Ragas and Ragnis is to produce these sentiments but this object can be served only when the secrets of each Raga or Ragni are discovered by studying their intimate relation with these feelings; and this can be done by studying the personified descriptions of these Ragas and Ragni in the light of the Hindu Science of Sahitya which has been neglected by the present day musicians; and the result is that the main object for which the Indian music was built up and skilfully elaborated by the genius of Hindu music experts has been lost sight of. In order to remedy this defect, the study of Hindu Sahitya which is so intimately connected with Hindu Music should be revived. I have explained this subject at length in my work on Hindu Music in Hindi.

FINE ARTS

By ATUL BOSE, *Artist*

“THE fundamental characteristics of the common properties of Fine Arts are that they exist independently of direct practical necessity or utility, that their enjoyment is purely æsthetic and that enjoyment must be disinterested without any concern with practical significance and value.”

The above idea asserted in my last essay is not readily accepted, so I think it requires a bit close study and analysis. Of course, the word ‘disinterested’ is used in the sense that pleasures enjoyed from a piece of art do not nourish one’s body nor add to his riches, that they do not gratify the recipient by the sense of superiority over others and that they are not exclusively enjoyed by any individual. It is quite evident that the beauty of Mona Lisa can not be monopolized, but is always admired by all visitors for all generations. The individual possessor of a picture may be proud of the ownership but this sentiment of pride is wholly independent of his artistic pleasure. Similarly music and poetry composed centuries ago are still enjoyed with no less apprehension. Moreover, we exclude the pleasures of smell and taste from those of Fine Arts only because we naturally hold the opinion that æsthetic enjoyment is disinterested. Why are these arts of savours and scents not placed in the same rank to the arts of form, colour and sound? In

Japan however, there is a recognised fine art of arranging perfumes; so in deference to Japanese modes we can at least say of taste only. We must admit that the pleasures of taste can not be the pleasure of Fine Arts, because their enjoyment is too closely associated with the most indispensable personal utilities. To pass from these lower to higher pleasures, consider the delight of a person at the signs and manifestations of love from his object of love. Why do we not call that artistic pleasure either? Why, in order to receive artistic delight of that kind, are we compelled to go to the theatre and see them exhibited in favour of a third person who is not really their object anymore than ourselves? This is no doubt for the difference between Art and Nature. Love is felt *really* in our Nature with all its passions, hopes and fears while it is only *displayed* in Art but not really felt at all. In this sphere of art, along with the reality and spontaneity of display, there disappear all those elements of interested pleasures—the elements of personal exultations, the pride of exclusive possession and all other emotions which, in short, can be summed up in the lover’s single word ‘MINE.’

Thus from the lowest to the highest point of view, we observe that the elements of personal advantage or monopoly in human gratifications seem to exclude them from the

Kingdom of fine arts, so the pleasures of fine art can be safely taken as disinterested, i.e. not concerned with the ideas of utility. There are some who raise an objection here which we cannot leave ignored; they urge that the person enjoying a piece of art is not free from self-interest as he seems to be, and that in the act of artistic contemplation his experiences are enhanced and so he gains something in fact; for instance while witnessing a play, a large part of his enjoyments consist in identifying himself with the lover or the hero. All this is true no doubt, but they must be aware that everyone of the spectators can enjoy equally and that satisfactions of ego are not these indirect and sympathetic satisfactions, but only those which are direct and incommunicable. So we can now come to the conclusion that the special qualities of pleasure felt and communicated by doing things in one way rather than another, independently of direct utility, are the common essential characteristics of the whole range of Fine Arts.

Now, let us take Fine Arts by groups and have a comparative study of them. Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Music and Poetry are by common consent the five principal Fine Arts as practised among the civilised communities of men. The kind of relations between these arts as ascertained by great thinkers in their individual ways can not be possibly all quoted here. In thought it is possible to group these five arts in many a different orders. We can deal only with the three kinds of grouping by three great thinkers—Comte, Hegel and Lotz.

Comte ascertains the kind of relations between the arts by inquiring which is the most simple and limited in its effect, which next simple, which another degree less and so on. This progressive complexity yields

in the following order:—Architecture, the most simplest of all because both of the kinds of effects it produces and of the material conditions and limitations under which it works; Sculpture next; Painting third; then Music; and Poetry highest as the most complex and comprehensive of all arts, both in its own special effects and its resources for partly calling up the effects of all other arts.

A somewhat similar grouping was adopted by Hegel though from the consideration of a wholly different set of relations. His thoughts summed up run thus:—In certain ages and among certain races man has only imperfect ideas to express where the material elements predominate over the spiritual; the characteristic of this art is Symbolic art; and such an art is Architecture. In other ages when the ideas are clearer and where the material and the spiritual elements are in equilibrium, thoroughly realised ideas are expressed in thoroughly adequate and lucid form; this mode of expression is called classic and Classic art is Sculpture. Later on, the ideas grow more powerful and consequently the spiritual elements predominate. The characteristic art of such an age is in which thought, passion, sentiment etc. emerge in freedom, dealing with material form as masters; this is the romantic mode of expression, and the Romantic arts are Painting, Music and Poetry.

Lotz fixed his attention on the relative degrees of independence which the various arts enjoy—their independence, that is, from the necessity of either imitating facts of nature or ministering to practical uses. So in his grouping Music comes first because it has neither to imitate any natural facts nor to serve any practical end; Architecture

next, because though it is tied to practical purposes and material conditions, yet it is free from the task of imitation and pleases the eye by pure form, light and shade, and the rest ; then as art tied to the task of imitation, Sculpture, Painting and Poetry taken in order according to their comprehensiveness.

There are also some other subordinate and auxiliary arts to the above five principal

Fine Arts such as, Dancing, (*subordinate to Music though different in kind*) Acting, (*auxiliary to Poetry*) Pottery, Embroidery, Jewellery etc. etc. To classify and place them in some order is a problem which I venture not to solve. The truth is, all classifications are intended to be final and to serve instead of any other. Moreover, the relations between these several arts are much too complex for final and satisfactory classifications.

A PEEP INTO THE PAST

BY PROF. A. VIDYABHUSHAN.

IT is a patent fact that most of the art of the west is based on imitations of the past, but can we make bold to say that our art has reached most of its achievements through hints from nature herself? Of course, no one will deny that in art as in other things nothing is absolutely original. And so in giving our artist credit for all the inspiration he has shown himself capable of drawing from nature, we must recognize the fact that in the evolution of art on Indian soil there are evident traces of valuable suggestion from each country that it came under various circumstances in contact with. One cannot always be quite sure as to the origin of the naturalistic base, but usually there is no doubt as to what is obviously of native origin.

Though not an art connoisseur myself, I am not unaware that a good number of our artists is still hovering between the new schools and the old. I can say with confidence that the majority appear to have quite gone over to the western mode of execution and interpretation, much to the regret of some admirers of the purely native style. Let art be a reflection of its own time as well as of all time, let it try to express the universal in the terms of today and art is bound to be real; and our art can be no exception to the rule. True, our art cannot be expected to get over the irresistible influence of modern occidental thought

and expression now pouring into our country changing its very civilization. The orient and the occident must needs blend. And there is a point always where they meet. And it would be the business of the artist to find this more readily and truly than the diplomatist. Of course we have too much regard for our native classical mode ever wholly to abandon it. India, no less than other nations, has her roots in the past; and some of our artists there always must be, who can and will portray the life and times of old India. Their works are of historic as well as of æsthetic interest; While the artists of the modern schools find little inspiration in the past. They are as purely modern in theme as in style. Another tendency quite marked is the desire to be decorative. This, in itself, art critics may not object to. It must not also be forgotten that in its origin the motive of our art was decorative; and through all time many of our best art products have been of this order. To study the history of the art of India, one must first of all have a glimpse into what gave rise to almost all other modes of art. It was architecture "the dominant art of India" from which evolved most others as accessories. It was architecture that tickled the imagination of the artist 'to produce a statue or a picture for its own sake, as a thing of beauty by itself.' Of course there were images which were designed to be worshipped, but they were so intended mainly

for the purposes of religion and not of art. The influence of religion and mythology is evident upon all arts including minor decorative arts. Often we speak of styles which are certainly the artistic characteristics of a nation at a particular age. These styles may sometimes be original or borrowed from other people to a certain extent.

The well-known scholar Vincent A. Smith speaks of six leading styles of Brahminical temple architecture, four Northern and two Southern. The northern Styles according to him are—(1) the Indo-Aryan; (2) the Gupta; (3) the Kasmiri; (4) and the Nepalese. The Southern styles are (5) the Dravidian, and (6) the Chalukyan.

In India, as in Egypt, isolated columns and pillars seem to have had their root in subterranean excavations for purposes of architecture; of these many an instance can be seen at Ellora, in the temple of Indra. These pillars are much shorter than those of Egypt; their bases and capitals occupy a large portion of the height of the column, and the corona is less accurately traced. In cases where we Indians cut out the rock for the purposes of decoration and sculptured it over with various ornaments, the column assumes a lighter appearance and the principle of an order of architecture can be traced. The excavated temples of our country are numerous and extensive; the principal ones are those of Elephanta, Salsette and Vellore or Ellora. Besides these excavated temples there are several others of various forms deserving notice. These may be classed under three heads—(1) those composed of square or oblong enclosures, (2) temples in the form of a cross,

(3) temples of a circular form.

Of the first class of temples the largest is that of Seringham, near Trichinopoly. Of

the second class of temples, the most remarkable is the great temple in the city of Benares, while of temples of circular form, the temple of Jagannath is considered the most ancient in India.

Perhaps no specimen of Indian architecture has been found earlier than 300 B. C. Broadly speaking, architecture of India may be classed as Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, or Muhammadan. These are so styled because of the religion professed by the ruling power in India during the time they prevailed.

In many striking points does Indian architecture resemble that of Egypt. Temples cut out of solid rock and ornamented with statues have been found both in India and Egypt. They bear remarkable resemblances with each other. The principal remains of Buddhist architecture are the cave-temples of Elephanta and Salsette, of Ellora and Carli and those of Behar and Orissa. There are also Buddhist temples in Ceylon, Burmah and Java consisting of a series of terraces which rise above one another in a pyramidal shape. The Jains also built temples richly ornamented and marked by great elegance and lightness of structure.

These may be described as consisting of a dome in the centre which is surrounded by others supported on sculpture columns. The *cupolas* have their ceilings hollow and not solid. These *cupolas* or concave coverings are either segments of a sphere, of a spheroid or of any similar figure. Being built of stone, they are of a very strong structure, even more so than the arch, in as much as the tendency of each part to fall is counteracted, not only by those above and below it, but also by those on each side. These cupolas are panelled and decorated with

scroll-work and foliage elaborately designed. Other than the Buddhist and Jain temples may be mentioned those consisting of *Vimana* or inner sanctuary. This resembles a four-sided pyramid rising very high and is formed of a number of steps or terraces.

These terraces have figures and sculpture and a small dome on the top. There were generally rectangular courts before the entrance which were flanked by *gopuras* or pyramidal gate towers. Halls of various sizes numbering from four to a thousand were built in the enclosures surrounding the

Hindu temples, of which Tanjore and Bareilly temples are the finest specimens of this mode of Indian architecture.

The Muhammadans introduced the arch and various forms of Saracenic or Moorish architecture which were mixed up with the chief phases of the previous styles of India. Another new style akin to that of Arabia, North Africa and Spain visited India as a result of Saracenic rule over those countries. This style deserves particular mention in so far as at least the pointed and horse-shoe arches in square panels etc.

ART & ARTIST

The Character of Indian Art-Crafts

N. A. Khundkar B. A., LL. B. (cantab) Bar-at-Law, dwelling upon the character of Indian Art-crafts observes, "The assimilative power of the Indian people is very great, and Indian Art has proved itself receptive of every foreign influence with which it has ever been brought into contact. It is for this reason that some maintain that there is nothing original in Indian Art. But Dravidian, Greek, Persian and European elements have in time been welded into a tradition distinctively Indian, which has been kept alive in the hands of hereditary craftsmen organised in caste guilds and supported by popular taste as well as by the favour of princes. The merest touch of their fingers trained for three thousand years to the same manipulations, is sufficient to transform whatever foreign work is placed for imitation in their hands into something rich and strange and characteristically Indian."

Swami Vivekananda on Art

The "Prabuddha Bharata" reports a dialogue on Art between the late Swami Vivekananda, a great religious teacher, and a Bengali painter who practises the European style of painting. The Swami explained the inner core of Art as follows.

"Art has its origin in the expression of some idea in whatever man produces. Where there is no expression of idea, however much there may be a blaze of external colours and manipulation, cannot be styled true art. The articles of every day use like vessels, utensils, cups and saucers should thus be produced as expressing an idea. In the Paris Exhibition I saw a wonderful figure

carved in marble. In explanation of the figure, the following words were written underneath—Art unveiling Nature—that is how Art sees the inner beauty by drawing away with its own hands the covering veils of Nature. The figure is carved in such a way as to indicate that the beauty of Nature has not yet become wholly manifest ; but the beauty of the little that has become manifest is such that the artist has become bewitched by seeing it"

Picture Restoring

Many people think that a picture and the canvas it is painted on are one, and that it is impossible to separate the one from the other. This is not the correct view of the thing is justified by the art of picture restoring widely practised in England and other European countries. Between the layers of colour and the canvas or panel, the painter first of all puts on a ground of chalk or plaster. This makes it possible for a fresco even to be transferred from a wall to a canvas. The method, though looks very simple requires special aptitude, long training, and infinite patience. A sheet of gauze is pasted to the front of the picture laying it face downwards on the table. The rotten old canvas is then moistened with hot water and removed bit by bit. In the case of panel painting the wood is first planed away and then scraped with a razor until every particle has been removed and the ground of painting is reached. All that remains to be done is to mount the picture on a new canvas or panel, and remove the gauze.

Secret of a queen painted as Spanish nun.

Through a chance discovery in the garret of a ducal palace in Madrid, a three hundred-year-old romance of wonderful Velasquez has been revealed. Hidden for three centuries as a picture of a nun, this portrait of Queen Isabella of Spain, the first wife of king Philip IV., has just been restored in London. The portrait was on private view until September 12 at the Victoria Galleries, Westminster. In the disguised picture practically nothing but the face and hands of the original was left uncovered, and the secret was first guessed at, owing to the paint peeling away from the nun's hood when there was revealed the the fringe of a lace collar.

"I have received a letter from the agents of the owner of the picture in Barcelona," said Mr. W. M. Power to a "Daily chronicle" representative, "thanking me for my restoration of the portrait. This work, which has been of a difficult character, has occupied my personal care and attention for over six months. There is no doubt that the portrait is genuine Velasquez. It has a strange history.

"Princess Isabella of Bourlion was married to Philip in 1615, and in 1624 was staying in the convent, of the nuns belonging to the order of Descalzos. As a mark of the kindness she there received she presented the nuns with this Velasquez portrait of herself. Later Isabella wished to enter the convent, but the Pope would not consent. The inmates of the convent were bitterly disappointed, and took their own action in the matter. They called in a painter, and secretly instructed him to paint out the Queen's court dress and the lace handkerchief in her hand and to present her in the complete garb of a professed nun. All this was done, and in addition, a chair was

converted into a table, showing an open book with a crucifix standing in the back ground.

"For over three hundred years the disguise was successful, until an antiquarian of Barcelona recently discovered the picture. He had received an order for a good portrait of Saint Therese; the founder of the order of Descalzos, and bought it to please his customer. There are eight Velasquez portraits of Queen Isabella, the present picture being one of the two known to be missing."

Moghul Painting.

"Moghul painting forms a brief but brilliant episode in the history of Indian art. It rises under the patronage of Akbar, flourishes under Jahangir, grows over-ripe under Shah Jahan, barely survives through the long reign of Aurangzeb, and in the eighteenth century still produces occasional works of merit. In form and spirit it is widely divergent from Hindu art, resembling the contemporary Rajput painting only in the fact that the paintings are executed on paper and are usually of port-folio size. Rajput painting is an art of feeling and ideas, essentially of a religious inspiration and interprets the experiences of the popular life in the sense of a spritual drama, using the language of the village and the home, and however exquisite, rarely making a parade of skill. Moghul painting is a courtly art, purely secular in outlook, profoundly interested in individual character, and primarily of historical interest: it rarely departs from its essential theme of portraiture. It differs from Persian art in the fact that the former is mainly an art of book illustration with romantic interest, while the Moghul painting mainly creates portfolio pictures, each complete in itself, and representing actual persons or events—in the words ascribed to Akbar's son Daniyal—

" what we have ourselves seen and heard." This interest in representation makes the Moghul painting on the whole a slighter art than that of the Rajput Schools : but in the analysis of personality it is far stronger, and in individual works this penetration of the individual human soul lifts the art of representation far above the plane of mere similitude to one of pure intuition and of spiritual vision."

Dr. A. COOMARSWAMY.

K. Mukherjee Esq.

We are glad that another promising figure in the person of Mr. Kushal Kumar Mukherjee has been added to our contributor's list. Mr. Mukherjee has just returned from England after a long stay of seven years there ; studying all the while the intricate techniques of art under English experts. His poster designs—some of which have been shown to us—are really very fine ; and it is perhaps, not too much to say that in this branch of art at least he will have very few rivals in this country. His first contribution—"A study from

life " which is published in our present number will amply illustrate the skill of the painter and we invite our readers to judge for themselves the merit of this rising artist by looking at the picture referred to.

Ourselves.

With the present issue we come to a happy end of our first year's endeavours. And the thoughts of gratitude come uppermost in our mind in regard to those who have actively helped to make the Indian Academy of Art as much a success as possible. We embarked upon this arduous work with every hope of getting regular supplies of paper and printing materials, though it soon proved to be otherwise. This unavoidably prevented us from being strictly regular, and sorry, as we are, for our inconsistencies we may be permitted to say that they were largely due to circumstances over which we had no control. We have, however, taken every precaution against such unhappy recurrence and are quite confident that our future will run in brighter lines.

A RIFT IN THE LUTE

Academy Supplement—"Only a word" by H. Mazumdar.

If ever anything has afforded the painter, the poet and the musician the richest topic of interest, it is unquestionably the legend of the Jumna and the groves of Brindaban. The theme can never be worn threadbare, so long it is touched by the magic personality of a gifted artist. The painting before us is of that order.

Srimati Radha while returning from her bath in the Jumna, with a pitcher full of water, is reminded by the green grass on the bank, the clear blue water of the gently flowing river and the new leaves of the adjoining groves of the colour of her unforgettable lover Sri Krishna, which eventually leads her to think of Krishna with an absorbed attention. Thus she paces slowly practically forgetful of her situation, her heart being with Krishna all the time. Lo! "Radha" calls the ever loving Swain, or is it the echo of heart resounded through the banks and the groves? The sound strikes the inmost corner of her mind. She half inclines her head in surprise to find Krishna by her side. "Only a word" has he uttered and no more, but what infinite meaning is there: it is the response to the sincere call of the faithful, it is the response to the call of the one to whom no sacrifice is too dear to gain His Love, it is the response to the one who wants to walk in Love's Light with Him as the guide and none else.—Srimati's heart is filled with unbounded thankfulness. She has no words to speak, her eyes only do justice to her feelings, her lips being mute.

The artist has exquisitely brought out in the beautiful face of Radha the conflict of joy at the unlooked-for but much-desired appearance of Krishna and the pang of apprehended separation. In the demeanour of Krishna an unimitable expression of benignity prevails consonant with his eagerness to listen to the sincere call of his loving devotee. The artist is careful to avoid giving any undue prominence to Krishna, as may appear superficially, for who does not know that it was the Gracious will of Krishna himself to give the first place to his devotee? His place he wilfully chose as the next. Therein lies the beauty of the idea which has charmed all India so many hundreds of years, and thanks to the artist for his clever treatment of such a noble subject which is so dear to the Indian heart.

Praying for the Child—by J. Roy.

We have in this painting a remarkable touch of pathos with an Indian setting, but with an appeal extending to the world at large. A poor woman after a day's hard labour touches the head of her child and begins to pray. Her feeble frame seems to prevent her from undergoing any hard toil, but she does not care for her own comforts, her sole interest is concentrated on that child alone, and nothing is too



ASHRU-KUMVA.
From an oil painting By A. Shaha.

much for her to suffer for the sake of her child. She is glad with all the intensity of a mother's affection when she sees her child happy and her sufferings assume altogether a new colour, when she thinks with her maternal softness of heart that they are undergone for the interests of her child. In the fulness of her heart, a prayer springs forth to the Almighty God who has given her this sacred charge, when the shades of evening are deepening around, and the night advances when no man nor woman can work any longer, she prays that let hers be the lot of suffering but let her child be spared the sorrow of bearing the bitter trials of the world ; let Gracious God give her every strength of a mother's heart to bear every thing for her son's happiness.

The artist has done everything to give an adequate expression of a mother's feeling under the particular circumstances and his brush has done him good service in the delineation of a painting full of noble sentiment.

Ashru Kumva.—(The Vase of Tears) by A. Shaha.

“Oh call me not, oh maiden dear, to the bank of the stream, there have I no need to go, My vase is full, yea, full to the brim with tears, oh! sad tears! To the Jumna I shall not go ; associations are there, oh! happy associations of a time gone by to rend my heart in twain.”

Such in fine, is the gist of the lovely poem of Bengal, and it has offered a touching theme to the beautiful painting before us. The artist has nicely drawn the figure of Srimati Radha with her countenance full of dark despair on account of the absence of Sri Krishna, her Divine lover. Nothing has any charm for the distracted Radha whether the surrounding scene or the adjoining stream. Her friends call her to the banks but she replies that she has no need to go thither. The tears which have flowed so freely from the sad eyes deploring the absence of Krishna, have filled the vase, thereby sparing her the trouble of filling it with the river water. But she fears to go to the Jumna for a different reason and for a powerful one, she apprehends her presence by the side of the Jumna will painfully remind her of the happy meetings with Krishna and so she prefers to remain where she is lest the associations of ideas may be too much for her broken heart to bear.

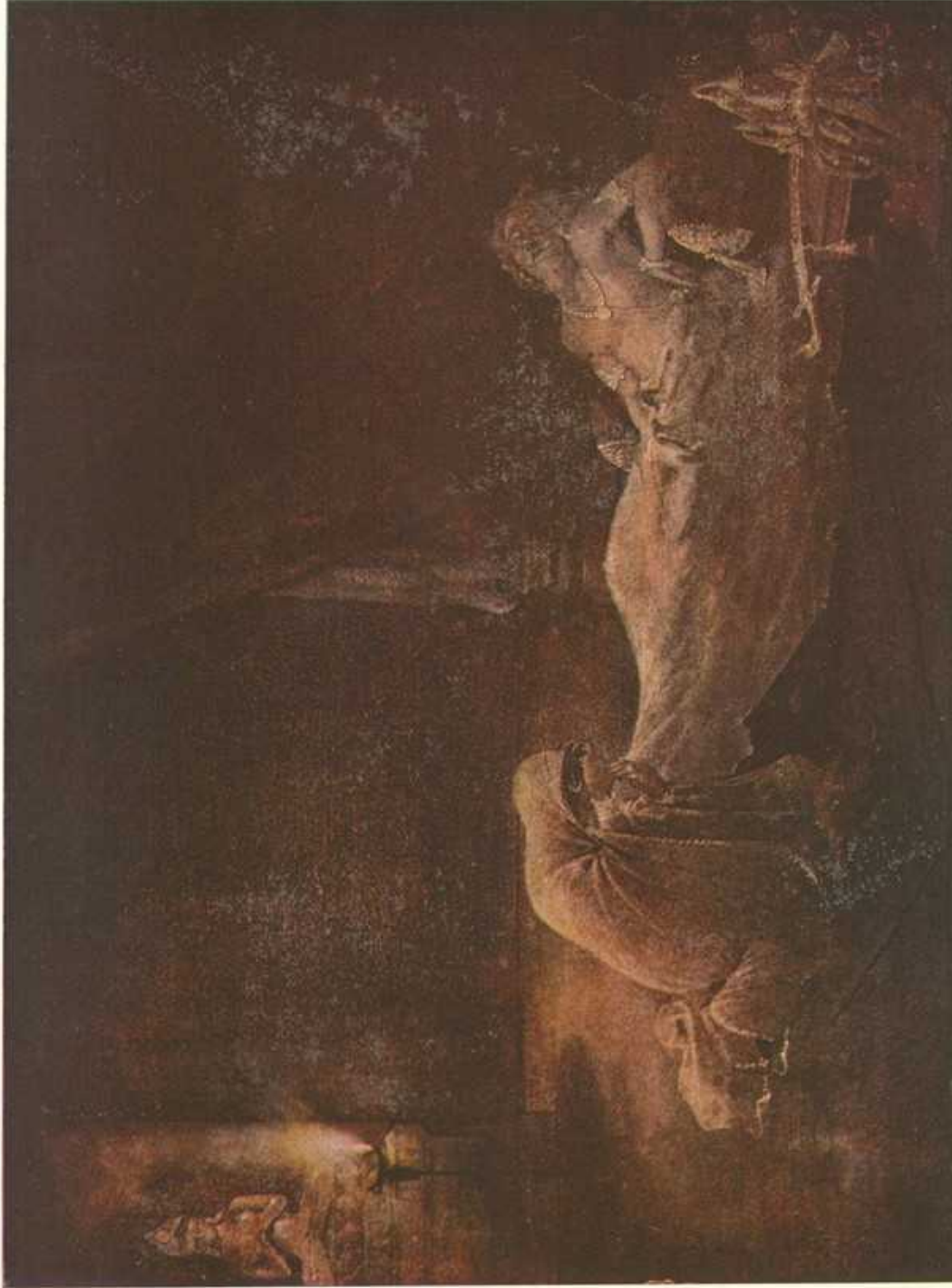
The songs of Radha and Krishna never fail to appeal to the poetic heart of India but when the songs are translated into a painting their value is increased ten-fold through the aid of the artist's harmony of colour and the easy brush work which we have in the present picture.

The Snake Charmer—by B. V. Talim.

Mr. Talim has insured his fame as a sculptor of no mean repute, but his present work does much to give an additional proof of his talents. His execution is so minutely true to life and the anatomical niceties appear in such clear relief that it seems to be a puzzle how the sculptor has been able to bring out the result of his keen observations so marvellously well. The piece is characteristically Indian in form, and gives an exact representation of the appearance of a snake charmer while he blows his instrument in playing with the snake. Mr. Talim's strength is his



SNAKE-CHARMER
From a Plaster By B. V. Talim (Bombay)



LAST DAYS OF DASHARATHA
By B. C. Law. (water colour.)



avoidance of "worn out shibboleths of art, and reliance upon the living facts of the living world around him. One feels that his types are found in the Bazar not in the Library. And this is the right way of progress."

Last days of Dasaratha—by B. C. Law.

The message of Ram Chandra's banishment and disappearance from the borders of the kingdom has at last reached the ears of the old King Dasaratha. He feels totally unnerved, and the tragic situation is deeply accentuated by the heart-rending utterances of grief by the inconsolable Kausalya. Unable to bear the strain, even the stout heart of the old warrior breaks down, and the King falls into a swoon to add to the grief of the queen.

The well-known episode is taken from the Ramayana, and we have little hesitation to say that Mr. Law is at his best in giving expression to the feelings of King Dasaratha and Kausalya as they might have been under such pathetic circumstances.

King Edward VII—by Mrs. Sumatibai B. Talim.

This is a picture of a fine needle work which looks exactly as though it were painted in oils. The different shades are skilfully worked out; and the general expression of the face has helped to make it an exact likeness of the late King. It would be no exaggeration to say that the work speaks much for the æsthetic taste of the lady who has so kindly lent her picture for publication. If the lady had taken up her brush and colour she would have undoubtedly done ample justice to the spirit of Art which she has manifested in her needle work. Her contribution testifies that the ladies are also taking a keen interest in the domain of Art, which is as it should be. We have every confidence that within a short time a larger number of contributions from them will be forthcoming to enable us to prove that Indian ladies are not in any way lagging behind in furthering the interest of a cultured movement.

Evening glow—

The picture is a happy proof of the artist's reverent attitude towards Nature, which seems to pervade his mind and pencil. The reddish tints of the setting sun fall upon the dark shades of the evening creating an exquisite scene of natural grandeur and beauty. The calm waters of the murmuring stream gliding with sunset or fading into twilight add an additional glow which the artist is careful enough to reproduce on his canvas without any touch of affectation anywhere.

Truth locked out—by M. A. Rahaman Chughtai.

Through many trials and much hardship and sacrifice, the seeker of truth has at last been able to face the dear object, which it has been her mission to fulfil. To her utter grief she finds her in chains: the ignorant man, subject to mortality and so unable to check her speed unknowingly binds her hands, so that the hold of truth may be checked if not her speed. What a sad commentary on the much vaunted wisdom of man, his mortality abetting his iniquity!



A RAPID STUDY
By V. V. Wagh (Bombay)



KING EDWARD VII
From a needle work by Sumatbat B. Talim.





TRUTH LOCKED OUT
By M. A. Rahman Chughtai (Lahore).
Water Colour

But nothing deters the votary, nor daunts her unconquerable purpose. She is prepared to embrace Truth inspite of her bondage, being convinced it is temporary. She is prepared to adore Truth's short lasting bondage for the benefit of those who are the authors of the misdeed. Only she dreads, if ever she has dreaded anything acting in the Light of Truth—lest she may lose truth from her close embrace which has cost her so dearly, and for which she has yearned so long.

The artist has, in this allegorical picture, given ample proof of imagination and a skilful use of art to a poetic end.

A Study in Charcoal—by Atul Bose.

This fine specimen represents a bold sketch in charcoal by Mr. Bose. One cannot but admire the manliness of the artist who has chosen a buoyant youth for his sitter. The work is tinged with vigour and strength and speaks much for the artist's talent.

Before the storm—By B. P. Banerjee.

Some beautiful touches of colour stand out in clear outline in this landscape. The still appearance of the large trees, the meadows and the surrounding scenery enables the picture to represent the lulling aspects of the usual calm before a storm. The outstanding feature of the painting is its fidelity to Nature. The painter is the oldest of the modern artists of Bengal, and so the publication of this picture offers us a happy opportunity of conveying our heartiest congratulations to him. He took to his artistic vocation at a time, when it was looked upon with studied indifference ; but his unflagging energy and staunch devotion to his ideal helped him to remove all impediments, and now in the evening of his life he has achieved full mastery over his brush as is evident from the present picture.

The Conflict—By H. Mazumdar.

"Oh ! what invisible chains tie me down ! Am I to be prevented thus ? Have I not conquered strong men and quelled proud hearts ? what spells have I failed to work to extend my invisible course ? Satiated with my conquest, Oh, Virtue ! I sought to preside over thy temple so that foolish men may pay homage to me and me alone. But what do I hear ? Ah, me ! it is the inner prompting of my heart, so long have I laid it asleep, but now it sounds deep, I cannot stifle it any longer. Oh, I hear, I hear—"Thou shalt not win nor shalt thou speed unto the Gate, till thou hast cast off thy weapons of sensuality and assumed a different role." Oh, Virtue ! will it be thus, but I feel an unquenchable yearning, I cannot resist it, thy silent protest sharpens it all the more, I must go unto thee. Open thine gate then, hospitable Deity ! and I shall be thy votary, even thy humblest hand maid shall I be, to get a glimpse of thee—my new life's star. Oh, the very weapons are my bars, take them, take them, they are dedicated unto thee and thee alone, do with them as you please, only listen to the prayer of one who weeps and shall never rest till she has sought thee "

Thus the corroded heart of a repentant soul cried when with satiation the inner soul of womanhood awoke for its true realisation. The call came, it was the reclama-



BEFORE THE STORM
From an Oil Painting
BY B. P. BENERJEE.

THE INDIAN ACADEMY OF ART.

tion of the human soul, and with it the heart-stirring conflict.

In presenting this painting before the art-loving public, the artist has given us an exquisite picture of dramatic intensity and striking situation which can be brought out on the canvas.

A Rapid Study—by V. V. Wagh

This is a life size sketch of Sir Bhala Chandra of Bombay, done by the artist in two hour's time. The style and method of working are so high that even if the point of rapidity is left out of consideration they will bear ample testimony to the skill of the sculptor. But when such a veritable work of art is produced by the labour of two short hours only it surely stands out as a wonder and perplexity. We congratulate Mr. Wagh upon his brilliant achievement and thank him for kindly lending us the picture for publication.

A Camera Sketch—by Dhani Ram

This is a photographic representation of a familiar scene, and much credit is due to the photographer for giving a very clear picture by means of his instrument. The green verdure and the grazing cattle are brought out very distinctly and they add a particular grace to the charming scene.

Allurement—by Inayat Ulla

This picture proves to what extent a painting on silk can be carried to a high order of excellence, having for its subject a young man as yet free from the vices of the world standing his trial against the temptation of drinking a cup of wine, offered to him by a wily woman.

The subject is apparently allegorical, the young man of course, stands for innocence, and the woman with the cup represents the dark snare of the world. Hence, the light green keeps in tune with unaffected virtue and the deep blue is made to represent vice and its consequence. The picture suggests the idea of Maya trying to capture the independence of the soul ; but at the same time, gives prominence to the fact that illusion fades before truth, and Maya has to stand condemned if one has the strong inclination to assert the independence of the soul.

A Study—by H. Roy Choudhury A. R. C. A.

This a fine portrait study in bronze and Mr. Chaudhury has shown his characteristic skill in bringing out the graceful feature of the lady in a most impressive manner.

A study of Nude from life.—by K. Mukherjee

In this charcoal sketch we find a noble endeavour on the part of the artist to study the anatomical accuracies and the contrast of light and shade. He has fully realised that without drawing a painting is nothing but a vulgar craft and tried, with considerable success, to show it in his picture.

A Himalyan Brook—by P. Majumdar

In this delightful picture the beauty and grandeur of a rippling rivulet gliding through the slopes of the Himalayan range are vividly brought out. The sky is



AFTER THE DAY'S TOIL
A Camera Sketch By Dhani Ram.



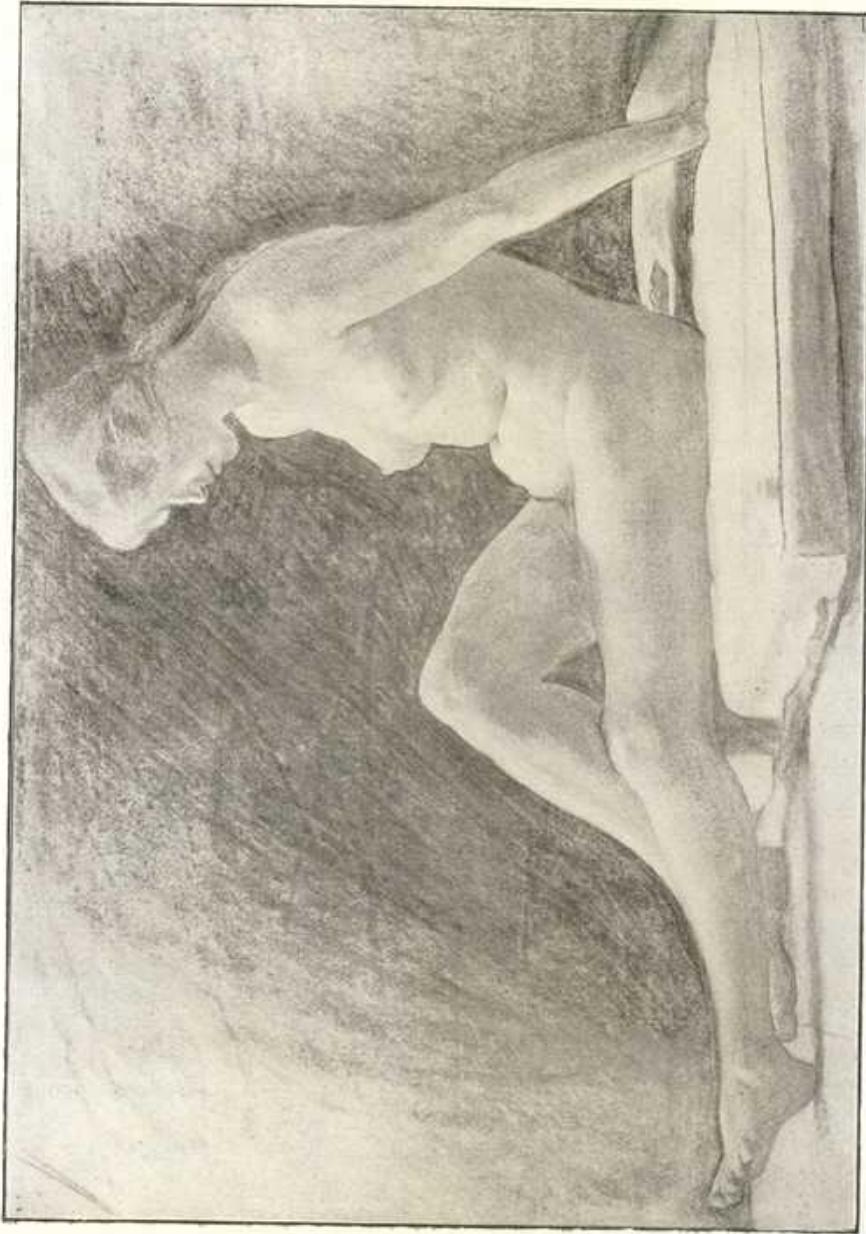


ALLUREMENT

*From a winter colour on silk
By Inyatulla, (Kasur.)*



A PORTRAIT IN BRONZE
By H. ROY CHOWDHURY, A.R.C.A.



A STUDY OF NUDE FROM LIFE
BY K. MUXERJEE (LONDON)



A HIMALAYAN BROOK
From a Water Colour By P. Malumdar.



wonderfully airy, the sunshine shining through the glades of the wood and the green trees rocking and swaying as the breeze rushes by them. The study of atmospheric effect and the green verdure shows the talent of the artist as well as his genuine love of nature.

Sunset—By M. Ata-ul Rahaman B. A.

This photo proves in an admirable manner the skill of mechanical contrivance. It was taken at Anasagar Lake, Ajmere, in the evening when the sun's rays were playing with the stray clouds of a recent shower before going to repose behind the range of mountains in the back ground. The photo is remarkably clear which speaks much for the photographer's promptitude in open-air exposure.

Entranced --by J. Roy.

Snatching a little time from the usual work of the day, the pious man takes to his small drum to which is attached a number of little cymbals. He slowly beats the drum, to a measure, the sound drowns the noise outside and the tinkling of the cymbals produces a harmonious melody. The man's heart is awakened by the music, he is absorbed, he begins to feel that there is a harmony in this world of bustle and life, till at last he has conceived that his heart is at one with the harmony of the Universe. He forgets the world outside, he has gone deep into the inner harmony of things discordant. He broods and meditates till he is entranced with the consciousness of a joy inexpressible.

The artist has very happily painted the features of a spiritually inclined Indian and the glow of his devotion. The picture is very lively in the expression of an enraptured joy in the countenance of the musician, at the discovery of a noble and consoling idea. There is little doubt that the painting is a true representation of the thoughtful tendency of the East.

Mugdha—by H. Mazumdar

It cannot be denied that even a noble thing like Art becomes monotonous and dull, if not characterised by a variety of treatment. Mr. Mazumdar seems to have realised this truth and has happily given us a pleasing picture of domestic life.

A young lady has just finished her toilet and has added thereby an additional glow of beauty to her already existing charms. She takes out a mirror and looks into it as if to find out whether her lover would be delighted with all that she has put upon herself. A sense of satisfaction overtakes her and she looks more and more into the mirror till at last she herself feels charmed and fascinated with her own delicacies. This lovely idea is indicated by the artist in a manner that the picture produces a delightful and agreeable effect in the mind.



SUNSET
By Atou-ul-Rahaman, B. A. (Lahore)
Photograph.





"MUGHDA"

From an oil painting By H. Mazumdar



Wash the Palette, wash the Palette,
 Now is the Artist's cry.
 Half a minute, Half a minute,
 W'll make it clean and dry.

Red is a bloody colour and so we have introduced a little Mauve to make it artistic! May God bless us!

Our horoscope says we are one year old! but it seems we began life only the other day. This is how a child becomes the father of man!

Sir Joshua Reynolds says, "All good paintings crack." Because goodness cannot remain concealed under the coatings of colour.

"What is an 'Aerial Perspective' Sir?" asked an art student to his master.

"It is a straight line which separates the modern School of Art from the rest," was the master's reply.

Customer: "You have painted me with grey hairs which I have not."

Artist: "That's only out of respect to you, Sir. Grey hairs are always respected you know!"

"Familiarity breeds contempt." This is the reason why an oil painting when looked at from near appears clumsy and awkward but from a distance it's all lovely and beautiful!

Model: "Please sir, excuse me. I won't come to your studio from to-morrow."

Artist: "Why, are you offended?"

Model: "You promised to paint me in bright colours but now I find you're using me for clay-modelling—a dirty thing which I can't bear!"

"Do you think my artistic prospect will be ruined by marriage?"

Friendly critic: "I don't think so if you do not depend on the income of your art."

"Is Poetry a Fine Art?" enquired the young poet.

"Certainly, otherwise Michael Angelo would not have been called the Homer of Painting," replied the artist.

Master: "It is the saddest mistake you have made by choosing an artist's profession!"

Student: "But I can correct the mistake, Sir."

Master: "How?"

Student: "By calling me an amateur henceforth."

Rate customer: "I asked you to paint me in a standing posture—why have you made me seated?"

Artist: "I thought, Sir, that my painting would last for a century and it would be very trouble some for you to remain standing for such a length of time; so I've provided a seat for you."

Mrs. Thoughtful: "Oh, dear, I can't help thinking that your father was an artist."

Mr. Thoughtless: "Did you learn it from my solicitors?"

Mrs. Thoughtful: "No, never. I have found it out myself. If your father were not an artist how could you be one? People say—Artists are born and not made."

"How much will you charge to photograph me and my wife together?" asked a newly married youth to a Photographer.

"Twenty rupees, Sir," was the reply.

"And how much for my wife alone?"

"The same, Sir."

"There, my dear," said the youth to his wife, "see how costly you are."

Patron: "It has been my life's mission to encourage Art by all means."

Artist: "But you reject my pictures whenever they are brought to you."

Patron: "That's because to give you an impetus for better work."

Art critic: "I have seen your pictures, they are nicely done. I hope you will prosper in future."

Artist: "Thank you, Sir. I have already prospered; I have married a millionaire's daughter and given up the art line!"

"Thanks to the artistic spirit of our country, quite a large number of Master Artists are produced every year!"

"Who are they, please?"

"Don't you know? The M. A.s of our Universities!"

Woe to the man who has'nt seen,
This 'First and Foremost' Art Magazine !
And thanks to those who have read,
The witty jokes from artist's head ;
Those who advanced rupees Eight.
They are heroes and heroines great :
Our Year-end greetings happy and bright,
To one and all—A merry Good Night !



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These pages are presented without alteration. Any tears, discoloration, or loss of text are original to the condition in which the journal survives. They are included here not only for authentication purposes but to give readers and researchers direct access to the visual and material culture of Bengal's art scene in 1920.

This facsimile closes the evidentiary loop that runs throughout the book. It transforms the recovery of Ashru-Kumva from a circumstantial narrative into a documented rediscovery. More than an illustration, it is the document that allows history to be rewritten with confidence.

VARIATIONS AND ACADEMIC REALISM: ARTISTIC PROCESSES WITHIN THE JUBILEE ART ACADEMY AND BENGAL'S REALIST TRADITION (c.1880s–1940s)

The practice of academic realism in early twentieth-century Bengal was sustained by a circle of painters associated with the Jubilee Art Academy. While the broader histories of the Government School of Art and the Bengal School provide the backdrop to this period, the essential contribution of the Jubilee-trained realists lies in their working method: the disciplined use of variation.¹ This approach—moving from initial sketch to refined study and finally to a fully resolved oil painting—became a defining feature of Bengal's naturalistic idiom and offers a precise lens through which to understand the artistic processes of the time.

Variation was neither duplication nor mechanical routine; it functioned as a mode of thinking and looking. Artists such as Bhabani Charan Law, Atul Bose, Jogesh Chandra Seal, and above all Hemendranath Mazumdar (Hemen Mazumdar) developed compositions through multiple iterations across charcoal, graphite, pastel, tempera, watercolour and oil.² Each medium served a specific investigative purpose. Charcoal secured contour, weight and proportion. Watercolour introduced atmosphere—humidity, lowered contrast, diffused daylight—qualities that respond to Bengal's climate and are difficult to test directly in oil.³ Pastel and tempera studies allowed experiments with tone, translucency and the shifting behaviour of drapery, particularly the delicate fall of the sari that became central to Mazumdar's pictorial language. Only after these questions were resolved

did the artist execute a large oil painting intended for public view.

Mazumdar's recurring portrayals of bathers and draped women exemplify this method with particular clarity.⁴ A typical sequence begins with a modest watercolour on board, where the gesture of the figure and the behaviour of wet cloth are explored with great subtlety. These studies often retain an intimacy absent from the final oil: the palette is softer, flatter and more contemplative. In the completed oil version, the same motif becomes more assertive—light is sharpened, texture heightened and the body's material presence strengthened. Rather than enlarging the study, Mazumdar transforms it, amplifying its sensuous qualities while retaining the compositional structure established earlier. The movement from study to oil reveals how the artist refined drapery, recalibrated posture and redistributed light to achieve the desired emotional resonance.

Similar processes operated in the work of Atul Bose, whose portraits progressed from incisive graphite likenesses to fully modelled oils, and in the practice of Jogesh Chandra Seal, who developed genre scenes and figural compositions through comparable sequences of study and revision. Even when the final oil appears seamless and assured, the imprint of earlier decisions remains embedded: a suppressed contour line beneath glaze, a tonal correction first attempted in pastel, or an adjustment to cloth whose



Hemendranath Mazumdar
Watercolour on Board, 14.5 x 9.25 in



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'After the Bath'
Oil on Canvas, 35.5 x 24.21 in, 1921

origins lie in a watercolour.⁵ Through these iterative procedures, the artists reconciled European academic training with the sensory realities of Bengal – its thick humidity, filtered interior light and subdued domestic spaces – while responding to cultural expectations of modesty, dignity and emotional restraint.

In this light, variation emerges not only as a technical discipline but also as an aesthetic strategy. It enabled realism in Bengal to attain a refinement that was neither imitative nor formulaic. The repetition of a theme across media was not excessive but a pursuit of precision: the exact inflection of gesture, the precise modulation of tone, the delicate equilibrium between sensuality and decorum.⁶ Instead of adopting the symbolic vocabulary of the Bengal School or the contextual modernism later associated with Santiniketan, the Jubilee realists articulated a modernity grounded in observation and controlled affect.

Through this iterative method, Bengal's academic realists transformed the studio into a site of continual re-seeing. Their variations demonstrate how a single idea could be tested, deepened and perfected through sustained attention. The resulting body of work – especially in the case of Mazumdar – embodies a modernism founded not on abrupt innovation but on considered refinement, where each version contributes to the visual intelligence of the final image. Variation, more than any other factor, distinguishes the Jubilee circle within the wider field of Indian realist painting and secures its enduring place in the history of Bengal's visual culture.⁷

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3. Jaya Appasamy *Indian Art and the Academic Realists* (ICCR, 1985), 15–20.
4. Hemen Mazumdar's preparatory studies are discussed in Mrinal Ghosh's, *Tradition of Academic and Representational Art of Bengal*, *Academy of Fine Arts* (1999).
5. Percy Brown, *Indian Painting under the British Raj* (London: Faber, 1939), 147–150.
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Hemendranath Mazumdar
Oil on Canvas, 32 x 22 in

Chapter 9:

DRAPED REALISM AND THE JUBILEE LINEAGE: BENGAL'S ACADEMIC REALIST TRADITION, 1880–1940

The historiography of modern Indian art has often foregrounded the Bengal School and the Santiniketan modernists, positioning them as oppositional forces to colonial academic realism. Yet, a parallel tradition thrived in Bengal through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—rooted in Beaux-Arts principles, but deeply localised in its sensory and psychological register. Often overlooked, this tradition crystallised around the pedagogical and aesthetic ethos of the Jubilee Art Academy, established in 1907 in Calcutta. It fostered an academic realism in which the draped Indian female figure, rendered with tonal restraint and anatomical nuance, became a signature idiom. This lineage did not simply replicate European naturalism but indigenised it—infusing realism with intimacy, dignity, and vernacular emotion.

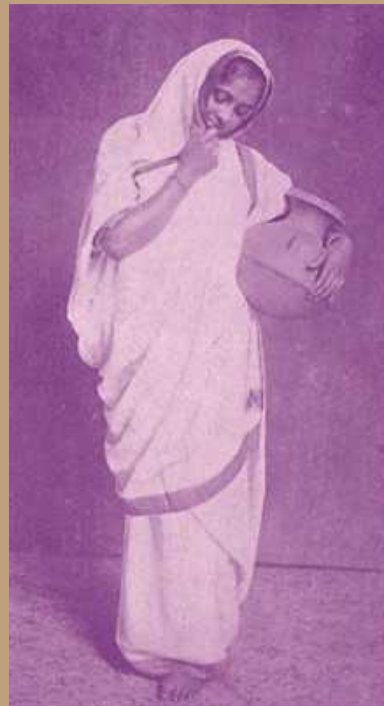
Founded by **Ranada Prasad Gupta**, a progressive industrialist and art patron, the Jubilee Art Academy offered rigorous training in life drawing, anatomy, oil painting, chiaroscuro, and outdoor sketching, much of it conducted in open-air tents on the Calcutta Maidan. The academy emerged as a reaction to E.B. Havell's reforms at the Government School of Art, Calcutta, which prioritized Indo-Persian and Ajanta-inspired decorative stylization. While Havell's Orientalist revivalism catalyzed the Bengal School, it also alienated many students committed to figural representation and realistic modelling. For them, Jubilee offered an alternative rooted in empirical observation and European technique—adapted, however, to local light, climate, and emotion. The

monsoon's refracted glow on brass vessels, the cling of wet muslin against skin, the quietude of twilight domesticity—all became material for this school's aesthetic inquiry.

At the heart of this tradition was **Bhabani Charan Law** (1880–1946), often regarded as one of the earliest and finest exponents of Bengal's draped realism trained privately later joined artist such as Hemendranath Mazumdar and Atul Bose who in 1911 left Government School in protest against colonial demands to decorate triumphal arches for King George V's visit—a symbolic act of resistance that led them to align with the Jubilee Academy's ethos. Law became celebrated for his oil portraits of zamindars and colonial officials, yet his true genius lay in genre scenes—rural women bearing water pots, seated beside temple tanks, or wrapped in red-bordered sarees glistening with humidity. His command of transparent glazes and anatomical foreshortening allowed fabric and flesh to cohere with emotional subtlety. Law's *Seated Young Woman with Water Pot* (private collection, Kolkata) exemplifies this technique, while the now-lost *Temple Scene* (auctioned at Bonhams, 2006) reveals his architectural tonalities. His contributions extended to institution-building: Law got actively involved in the Indian Academy of Fine Arts in 1919 and played a crucial role in Bengal's early realist exhibitions, though he is sometimes mistakenly credited with founding the Academy of Fine Arts, established in 1933 by Lady Ranu Mukherjee. His understated legacy, eclipsed by nationalist and

Selected Plates from the Original Jubilee Lineage Album (c. 1920s–30s)

The following six photographic reproductions have been selectively excerpted from a rare archival album- *Shobha*, associated with the Jubilee Art Academy circle, curated to reflect the sensuous idiom of draped realism that defined Bengal's academic naturalist tradition. These are not full-page facsimiles but a carefully chosen set of six representative images that capture the movement, poise, and tactile expressivity of female figures – often set against aqueous or rural backdrops. Each is imbued with poetic Bengali titles such as *সজল তনু* (*Moist Body*), *আহিরিনী* (*Ahirini*), *ঘাটের পথে* (*On The Way to The Ghat*), *গাগরীয়া* (*Small Earthen Pot*), *সরমে রাঙা* (*Blushing with Shyness*) and *নদীকূলে* (*By the River*) evoking both narrative nuance and pictorial restraint. The photographs, likely staged and composed under the influence of painter B.C. Law, reinforce the aesthetic grammar of wet drapery, diffused light, and introspective feminine posture. Rendered in subdued tonal ranges and tight compositional framing, these images mirror the painterly concerns of the period – particularly the vernacular modernism cultivated in Bengal through institutions like the Jubilee Art Academy and the Indian Academy of Fine Arts. Whether used as studies for paintings or standalone art objects, they bear witness to the intermedial dialogue between photography and realist painting in colonial India.





B.C. Law

সীবন-রতা

শিল্পী - শ্রীযুক্ত ভবানীচরণ নাহা



B.C. Law

“আমার শেষ হল’ কি বেচা-কেনা ?
পারবো কি গো ক্রিতে এবার—চুকিয়ে সবার পাওনা-দেনা ?”

modernist idioms, remains foundational to Bengal's realist continuum.

If Law embodied the sensuous restraint of draped realism, **Hemendranath Mazumdar** (1894–1948) elevated it to public visibility and popularity. A graduate of the Jubilee Academy, Mazumdar fused academic realism with vernacular domesticity in a way that made his works widely resonant. His iconic painting *After the Bath* (c. 1920s), and others of women towelling



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Village Beauty'

themselves or standing at doorways, became widely disseminated through prints and were often mistaken for photographs due to their technical finesse. His brushwork modulated light and cloth to evoke atmosphere—steam, silence, inner thought. Mazumdar's palette was rooted in earth tones—ochres, reds, indigos—mirroring Bengal's physical and emotional landscape. Beyond studio works, he contributed to art education through his leadership in the Academy of Fine Arts and co-founding the Indian Academy of Fine Arts with peers. A charismatic figure, Mazumdar helped bridge elite art circles and the Bengali middle class, sustaining realist idioms well into the 1940s.

Atul Bose (1898–1977), another early defector from the Government School, reinforced the tradition



Atul Bose
'Female Figure'
Conte, 11.5 x 9 in, 1941

through portraiture. Trained in London at the Royal Academy and Slade School, Bose brought classical draughtsmanship and compositional clarity to portraits of national leaders such as Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru. His realism retained a psychological dignity, eschewing flamboyance in favour of introspective stillness. While Bose later held administrative positions in Bengal's art institutions, his early work as a painter rooted in Jubilee's ethos of sincerity, form, and clarity deserves renewed attention. Unlike Mazumdar, his women were seldom eroticised; instead, they carried an air of independence and alert consciousness.

Jogesh Chandra Seal (1895–1926), often marginalised in canonical narratives, contributed a quieter dimension to the movement. Though little archival material survives, contemporary journals reference his works as remarkable for their handling of posture



Jogesh Chandra Seal

and gaze. His best-known painting, *Untitled (Disappointed)* (1919), presents a draped woman in melancholic repose—suggestive of emotional defeat without melodrama. Seal's participation in exhibitions of the Society of Fine Arts (1921) indicates his embeddedness within the realist milieu. His early death at 31 curtailed a promising career, yet his few surviving works offer insight into the introspective dimensions of draped realism—where light becomes an index of thought and loss.



Jogesh Chandra Seal
Oil on Canvas, 48.2 x 26.2 in
1919

Fanindra Nath Bose (1888–1926) carried the academic tradition into sculpture. Trained in Calcutta and later in London, he became the first Indian Associate of the Royal Society of British Sculptors. His practice merged anatomical accuracy with Indian narrative subjects, often drawn from daily life rather than epic mythology. Works such as the bronze Snake Charmer (1919), although not widely accessible today, are documented in art-historical reviews and were praised for their kinetic balance and rhythmic modelling. His Male Bust (possibly Leslie Galloway, c.1908–1926), now in the collection of the Royal Scottish Academy, testifies to his technical confidence and cosmopolitan reach. Bose exemplified how realism extended into three dimensions—maintaining Jubilee’s commitment to form, character, and craft.



Fanindra Nath Bose
'The Snake Charmer'
 Bronze, c.1915
 Collection: Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh

While these figures grounded draped realism in careful observation and sensual restraint, it is crucial to acknowledge the divergent trajectory of **Jamini Roy** (1887–1972), who trained in academic circles akin to Jubilee before rejecting naturalism altogether. Initially influenced by realism through peers like Mazumdar, Roy’s early work included portraits and studies. However, by the 1920s, he had turned towards Kalighat painting, Santhal motifs, and indigenous materials, declaring a stylistic rupture from colonial aesthetics. Roy’s break, however, was not without continuity—his insistence on form, line, and serial repetition echoes Jubilee’s discipline. His trajectory suggests that even within rejection, the academy’s training lingered as structure and measure.



Jamini Roy
'Santhal Lady'
 Oil on Canvas, 34.5 x 22.5 in

Lesser-known practitioners bolstered the tradition. **Basanta Kumar Ganguly** exhibited regularly in early



Basanta Kumar Ganguly
'Three Sisters'
Oil on Canvas, 20.5 x 31.7 in, 1930s

Calcutta shows, while **Satish Chandra Sinha** (1894–1967), a Mazumdar intern at Jubilee, explored rural girlhood and domesticity in oils. Fanindranath Bose



Satish Sinha
Oil on Canvas
20 x 16 1/8 in, 1954

(active 1920s) focused on ornate interiors with shadowed drapery.

The recent rediscovery of **Ananda Mohan Shaha** underscores the lineage's breadth: his *Ashru-Kumva* (1918), featuring a grieving woman beside a tear-filled pot, published in the *Indian Academy* journal in 1920 and reattributed by Aakriti Art Gallery in 2023. Its subdued palette and damp folds affirm Shaha's alignment with Jubilee naturalism.

The deaths of Law and Karmakar in 1946 symbolically closed the first generation, as post-war modernism eclipsed academic realism. Yet this corpus—Mazumdar's atmospheric intimacy, Law's technical poise, Seal's quiet pathos—warrants reevaluation as vernacular modernism. Their draped sari, far from mere motif, posed a technical and cultural challenge: a membrane between the visible world and inner truth, resisting both colonial exoticism and nationalist abstraction. In an era of aesthetic contestation, the Jubilee lineage affirmed perception and sincerity as pathways to indigenised modernity.

By the mid-1940s, the Jubilee tradition had begun to fade. With the deaths of Law in 1946 and earlier Bose in 1926, the first generation of the Jubilee lineage concluded just as new modernist and nationalist idioms were emerging in Indian art. The post-Independence embrace of modernism, abstraction, and nationalism increasingly sidelined realist idioms. Yet the contribution of these artists—Law's poised women, Mazumdar's humid interiors, Bose's dignified sitters, Seal's emotional silhouettes, and Bose's supple bronzes—demands reconsideration. The draped sari, central to their visual lexicon, was not merely a stylistic device. It was a site of cultural negotiation: between realism and restraint, sensuality and sanctity, East and West. In recovering this lineage, we uncover not just a forgotten fold in cloth, but a forgotten fold in history—where realism was not a colonial residue, but a vernacular mode of seeing.

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CHRONOLOGY OF BENGAL'S ACADEMIC REALISM

1854/1864:

Establishment of Calcutta art school (School of Industrial Art, 1854; renamed Government School of Art in 1864) provides the first institutional framework for academic art pedagogy in Bengal.

1886–1905:

Italian academic painter Olinto Ghilardi serves on the Calcutta art school faculty. His European realist training directly shapes the technique of an entire generation, including early lessons imparted to Abanindranath Tagore.

1880s–1890s:

Circulation of Raja Ravi Varma's mythological paintings and oleographs popularises draped female figures and oil realism. Calcutta's patrons and early realists adopt this visual vocabulary.

c.1897:

Abanindranath Tagore receives European academic instruction at the Government School of Art. In the same year, Jubilee Art Academy is founded by Ranadaprasad Gupta as a pro-realist institution resisting the Orientalist reforms introduced by E.B. Havell.

1907:

Formation of the Indian Society of Oriental Art (ISOA) consolidates the modern nationalist aesthetic of the Bengal School.

1910–1915:

Hemendranath Mazumdar joins the Government School (1910) and soon shifts to Jubilee Art School (1911–15). Atul Bose and other young artists also train at Jubilee, defining the idiom of Bengal's academic naturalism.

1911:

The Delhi Coronation Durbar commissions and royal ceremonial decorations in Calcutta involve Jubilee-trained realists, with Hemendranath Mazumdar painting the welcoming gates. The event marks a moment of heightened tension between realist students and the Government School's evolving pedagogy.

1915–1919:

A realist network forms around Jubilee, culminating in a desire for a new exhibiting platform independent of both the Government School and ISOA.

1919:

Founding of the Indian Academy of Art (later also called the Indian Academy of Fine Art, Calcutta) by Hemendranath Mazumdar, Jogeshchandra Seal, Jami-ni Roy, and Atul Bose. The Academy becomes the principal institutional home for Bengal's academic realists.

1920:

The Academy's illustrated periodical publishes its Puja Number, reproducing Ashru-Kumva – later identified as a 1918 work by Ananda Mohan Shaha – marking one of the earliest known realist plates outside the Bengal School canon.

Early–Mid 1920s:

Through Academy exhibitions and the Society of Fine Arts, realist oil painters gain prominence. Bathers, draped women, and meticulously rendered mythological figures dominate the decade.

1921 onwards:

Establishment of Shilpi, a major art periodical associated with Hemendranath Mazumdar and the Academy. Shilpi becomes the primary textual platform consolidating the realist movement during the late 1920s and 1930s.

1930s:

Realism continues through figures such as Bhabani Charan Law, even as Santiniketan's contextual modernism under Nandalal Bose emerges as the dominant critical narrative in Bengal's art world.

1935–1940:

Academic realism's institutional influence declines sharply; the aesthetic and ideological authority of Santiniketan and ISOA reshapes the canon of Indian modern art.

Post-1940s:

Academic realism becomes marginal in standard histories until its gradual revival by art historians (e.g., Partha Mitter) and contemporary exhibitions. A key moment in this renaissance is the rediscovery and publication of Ananda Mohan Shaha's Ashru-Kumva by Aakriti Art Gallery (2023).

Chapter 10:

REFLECTIONS & RESPONSES:
ON REDISCOVERING ANANDA MOHAN SHAHA



In Vacant or Pensive Mood: Reclaiming Ananda Mohan Shaha's Lost Masterpiece

Uma Nair

Curator, Bengal Beyond Boundaries (2023)



Uma Nair at Bikaner House, New Delhi

At first sight, hanging on the wall in Vikram Bachhawat's historic office, Ananda Mohan Shaha's Ashru-Kumva seemed to depict a softly seductive subject, while it also had a relatively haunting air of yesteryear's nostalgia. And yet, it often felt as if it sat in silence over Bachhawat's prodigious collection of paintings at Aakriti Art Gallery.

Charisma and Elusiveness

The translucent sari, the glistening bajuband on her right hand, and the little round-bottomed brass pot—each element seemed to hold its own story. But why was this painting so special? There was a surety of touch in the image that was wholly irresistible. Shaha's command of the brush, loaded with just the right amount of paint, was staggeringly assured. Hidden beneath the sari, the exquisite gold-polished oddiyanam (South Indian bridal waist belt) is a stunning blend of tradition and elegance.

This handcrafted piece adds a regal touch to the portrait and tells us she is a lady of rank—an essential accessory for brides and women who loved classic Indian fashion.

Part of the attraction lies in the unassuming subject matter, which is both charismatic and evocative: this is not just a woman seated with a pot, but a subject whose posture and gaze hold an erotic yet elusive aura, stirring the human imagination.

Fictional as well as Realist Fantasy

There can be little doubt that Shaha deliberately imbued his subject with qualities of fictional as well as realist fantasy. He invites the human gaze in such a way that we imagine his subject as a woman of grace and gorgeous gravitas.

Perhaps the most convincing interpretation is that Shaha painted her as a retelling of a sublime story

in *solitaire*. One can't say this is a society portrait of a wealthy patron, but it reminds us of portraits by Rembrandt—drawn with refined materials—suggesting the high value of the image. It also recalls the traditions of Indian Mughal portraiture where attributes and profiles were carefully constructed to depict rank and status. However, when extended to women, the depiction often reflected the male gaze, observing beauty and adornments with intricate care.

Shaha presents his subject as an idealized “type” in profile, while establishing an archetype of voluptuous beauty and internalized grace. The isolated portrayal serves not merely as an individual but as a universal representation of private emotional experience.

Soft-Angled Seduction

The folds of the thinly draped sari add to a moment of soft-angled seduction. While the painting's subject and subtle eroticism clearly speak to the imagination, this is only a fragment of its attraction. Scholars have often said that in singular portraits of women, beauty ultimately derives not just from what is depicted but how it is depicted.

Shaha has a surety of touch—his brush loaded with just enough paint, a statement of remarkable economy. The woman veiled in gauzy material, her bare breasts delicately suggested, her posture framed in luminous, rhythmic lines, reveals Shaha's silent, persuasive technique.

Her luxurious adornments—bangles, earrings, hair ornaments—allude to affluence and grace. Her thin,

precise facial lines and the gentle waves of her hair are crafted with a delicate wash effect. Everything accrues to a sense of dignity and poetry rather than mere ostentation.

Shaha's brushwork achieves a masterful illusion: the soft drape of the sari clinging to and flowing from her torso, created by deft, quick flicks of pale grey and thin gold. The fall of the garment from waist to floor creates a lyrical, vertical silhouette, restructuring the mood into a poetic, gentle sensuality.

A Portrait of Solitude

This solitary figure exhibits a timeless focus on human experience. Its feminine conciseness and single-subject focus align it with the Romantic ideals of emotional introspection and reverie. Her solitude echoes Wordsworth's lines: “In vacant or in pensive mood, which is the bliss of solitude.”

Shaha recreates a full-bodied feminine form, enhanced by the sari and jewels, and gives the viewer an indelible image of tender introspection. At Bengal Beyond Boundaries at Bikaner House in 2023, this painting—then exhibited anonymously—captivated audiences, including luminaries like filmmaker and artist Muzaffar Ali, G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant, and Design Guru Sunil Sethi.

Today, with the rediscovery of its creator, Ananda Mohan Shaha, *Ashru-Kumva* reclaims its rightful place in the canon of Indian art—a testament to beauty, memory, and the silent eloquence of a forgotten master.

Emergence of Modernity: Bengal's Academic Naturalist Tradition In Its Broader Context

Mrinal Ghosh

Art Historian, Critic and Curator

During the hundred years that elapsed between the battle of Plassey of 1757 and the first war of independence, demarcated by the British as 'Sepoy Mutiny' of 1857, Bengal moved from medieval to modern period. But this elevation could be materialized at the expense of total annihilation of Bengal's economy and indigenous industry. The historian R.C. Dutta wrote in his *Economic History of India*: "So great an economic drain out of resources of a land would impoverish the most prosperous country's life. It was reduced to a land of famines very frequent and more widespread and more fatal than any nation before in the history of India or of the world."

This drainage of wealth of Bengal was one of the factors that helped to develop industrial revolution in England. So the history of emergence of modernity in Bengal is the history of unprecedented exploitation. The field of art was also not out of such swindling. In both cases modernity emerged out of the ruin.

The 'permanent settlement' introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 created a brand of landlords or Zaminder class. They could accumulate money from land revenue, also through other types of business with the British companies. Thus a class of nouveau rich people was created, who were attracted to the British culture. Interest in visual arts also emerged. Like the English aristocracy many of them were interested to learn the European technique of painting. The necessity for art teaching thus sprang up. Advertisements came up in newspapers where interested art teachers wanted tuition for art teaching. In the year 1775 'Calcutta Gazette' published such an announcement where some Mr. Hone expressed his desire to teach drawing and painting to interested persons.

Out of such necessity a privately organized art institution came up in Calcutta in March 1839. Its name was 'Mechanics Institute'. It was the first such endeavor in Calcutta, but not in India. The first western type art school in India was, however, opened at Poona in 1798 by a British resident Charles Mallet. Run by an artist James Wales it was very short lived.

The proposal for formation of 'Mechanics Institute' was taken at a meeting at Calcutta Town Hall on 26 February 1839. Frederick Corbyn, the famous editor of 'Indian Review', a monthly journal, was the principal organizer. Sir John Peter Grant was nominated as Chairman; Vice-Chairman was Reverend T. Bowas and Dr. Frederic Corbyn. George Grant and Colsworthy Grant were nominated as Secretary. There were twenty three honorable persons, British and Bengali, in the committee. The famous Tarapada Chakraborty, the first Secretary of Brahma Samaj (a special religious sect who believed in one God, named as Brahma) was one of them. The classes of this Institution were first held at Town Hall. Its rent was high. So the venue was changed. To find a permanent space an old house at the eastern side of Government House was repaired. When the institution was shifted there, Colsworthy Grant took drawing class for two days in a week. But the Institution did not last long.

The Mechanics Institute raised much enthusiasm among the educated people of Calcutta. They were very much disheartened due to its quick demise, which was due to financial problems. This urge of the sophisticated people and the necessity felt by the British Authority to produce some artist craftsmen were the cause formation of art education institution.

After this first venture the 'School of Industrial Art'

was opened on 16 August 1854 at Garanhata, Chitpur area of Calcutta as a private enterprise. M. Rigaud, a noted artist was assigned the responsibility to teach clay modeling in honorary capacity. M. Agyer was appointed teacher in painting. At the beginning there were 45 students in clay modelling and 45 in painting. In the middle of November 1854 the school was removed from that site to the building of Motilal Seal at Calootola. The school was managed by a committee of the 'Society for the promotion of Industrial Art'. They organized an exhibition of the students from 22 January to 3 February, the first of the kind in Calcutta.

T.F. Fowler came from England and joined as teacher of Engraving, Etching and Lithography in February 1855. A Govt grant of Rs 600/- was issued from July 1856. Another fund of Rs 7500/- was provided from Peel Testimonial Committee to award three monthly Peel scholarship of Rs 8/- each out of its interest to the best of the students. At the outbreak of Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 the Govt monthly grant was reduced from 600 to 350. The grant was, however restored in late 1858. Mr. Garick joined as Head Teacher after release of M. Rigaud in August 1859. By 1862-63 the following subjects were taught: (i) Ornamental and figure drawing, (ii) Wood Engraving, (iii) Lithography, (iv) Painting in oil, (v) Modelling and Plaster casting, (vi) Pottery, (vii) Photography.

The school was suffering from dearth of fund. The committee requested the Govt either to increase the fund or to take full responsibility of the school. The Government took initiative. They invited Mr. Henry Hover Locke (1837-85) to take charge of the school. Locke was an educationist based in London. Locke came to Calcutta and took over the charge on 29 June 1864 as Principal. The school came under the control and supervision of the Director of Public Instruction. The previous name of the school was retained for some time. The name of changed to Government School of Art in 1865. Locke took full command of the school and its pedagogic method was improved. Total 12 subjects including Photography were introduced for studies.

In 1876 an Art Gallery was introduced to the school by the cordial support of the Viceroy Lord Northbrook. The gallery was housed in 164 and 165 Bowbazar Street. The classes of the school were carried out in 166, Bowbazar Street. The Govt sanctioned an annual grant of Rs 10000/- to purchase art objects for the gallery. Bhagabati Charan Mallick donated Rs 500/-. With this fund famous pictures were purchased from Europe in original and also in copy. The art gallery added to the fame and popularity of the school.

In February 1892 due to deterioration of the building of the school at Bowbazar, the school was shifted to a site on Chowringhee Road adjacent to Indian Museum. The Govt took initiative to build a new building for the school. A new building was constructed for the art gallery also. The art gallery was finally reopened on 29 January 1895 in the new site. Number of art objects in the new gallery was like this: oil paintings 83, water-colour paintings 96. engravings 18, chromolithographs 51, chalk and pencil drawings 20, photographs and other works 96. Most of the pictures were purchased from England.

The Art School entered a new phase in 1896. So far the mode of teaching here was based on the academic naturalist technique of Kensington School. The system was questioned and new indigenous trend was introduced. Ernest Binfield Havell (1861-1934) joined the school as Superintendent on 6 July 1896. Before coming here he served at the Madras School of Art as Superintendent for about a decade from 1884. He introduced some significant changes in the curriculum of art studies of Government Art School, Calcutta that instituted a far reaching effect in the development of modernity of the art of Bengal.

The curriculum of art school was divided in two divisions: industrial art and fine art. The industrial art included studying in advanced design, architectural and mechanical design, lithography, wood engraving and modeling. In fine art section the students were taught drawing and painting from life studies, still life etc and sculpture. Havell put strong empha-

sis on Indian style of art instead of European. He felt there could be no art education unless it was based on the cultural heritage of the learner. The government authority did not interfere with Havell's decision. In oriental division all students were to be instructed in oriental design.

The decision of Havell raised protest among a section of students. They thought that they were being deprived of learning the scientific method of drawing and painting. In protest the students went on strike. **Ranadaprasad Gupta** (1870-1927) was the leader of the protesting students. In retaliation the art school authority expelled him. He was a third year student then. He came out of the school and formed a new



Ranada Prasad Gupta
'A Nude Study'
 Watercolour on Paper Pasted on Cardboard
 1900

school, where British naturalist technique could be taught. He was the teacher. The name of the school was 'Jubilee Art Academy'.

The 'Indian School of Art' was founded by Manmathanath Chakraborty (1866-1932). He was a famous photographer and painter. He formed 'Bharatiya Shilpa Samity' in 1893. 'Indian School of Art' was the development of this institution. Therefore the school is often taken to be established in 1893. In chronological order Indian School of Art was the fourth of such institution in Calcutta. The first being 'Mechanics Institute', the second 'School of Industrial Art' or 'Government School of Art', the third 'Jubilee Art Academy' and the fourth 'Indian School of Art'. The students trained in these four institutions became proficient in academic naturalist style, and through their practice it turned to be a major form of expression in the development of modernity of the art of Bengal. During the second half of 19th century academic naturalism was the only mode of expression of modern art of Bengal. From the beginning of 20th century an indigenous form of expression emerged known as 'neo-Indian school' pioneered by Abanindranath Tagore and expanded by his disciples and followers like Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, Kshitindranath Mazumdar and many others.

But the practice of academic naturalism did not subside. Till now it is one of the major modes of expression of modernity and modernism. It has, no doubt, enhanced the strength and glory of our artistic heritage. But only a few artists, who have worked during the second half of 19th century and first half of 20th, have come to the lime light. Many of the artists' life have remained unsung. This is a lacuna in our art historiography. Ananda Mohan Shaha was such an artist. Only one of his paintings titled 'Ashru Kumbha' (meaning Pitcher full of Tears) that was published in the journal 'Indian Academy of Arts' in 1920 has been found out that reveals his very sensitive adroitness in naturalist rendering. Through immaculate portraiture of a beautiful young lady he connected contemporary visual reality with the Vaishnava myth. His skill and sensitivity goes parallel to that of Hemen-

dranath Mazumdar (1894–1948). Yet we allowed him to immerse in the oblivion. This is the problem of our artistic historiography.

We may now remember some of the academic naturalist artists, who have made their glorious contribution in the field of our modernity.

Before we come to the artists of Bengal, we should mention the name of Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906). He was not an artist from Bengal. Yet we intend to look into his artistic achievement due to the fact that he was one of the most successful painters during 19th century in naturalistic style and he extended great influence on the art and society of Bengal. Even the poet Rabindranath was once moved by his paintings.

Among the most important painters of Bengal practicing in academic naturalist style **Annada Prasad**



Annada Prasad Bagchi
'Woman with Lamp'
Pen and Ink on Paper, 1900

Bagchi (1849-1905) was one of the early generation artists coming out of Government Art School, Calcutta. He was admitted to the art school on 13 July 1865. He earned proficiency in wood engraving, lithography and other engraving techniques and finally learnt oil painting under Principal Locke. He earned fame for illustration of the famous book *The Antiquities of Orissa* by Dr. Rajendralal Mitra, which he did during 1868-69. He was a skilled portrait painter in oil.

Shyamacharn Srimani (?-1875) was a student of Government Art School when H.H. Locke was Principal. Srimani was an expert in wood engraving and lithography. In 1869 he was appointed as a teacher of geometrical drawing by Mr. Locke in the same art school. Apart from his proficiency in naturalist style of painting he was more famous for his contribution in the writing of art history. He tried to awaken awareness about greatness of Indian art heritage. His book on Indian art theory titled *Sukumar Shilper Utpatti O Aryajatir Shilpachaturi* (The emergence of fine arts and aesthetic sensibilities of the Aryans) published in 1874 was the first attempt in serious art writing in Bengali language.

Bamapada Banerjee (1851-1932) was born in the village Satgachia of district Bardhaman on 6 March 1851. His father was Haranath. He took his early education from Bhubanchandra Bandyopadhyay High English School at Sridharpur and Janai Training School at Hoogli. After finishing school education he got admitted in Government Art School, when H.H. Locke was Principal. Later he took further training in oil painting to Pramathalal Mitra and learnt restoration of old paintings from the German artist Carl J Beker. He was famous not only in portrait painting but also for his paintings done on mythological themes in academic naturalist style.

Shashikumar Hesh (1869-?) was born in the Maimansingha district of previous East Bengal. He took his initial school education from Maimansingha City School. Due to poverty he had to abandon education to take a job of teaching in village primary



Bamapada Banerjee
'Vishnu as Seshashayee with Seshnag in the form of OM'
 Oil on Canvas, 1900

school at a salary of Rs 12/-. He had strong inclination for painting since childhood. This induced him to leave his job to get admitted to the Government Art School at Calcutta, when Henry Jobbins was the Principal and passed out successfully. In 1894 he went to Italy at the advice of Olinto Ghilardi, the Vice Principal of art school and was trained in Royal Academy of Rome. After that he also received training at the Munich Royal Academy. Then he stayed in Paris and went to London in 1899. Hesh was famous as a portrait painter.

Jamini Prakash Gangooly (1876-1953), popularly famous as J.P. Gangooly was renowned as an oil painter in naturalist style, both in portrait and landscape painting. He was born on 3 November 1876 at Jorasanko Tagore house of Calcutta. He was related to Tagore family of Jorasanko and was intimately related to Abanindranath and Rabindranath. Like Abanin-



Shashi Hesh
'Female Nude'

dranath he also had his initial training in painting under Olinto Ghilardi (1849-1930) and Charles Palmer (1906-1987). His early school education was in Metropolitan Institution, City Collegiate School and St. Xaviers School. He learnt painting from Gangadhar Dey at home. Later he was influenced by the European artists Lord Frederic Leighton, Sir Edward John Poynter, and Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema and wholeheartedly accepted academic style as the means of his expression.

Bhabani Charan Law (1880-1946) assimilated naturalism with some sort of Indian sensibility. Apart from portrait and landscape painting in water colour and oil, he also worked on various mythological subjects based on Ramayana, Mahabharata and other literarily themes. He was associated with a number of art institutions and organizations. He was vice-president of 'Indian Academy of Art', Calcutta and 'Indi-

an Institute of Art and Industry'. He was the founder secretary of 'Society of Fine Arts' (1921).

Many painters trained in 'Jubilee Art Academy' attained fame as celebrated artists between 1920-s and '40-s. Among them some of the important names are Narendranath Sarkar (1881-1943), Fanindra Nath Bose (1888-1926), Jogendranath Shil (1895-1926), Atul Bose (1898-1977). Basanata Kumar Ganguly (1893-1968), Hemendranath Mazumdar (1894-1948), Prathamath Mallick (1894-1983), Abhaycharan Das (1886-1956) and Prahlad Chandra Karmakar (1900-1946). Jamini Roy (1887-1972), a student of Government Art School, in his early works showed great skill in naturalism. He gradually shifted to popular and folk idioms.

Among the renowned sculptors of naturalist school some of the important figures are Jadunath Pal (1821-1920), Rohinikanta Nag (1868-1895), Ashwini Kumar Barman Roy (1882 -), Hiranmoy Roy Chowdhury (1884-1962), Narayan Kashinath Deval (1894 -), Gopeshwar Pal (1894-1944), Priyonath Mallick (1894-1983), and above all Debiprasad Roychowdhury (1899-1975).

The trends of practice in naturalism turned to be a part of modern and modernist art practices. The artists of 1940s tried to avoid academic naturalism as a protest against its colonial root. They tried to assimilate the Western modernist development from Impressionism, Post-impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism etc along with the indigenous popular idioms. Yet naturalist practices were at the root of some of the artists like Paritosh Sen, Gobardhan Ash and some others. Many of the artists of 1950s and 1960s and later generations based their expression of rebellion on immaculate naturalism, finally distorting it towards various kinds of fantasy through assimilation Western modernist forms. Bikash Bhattacharjee (1940-2006) is a very significant example. He was a very immaculate portrait painter in naturalist style. Sunil Das (1939-2015), Jogen Chowdhury (1939), Shubhprasanna Bhattacharya (1947) and Wasim Kapoor (1921-2022) are best examples to have an idea



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Woman with Pitcher'
Oil on Canvas, 1921

how naturalist practice is still working to the root of contemporary practices of Bengal art.

Now let us look back again towards 19th and early 20th century to have some idea of how various artists were associated with the practice of naturalism. In this context some information is available in the book by Tapati Guha Thakurta 'Making of a 'New'

Indian Art'. The first Fine Art exhibition in Calcutta was organized by 'Brush Club' in February 1931. No Indian artist participated in it. Similar was the case in another exhibition of 1854-55 held at Town Hall, Calcutta. Not a single Bengali artist was included there too. The first example of participation of Indian and Bengali artist was in the exhibition held in December 1874 at New Imperial Museum. Most of them were students of Calcutta and Bombay school of art. Apart from Annada Prasad Bagchi, Harish Chandra Khan and Girish Chandra Chatterjee were listed among the participants. But the further activities of the last two are not known. In the exhibition held at the premise of Government Art School in January 1879 participation of Bengali artists was significantly high. The name of Motilal Pal appears there, 'who was outside the realm of the School of Art'. His name was also immersed in oblivion in later period.

Guha Thakurta mentions of Jatindra Mohan Tagore, who included in his collection the works of Girish Chandra Chatterjee, Harish Chandra Khan apart from Bamapada Banerjee and Jamini Prakash Ganguli. The names of the first two artists have been lost in later period. There were many artists, who came up from sophisticated families and were trained in Art School in naturalist style. Soutindra Mohan Tagore (1865-1898), who belonged to the Pathuriaghata branch of the Tagore family, was the first painter to have studied at the Royal Academy. There were other such persons also, such as Jaladhi Chandra Mukherjee, Debendra Mallick (1835-1894), Dinendra Mallick (1895-1968); from Jorasanko Tagore family such important persons like Girindranath Tagore, Gunendranath Tagore, Hitendranath Tagore, Jyotirindranath Tagore were trained in naturalist school. They were non-commercial. Jyotirindranath has come up as a very important portrait painter, appreciated by the British artist Rothenstein. At the initial level Rabindranath was influenced by his drawing. Abanindranath Tagore himself was trained in naturalist form during his early part of his life.

The influence of naturalism then percolated to the Print medium also. In Calcutta Art Studio such art-

ists, who were students of Calcutta School of Art like Nobokumar Biswas, Phanibhushan Sen, Krishna Chandra Pal, Jogendranath Mukherjee apart from Annada Prasad Bagchi showed their proficiency in portraiture. Among other artists, students of Art School, who showed their excellence in the sphere of printing and commercial art there were Kalidas Pal, Biharilal Roy, Sarat Chandra Deb, Gopal Chandra Chakraborty, Girindra Kumar Dutta (1841-1908), Trailokyanath Deb (1847-1928), Priyogopal Das (1870-1928), who made engravings of Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumder's illustrations of his book 'Thakurmar Jhuli', Krishna Hari Das, Harinarayan Bose, Harish Chandra Haldar, Girindra Kumar Dutta and others. Here we find how the field of naturalist practices expanded in different directions.

Next comes illustrations in periodicals and literary journals. 'Shilpa Pushpanjali' was the first art journal in Bengali published in 1885. Then came literary journals one after another: 'Pradip' (1897), 'Prabasi' (1901), 'Modern Review' (1907) all edited by Ramananda Chatterjee, 'Manasi O Marmabani' (1907) edited by Prabhat Mukherjee, 'Bharatbarsha' (1913) edited by Dwijendralal Roy etc. All these journals required illustrators. In the illustrations at that time naturalist forms were extensively used. Partha Mitter discussed in details on this aspect in his book 'Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922'.

Upendrakishore Roychowdhury (1863-1915) was a very important figure in the field of literature, art and printing technology. He was a very proficient artist in naturalist style. He was mostly famous for his innovations in printing and transfer of images. He had great contribution in the field of illustration in journals. The painters like Jaladhar Sen, Charuchandra Roy, Apurba Krishna Ghosh, Binoy Ghosh, Chanchal Bandopadhyay made considerable contribution in the field. In this way the naturalist trend of modern art in Bengal made deep impact in the different fields of creativity. Many artists were attached to it, among them only a few have come to limelight. Most are in oblivion. It is better if our historiography can document about these forgotten artists.

Draped in Light and Memory: The Wet Sari Motif in Indian Academic Realism - Bengal & Beyond

Vikram Bachhawat

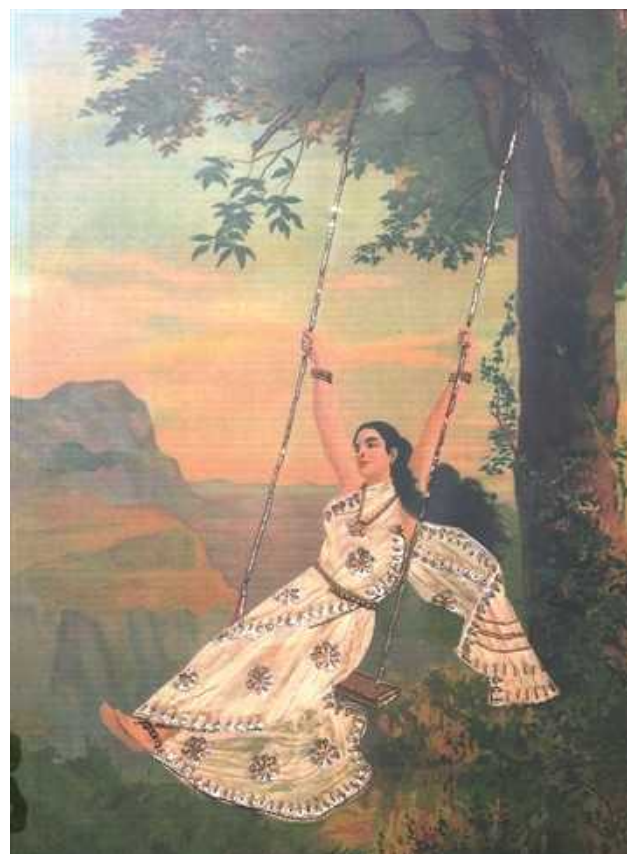
Art Researcher, Collector, and Founder-Director, Aakriti Art Gallery

The rediscovery of Ashru-Kumva by Ananda Mohan Shaha has drawn renewed attention to a genre of academic realist painting in India that centered on the female figure draped in a translucent, often wet sari. While Bengal is often credited as the primary site for the development of this motif—largely through the works of Hemendranath Mazumdar and

his peers—the theme had broader resonance across Indian academic painting circles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This essay seeks to place the motif within a wider art historical framework by tracing its appearance in the works of academic painters beyond Bengal, thereby situating Ashru-Kumva within a larger pan-Indian visual tradition.



M.V. Dhurandhar
'Girl Carrying a Matka'
10.2 x 6.8 in, Pencil on Paper



Raja Ravi Varma
'Mohini'
Oleograph, 20 x 14 in



M.V. Dhurandhar
'Mohini Bhaskasura - II'
 Oil on Canvas

Bhaskasura (1899), while mythological in subject, reflects the influence of Raja Ravi Varma's earlier interpretations of Mohini as a seductress cloaked in translucent white drapery. Indeed, an early 20th-century reviewer remarked that the popular image of Mohini "with her diaphanous white sari and lustrous black mane" was indebted to Varma, establishing a visual template against which others like Dhurandhar were inevitably compared. Dhurandhar's own paintings and illustrations—particularly those featuring women at Chowpatty Beach, at ghats, or in the monsoon—extend the aesthetic language of sensual modesty,

In Western India, particularly in Bombay, the artist M.V. Dhurandhar (1867–1944), a prominent graduate and later principal of the Sir J.J. School of Art, became widely known for his depictions of women in a variety of roles and environments. Dhurandhar's oeuvre—spanning academic canvases, lithographs, and early cinematic posters—demonstrated a consistent engagement with feminine grace, modesty, and allure. His Mohini



Atul Bose
 Pencil on Paper, 8 x 5.5 in, 1939

employing the wet sari as a vehicle for both realism and romance.

Back in Bengal, Mazumdar's circle included artists such as Atul Bose (1898–1977), a co-founder of the Indian Academy of Art and a painter known primarily for his society portraits. However, Bose also



Jogesh Chander Seal
'Lady Lighting a Diya'
Oil on Canvas, 28 x 21 in

produced figural works that revealed a shared academic concern with the interplay of light, drapery, and skin. His painting *Moonlight* (date unknown), for instance, shows a woman on a terrace drying her hair in the gentle moonlight, her thin sari rendered with sensitivity to both texture and emotion. Though less explicit than Mazumdar's bathers, Bose's female studies evoke the same poetics of fabric and flesh within domestic or solitary moments.

The case of Ananda Mohan Shaha (also spelled Saha) introduces an important, if largely forgotten, practitioner of this idiom. Shaha's *Ashru-Kumva* (1918), recently attributed and restored, presents a woman seated alone with a brass pitcher—her posture downcast, her sari damp, her surroundings suffused with melancholy. The title, which translates to "*Urn of Tears*," and the overall mood of the painting suggest an allegorical or devotional tone. Its stylistic execution—in terms of anatomical precision, treatment of drapery, and subdued tonality—places it squarely within the academic realist tradition of early 20th-century Bengal. Although no other known works by Shaha have been documented in institutional or private collections, this painting aligns him with a generation of Indian artists who adopted European realist techniques while maintaining cultural specificity in terms of dress, emotion, and setting.

Elsewhere in India, particularly in the southern regions, the wet sari motif was more episodic but nonetheless present. Following Ravi Varma's influential portrayals of goddesses, apsaras, and mythological heroines, artists and lithographers in Kerala and Tamil Nadu produced works—especially for the calendar art industry—that included bathing scenes or

divine women draped in clinging saris. These images circulated widely, further embedding the motif into the visual imagination of the public. While these iterations often lacked the painterly refinement of oil on canvas, they extended the reach of the theme into popular culture and mass reproduction, continuing the legacy initiated by Varma and adapted by academic realists across the subcontinent.

Across these regional expressions, several thematic constants emerge. First, the female subject remains central, with male figures either absent or peripheral. The wet sari serves as a symbolic medium—both revealing and concealing—allowing the artist to explore sensuality without violating cultural norms. Secondly, the motif embodies a synthesis of Western artistic technique and Indian subjectivity. It is precisely this fusion that enabled Indian academic painters to craft a visual language that was technically on par with European art but unmistakably rooted in indigenous cultural codes.

Finally, the rediscovery of Shaha's *Ashru-Kumva* offers a critical reminder of the gaps and silences in art historical memory. While figures like Varma, Dhurandhar, and Mazumdar remain canonized, lesser-known contributors such as Shaha represent the submerged strata of Indian visual culture. Their works, when recovered, not only enrich the narrative but challenge the exclusivity of established lineages. As such, *Ashru-Kumva* stands not only as a singular artistic achievement but as a conduit through which the broader contours of Indian academic realism—across geography and generations—can be more fully understood.

The Waiting Maiden

Soujit Das

Art Historian (Ph. D)

The painting *Ashru-Kumva*, created in 1918 by Ananda Mohan Shaha and published shortly thereafter, stages an encounter with a deeply unsettling emotion. The viewer is invited to engage in a nocturnal scene where a lone woman awaits her lover. The setting is indeterminate, more psychic than geographic, though it loosely evokes the contours of a mythic grove. Is it the *Kunjavan* where Radha waited for Krishna? What emerges is not a scene of narrative action but a crystallisation of a mood. The woman is no named figure from scripture, yet she unmistakably gestures toward an archetype—the yearning heroine, shaped by a long lineage of poetic and painterly conventions that suddenly became relevant in the larger artistic milieu of early 20th century Bengal. She was rendered here not as myth but as an acquaintance, stripped of iconographic clarity.

The painting evokes a melancholic intensity not through overt drama but through the slow saturation of detail—the shimmer of the fabric, the stillness of her limbs, the hush of moonlight over her form. One cannot help but recall Dürer's *Melencolia I* in this context—not for its visual parallels but for its existential tone. Like Dürer's enigmatic winged figure, Shaha's protagonist sits immersed in a private world, touched by something unknowable and outside of time. Her expression—holds an ineffable presence, suggesting not just grief but a kind of interior vastness. The melancholia here is not pathological but poetic. Melancholia, as it manifests here, is not simply sorrow or grief, but a condition of being caught between presence and absence, between what is longed

ভারতবর্ষ



“কলসী গয়ে কংখে

পথ সে বীকা”

—রবীন্দ্রনাথ

শিল্পকলায় আত্মপ্রকাশের ক্ষেত্রে শ্রীমতী শাহা আনন্দমোহন শাহা

[শ্রীমতী শাহা আনন্দমোহন শাহা

Emerald Printers No. 11
CALCUTTA

Arya Kumar Chowdhury

'Woman with a Pitcher Hand'

Published in Bharatbarsa Magazine, 1919

for and what cannot return. It is not loss that wounds but the suspension of its resolution. In her hand, she holds a water pitcher – at once banal but at closer observation reveals as a potent symbolic element. The pitcher, commonly used in Indian miniature painting as a visual emblem of feminine desire or longing, especially in depictions of the Ashta-Nayika, serves in this image less as a romantic token than as a vessel of withheld emotion. Through this, Shaha revived a classical motif found in treatises such as the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Sāhitya Darpana* or *Rasikapriya*, reinterpreting it for his early 20th-century audience. His peers, painters like Hemendranath Mazumdar, too, frequently employed such visual trope, often layering it with erotic suggestion as the male gaze actively gets into action. In Mazumdar’s work, the wet drapery became a site of visual seduction, a means to hint at the female body while maintaining a veil of modesty. Shaha, while invoking this tradition, rendered it with restraint and subtlety. In *Ashru-Kumva*, the character does not confront the viewer; the woman does not invite a gaze, nor does she perform her sorrow. Instead, her averted eyes and slumped posture creates a quiet dialogue with the natural world around her. Her ‘presencing’ makes visible an emotion that is deeply internal yet palpably real. One is reminded that melancholia does not simply mourn the past – it suspends it, returning again and again to the same moment, not to resolve it but to dwell within its incompleteness.

This dwelling is spatialised in the painting itself, which offers no pathway forward or out. The protagonist’s refusal to meet the viewer’s eye seals off her world. She is a subject arrested within it engaged in



Albrecht Dürer
 'Melancholia - I'
 Engraving
 1514

a soliloquy. There is a tension between the luminous sensuality of her body and the emotional opacity of her gaze – a disjunction that refuses closure. It is this unresolved space that melancholia occupies: a structure of feeling that clings to what cannot be retrieved, turning time itself into a kind of weight. The night in the painting is existential rather than atmospheric. It

enfolds the figure in silence, and in doing so, materialises an inwardness that cannot be externalised, only shared across distance by the viewer's quiet recognition of it. What emerges, then, is not simply a study in longing but a meditation on the aesthetic condition of melancholia itself. The viewer, caught between the act of looking and the impossibility of reciprocation, finds themselves in the same position as the painting's subject: suspended, waiting, contemplating a desire without an object. This is not voyeurism but a kind of shared solitude, a pact of looking that acknowledges the limits of what can be known or felt. Its beauty lies in precisely in that refusal – to resolve, to explain, to comfort.

As one views *Ashru-Kumva* today, one is also expected to engage with the melancholy condition of art itself – its capacity to carry forward the emotional sediment of another time. The painting's rediscovery after decades demands the broader search for fragments, the recovery of the overlooked, the care for what has fallen out of view. Art, in this sense, does not preserve time; it reminds us of its erosion. And yet, in this erosion lies the strange power of melancholia as a form of knowledge. The painting does not speak, but it listens. And in its silence, it tells us something about the ways longing continues, unspoken but felt, withheld but present. Just as the pitcher may cease to pour, the painting may never be able to be decoded. But its stillness lingers, and in that lingering, it claims a kind of afterlife.



Frederick William Alexander
*'Bengali Woman in White Sari
Descending from a Steps of a Well'*
Watercolor, Late 19th c, Victoria & Albert

Ananda Mohan Shaha and The Academic Realist Tradition in Early 20th-Century Bengal

Debdutta Gupta
Art Historian and Curator

Ananda Mohan Shaha (fl. c. 1910s–1920s), a master absent from standard art-historical biographies, has been reintroduced to the scholarly canon through his signed oil painting *Ashru-Kumva* (1918), inscribed “Ananda Mohan Shaha, 1918” (Bengal Beyond Boundaries, 2023). Limited documentation exists regarding Shaha’s training, yet his technical proficiency in oil painting, anatomical accuracy, and compositional clarity suggests instruction in European academic realism, likely at the Government School of Art, Calcutta. His oeuvre aligns with that of contemporaries such as Hemendranath Mazumdar, Atul Bose, and B.C. Law, who practiced figurative realism during a period when Bengal’s art world was dominated by revivalist ideologies (Partha Mitter, 1994).

In the early 20th century, the Bengal School, led by Abanindranath Tagore, promoted a nationalist revivalist aesthetic rooted in the Swadeshi movement. This school rejected Western academic naturalism, associated with colonial influence, in favor of indigenous techniques derived from Mughal, Rajput, and Japanese traditions (Guha-Thakurta, 1992). Its exponents prioritized spiritual and mythological themes, rendered in stylized forms, over the naturalistic oil painting taught in colonial art schools. Conversely, Shaha and his realist colleagues embraced European academic techniques to depict Indian subjects, asserting that realism could convey cultural authenticity with equal validity. Their work contributed to a cosmopolitan strand of Indian modernism, running parallel to the revivalist narrative but often marginalized in subsequent historiography (Dalmia, 2001).

This ideological divide prompted institutional responses. In 1919, academic realists, including Mazumdar and likely Shaha, established the Indian

Academy of Art in Calcutta to challenge the Bengal School’s dominance, institutionalized through the Indian Society of Oriental Art and its journal *Rupam* (Kapur, 2000). The Academy’s Indian Academy of Art Journal provided a platform for realist artists across India, featuring works from Bengal, Bombay, Madras, and Lahore. *Ashru-Kumva* was published in the journal’s 1920 Puja annual alongside paintings by Mazumdar, M.A.R. Chughtai, and D.P. Roy Choudhury, situating Shaha within a broader realist counter-movement that asserted academic realism as a legitimate mode of Indian artistic expression (Aakriti Art Gallery, 2023).

Visual Analysis of *Ashru-Kumva*: Technique and Iconography

Ashru-Kumva depicts a solitary female figure seated in a nocturnal setting, holding a brass Kumva (water urn) as a symbolic repository for her grief. Executed in oil, the painting demonstrates Shaha’s mastery of academic realism: the figure’s diaphanous drape, modest silver jewelry, and anatomically precise form are rendered with meticulous attention to light and texture. The composition employs chiaroscuro, with a dark arboreal backdrop contrasting the softly illuminated figure, whose poised yet introspective posture conveys restrained sorrow (Bengal Beyond Boundaries, 2023). The urn, tilted as if to collect or release tears, imbues the scene with symbolic ambiguity, while the muted palette of browns, greens, and ochres evokes a twilight ambiance.

The painting’s restraint distinguishes it from both sentimental academic art and nationalist allegory. Unlike the Bengal School’s mythic narratives or Mazumdar’s sensuous figures, *Ashru-Kumva* prioritizes

psychological depth over theatricality or eroticism. Its vernacular realism—European techniques applied to a quintessentially Bengali subject—recalls Raja Ravi Varma’s fusion of academic oil painting with Indian themes but eschews Varma’s occasional flamboyance for understated pathos (Mitter, 1994). This positions *Ashru-Kumva* as a transitional work, bridging 19th-century academic traditions and emergent modernist sensibilities in Indian art.

Karuna Rasa and Aesthetic Theory

The emotional resonance of *Ashru-Kumva* aligns with *karuna rasa*, the aesthetic of compassionate sorrow articulated in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (Bharata, c. 200 BCE). The figure’s subtle gestures—her inclined head, expressive eyes, and symbolic urn—evoke *śoka* (grief) through suggestion, adhering to classical prescriptions for depicting pathos with dignity (Ghosh, 1950). This resonates with Indian visual traditions, notably the *virahini nayika* (heroine in separation) found in Rajput and Pahari miniatures, yet Shaha’s secular, individualized figure modernizes this archetype, presenting sorrow as a universal human experience rather than a mythological trope (Dehejia, 1997).

The urn, a multivalent symbol, may imply preserved grief or ritual release, reflecting early 20th-century Bengali cultural ideals that valorized women’s silent endurance. This is critiqued in Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay’s contemporary literature, which highlights the societal romanticization of female suffering (Chattopadhyay, 1917). By invoking *karuna rasa*, *Ashru-Kumva* fosters empathetic engagement, aligning with the *Nāṭyaśāstra*’s aim of cathartic compassion and situating the painting within a broader Indian aesthetic continuum.

Realism as Resistance: Historical Context

Created in 1918, *Ashru-Kumva* emerged amid debates over Indian art’s role in colonial modernity. The Bengal School’s revivalist ideology, dominant by the 1910s, equated academic realism with Westernization, marginalizing artists who embraced European techniques (Guha-Thakurta, 1992). The Indian Academy of Art’s formation in 1919, and its journal’s publication of *Ashru-Kumva* in 1920, constituted a deliberate challenge to this hegemony. Realist artists like Mazumdar, who criticized the Bengal School’s “retrogressive” historicism, argued that depicting contemporary Indian subjects in a global artistic idiom was a valid nationalist expression (Kapur, 2000).

While not overtly political, *Ashru-Kumva* invites allegorical interpretation within its historical moment. Painted during World War I, the 1918 influenza pandemic, and escalating anti-colonial agitation, the urn of tears could symbolize collective Indian suffering (Aakriti Art Gallery, 2023). Unlike Abanindranath Tagore’s *Bharat Mata* (1905), an explicit nationalist icon, Shaha’s painting offers a subtler reflection of grief, aligning with a humanistic rather than didactic nationalism.

Cultural Inter-texts

Ashru-Kumva engages with Bengal’s early 20th-century cultural milieu, particularly the literary humanism of Rabindranath Tagore and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. Tagore’s works, such as *The Post Office* (1912), evoke *karuna rasa* through understated suffering, paralleling Shaha’s restrained aesthetic (Tagore, 1912). Chattopadhyay’s novels, including *Devdas* (1917), depict women enduring societal injustices, their dignified sorrow mirroring Shaha’s protagonist



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Vidyapati-r Nayika'

বিদ্যাপতির নায়িকা

(Chattopadhyay, 1917). The painting also resonates with Vaishnava bhakti traditions, where tears of devotion are sacred, and folkloric motifs of memorializing grief, enriching its iconographic depth (Dehejia, 1997).

Legacy and Historiographic Significance

Long obscured, *Ashru-Kumva* was rediscovered and reattributed to Shaha, its conservation by the Kolkata Centre for Creativity revealing its technical virtuosity (Bengal Beyond Boundaries, 2023). As the only known signed work by Shaha, it is a critical document of his practice and of Bengal's academic realist tradition. Its recent exhibition (Aakriti Art Gallery, 2023) and publication have repositioned it as a historiographic landmark, challenging the Bengal School's dominance in narratives of Indian modernism. By integrating European techniques with Indian themes, Shaha's work illuminates a parallel modernist trajectory, underscoring the pluralism of early 20th-century Indian art (Dalmia, 2001).

In conclusion, *Ashru-Kumva* exemplifies the aesthetic and ideological complexities of Indian academic realism. Through its technical precision, invocation of *karuna rasa*, and engagement with colonial modernity, it offers a nuanced perspective on Indian art's evolution. Shaha's rediscovered voice enriches the historiography of South Asian art, affirming the enduring relevance of realism as a mode of cultural expression.

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Hemendranath Mazumdar

How Meaning Travels: The Ambivalence of Identity in Ashru-Kumva

Dr. Anuradha Ghosh

Academic and Author

Ananda Mohan Shaha's *'Ashru-Kumva'* (The Vase of Tears/The Vessel of Tears), a remarkable specimen of the Academic Realist style that was considerably popular in Bengal around the late nineteenth- early twentieth century, is notable not only for its stylistic features but also for the ambivalent narrative embedded within. A first encounter with the painting communicates to the viewer a rather straightforward narration— that of a woman who is clearly unmindful, lost in her thoughts; this inner world is a cocoon, really, that brings about a disconnect with the world around her, with reality. It is the title - '*Ashru-Kumva'*— that cues in the element of sadness within this single-stranded narrative and introduces deeper undertones.

The sense of self-absorption is keyed in not only by the gesture of the woman (whose eyes are unfocused and her fingers rest gently on her cheek— this last detail, as we have seen in numerous other paintings, is an indicator of deep submergence in one's own thoughts). It is indicated more directly by the vessel by her side, which is a significant prop of the narrative. It is a brass pitcher which was commonly used by rural women of Bengal: it was usually carried by them when they went to bathe in nearby waterbodies. We need to keep in mind that a century ago, bathing was usually an outdoor activity for most rural Bengali woman, including those from rich and aristocratic households. After bathing, some of them filled up the vessel with water and returned home with the full vessel. Here the receptacle is clearly full, as only a slight tilt allows the water to drip from it in a consistent flow. But she is totally oblivious to the drip, and this is the central detail that fixes the extent of her self-absorption. Also, the '*ashru'* of the title— which means '*tears'* in Bengali— brings about an interesting trope into the narrative, indicating that she is so full of sorrow that her vessel brims not with water, but tears. Here the vessel, which gives the title to the painting, is both itself— a physical, objective entity— and a metaphorical representation of the psychologi-

cal state of the woman at the same time. We can make out that she is wearing an expensive Muslin saree, and also some exquisite jewellery; these fix her social position. She clearly belongs to an upper-class household, and her marital status is uncertain. Upon careful observation it does seem that this is possibly an after-bath painting. The way in which the saree clings to her breasts and thighs is the main indicator here, not the transparency— muslins were anyway transparent. Many details about the painting remind us of some of Hemen Mazumdar's works: even apart from the wet raiment and its pictorial treatment, the vessel as a metaphorical prop is almost identical. If we take a moment to compare it with Mazumdar's '*Tonmoy'* (The Lost Heart) we shall see how the artist uses the dripping vessel in a similar manner in his work as well— as an indicator of the unmindful, self-absorbed woman, lost in her own fantasy, though here the frame is not sorrowful. The way Shaha paints the jewellery, his use of glazing especially, also remind us of Mazumdar's similar handling. The semi-darkness of the background as well as the enclosure-like feel of it are remarkable too. We know that while coming back from the waterbody after bathing most women used semi-public paths (unless they were very rich or aristocratic, coming from a family of zaminders or the like, in which case they would have ponds or lakes within their own premises). Thus, in order to preserve their modesty and avoid meeting other unrelated men, they usually chose either dawn or dusk, when there would be the cover of impending darkness and few people around. There is also a sense of mystery about the dark haunt that deepens the lone woman's solitary musings, something that Mazumdar too used to full effect. A survey of the echoes of subject and style in the work of the two painters is especially significant here, as I will try to trace a deeper consonance: that of a subterranean discourse of resistance.

It can be assumed with a fair share of accuracy that Ananda Mohan Shaha was known to Hemen Ma-

মাসিক বসুমতী



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Sikta Kusum / Tonmoy'
Water colour

বসুমতী প্রেস]

সিক্তা কুমুম

[শিল্পী—হেমেন্দ্রনাথ মজুমদার ।

zumdar and the group of Academic painters, many of whom were a part of Indian Academy of Art. The point of assumption does not rest exclusively upon the fact that his painting was published in the Academy's journal (the Puja Number of 1920), but also on the stylistic echoes that clearly exist between the work of the two artists. The way Shaha uses glazing for the jewellery, and the manner in which he handles the sheen clearly recalls the finesse of Mazumdar. We have to keep in mind that at around this time there was a strong challenge to the followers of Academic Realism in the form of 'Indian-style' painting as it was loosely referred to, popularised by Abanindranath Tagore and his followers. It did not, however, lessen the popularity of the genre, nor did the department of 'Fine Art' in the Government Art School lose its demand among aspiring art students (in spite of the hefty encouragement received by the department of Indian-style painting). But with powerful artists, ideologues, critics and even editors, like Abanindranath himself, Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy and Ramananda Chatterjee (editor of *Prabasi* and *Modern review*) this 'Oriental' style gained currency as the legitimate artistic taste of the times. This was, of course, supported by a deep vein of cultural politics that forged a direct connection of nationalist sentiment to this. Rather like the interconnected phenomenon of Swadeshi and boycott, this thrived on certain areas of acceptance and rejection: realism and verisimilitude (seen as an overseas product) as well as the use of oil paint were shunned, while Indian painting techniques with water-soluble colours were encouraged. Subjectwise, the focus was on the glorious yesteryears of Indian history, its ancient art and mythology, with a possible intention of re-energising a vanquished, demoralised race by reminding it of its past glory. It is important for us to remember that the Academic painters – especially Hemen Mazumdar – reacted to this attitude, specifically to what he saw in it as illogical and ahistorical. This clash of opinions did give rise to oppositional camps, and if we care to delve into old publications, we shall see the resistant discourses that burgeoned, containing critical defences in favour of naturalism in art – we will especially remember the writings of Upendrakishore Roychowdhury and Sukumar Roy. Answering to the Oriental camp's favouring of 'spirit' over form,

Benoy Sarkar wrote a path-breaking article in *Rupam* in 1922 (interestingly, this was the journal of Abanindranath's 'Society of Oriental Art') called *The Aesthetics of Young India*, in which he insisted that one does not need to wander away from the form in order to discover the ideal, which is innate to the form itself. Stella Kramrich, in a supposed rejoinder to this article in the same year stated 'To know her own necessity of significant form should be the first endeavour of artistic young India.' Thus there was a deeper vein of cultural politics at play here; it will probably not be too far-fetched to insist that the Academic painters did have a point to prove, regarding the 'Indianness' of their own work, and also to prevent art from being used as just another product in the unfolding nationalist politics, open to either acceptance or rejection. Each artwork, thus, have to be read keeping these points in mind, as these can also be seen as sites of embedded resistance. It is necessary to remember that the journal of the Indian Academy of Art (in which *Ashru-Kumva* was published) was primarily planned to counter the influence of *Rupam*, which received considerable subsidy from the British Indian Government – in spite of expressly promoting the Indian style of art. We may also remember that the Academic painters formed the 'Society of Fine Art' specifically to find alternate avenues to show their artworks, as they were unwelcome in the exhibitions arranged by The Society of Oriental Art.

The main reason for my dabbling in the cultural politics of the times is to discover and understand subterranean impulses in the artworks, as I had indicated earlier, which would allow us to interrogate our primary, simplistic readings. The major point on which the Academic painters hinged on, in trying to prove that their works were no less 'Indian', was to insist that their subjects, settings and evocation of the environs were rooted to the characters, customs and the visual culture of the country, thus by no stretch of the imagination could they be branded otherwise on the sole basis of following naturalism and using oil paint. '*Ashru-Kumva*' is an excellent example of this. The painting primarily seems to be that of a high-brow woman, sad and self-absorbed, nursing her own troubled thoughts. But what we need to consider here is what the journal makes of it: we would be surprised



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Pranaya Bansari'
Oil

In the possession of
D. N. SAHOO Esq.
Bhankurja



PRANAYA BANSARI
By H. MAZUMDAR



Hemendranath Mazumdar
'Neelambari'

to see that the woman is seen as Radha, wallowing in her grief at her separation from Krishna, by the bank of the river Yamuna. There is enough validity to take this view seriously, as it is unlikely that the descriptor was written without consulting the painter. Towards the end of the journal, the short text describing the painting clearly says:

‘The artist has nicely drawn the figure of Srimati Radha with her countenance full of dark despair on account of the absence of Sri Krishna, her Divine lover. Nothing has any charm for the distracted Radha whether the surrounding scene or the adjoining stream... The tears which have flowed so freely from the sad eyes deploring the absence of Krishna, have filled the vase, thereby sparing her the trouble of filling it with the river water. But she fears to go to the Jumna for a different reason and for a powerful one, she apprehends her presence by the side of the Jumna will painfully remind her of the happy meetings with Krishna and so she prefers to remain where she is lest the association of ideas may be too much for her broken heart to bear.

The songs of Radha and Krishna never fail to appeal to the poetic heart of India but when the songs are translated into a painting their value is increased tenfold through the aid of the artist’s harmony of colour and the easy brush work which we have in the present picture. (Indian Academy of Art, Puja Number, 1920, p. 78)

This text is longer than the descriptors for other paintings, and it is clear that the connection of the painting with Indian mythology is especially focused on. We will do well to remember that Hemen Mazumdar, the founder of The Indian Academy of Art, had himself worked on a number of Krishna-Radha paintings, and it is also a powerful reminder that subject-wise, there was no essential difference between the two oppositional camps, as they had both chosen mythological themes for artistic treatment. Going a little deeper, we can also discover an interesting ambivalence that builds on varying levels of time. The ancient and mythical figure of Radha can also be seen as a contemporary woman, who is spending solitary, pensive moments in a silent dialogue with herself—

in fact without the semantic support of the title and/or the descriptor, this would be the viewers’ primary impression. In fact, to root the title to the Radha-myth, the writer of the text uses the translation of a popular Bengali song: ‘oh call me not, oh maiden dear, to the bank of the stream, there have I no need to go. My vase is full, yea, full to the brim with tears, oh! sad tears!’ Thus the meaning is unhinged, the meaning travels, between this moment and that moment, between past and present, imagination and reality, between the culturally embedded symbol of undying love and the lovelorn lady bound by time and mortality. This recalls another painting where the same ambivalence of meaning reigns— ‘*Neelambari*’ by Mazumdar, which, too, appears to be a painting of Radha (in Bengal, Radha is usually known as Neelambari— the blue-clad woman— while Krishna is *Peetambar*, one who wears a yellow cloth). But the interesting point about this painting is, the woman wears a blouse with a lotus pattern embroidered on the back. With this very dated piece of clothing, the painter brings about a kind of colonial mimicry, and at the same time roots the figure firmly to his times, while ensuring that the shadow of Radha does not ever escape the viewers’ mind.

This ambivalence answers not only to the question of ‘Indianness’, but also to another significant point. There had been this allegation that the Orientalists addressed imaginary communities as it were, belonging to the distant past, not the people who inhabited the ‘here’ and ‘now’. The need to imbibe the features of contemporaneity in art had been stressed on by many— even way back in 1874, Shyama Charan Sreemany, in his essay ‘*Arya Jatir Shilpochatur*’ had clearly mentioned the imperative to keep in mind ‘the particularities of time, place and people’ (my translation). By rooting the figure to his times, the artist could have been addressing the limitations of the Orientalists by providing an instance as to how past and present can be assimilated within an aesthetic context. We can trace a similar deliberation in Ananda Mohan Shaha’s work as well. His subject is rooted both to reality and to distant myth, is both mortal and eternal. It is this movement of meaning that gives *Ashru-Kumva* a deep semantic richness.

Expanded Biography and Final Reflections

The rediscovery of Ashru-Kumva and its confirmed attribution to Ananda Mohan Shaha (also spelled Saha) has added a vital fragment to the puzzle of early modern Indian art. Though still a figure shrouded in partial anonymity, Shaha can now be placed with greater accuracy in the lineage of Bengal's academic realist painters—his name no longer lost, but reinstated through verifiable documentation and careful conservation.

This final chapter consolidates all found biographical data, reconciles past speculation with new archival discoveries, and reflects on the broader implications of this research.

Biography Findings of Ananda Mohan Shaha

- Full Name: Ananda Mohan Saha (sometimes appearing as A.M. Shaha or A. Shaha in early records)
- Date of Birth: (1887-1952) Not confirmed; active period estimated between 1910s–1930s
- Education: Studied at the Government School of Art, Calcutta, or Jubilee Art School, Calcutta from 1905–1910
- Stylistic Affiliation: Academic realism in oil painting; influenced by European art education

introduced under colonial pedagogy, as well as Bengal's cultural and visual traditions

- Artistic Circle: Contemporary of Hemendranath Mazumdar, Atul Bose, B.C. Law
- Confirmed Work: Ashru-Kumva (1918), oil on canvas, signed and dated by the artist; reproduced in the Indian Academy of Art, Puja Number (1920)
- Institutional Affiliation: Participated in or associated with exhibitions by the Indian Academy of Art, and possibly the Society of Fine Arts (Calcutta), Indian Society of Oriental Art, and Bengal Academy of Art (based on indirect journal references subject to confirmation)
- Exhibitions:
 - o Listed in the Indian Academy of Art journal (1920)
 - o No further confirmed exhibition records currently survive
Note: While references to an "A. Shaha" or "A.M. Shaha" appear sporadically in catalogs of the Indian Society of Oriental Art and Bengal Academy of Art between 1915–1925, these cannot be conclusively linked to Ananda Mohan Shaha (Saha) without additional visual or archival confirmation.

The Rediscovery of Ashru-Kumva: Verified Facts

1. The painting Ashru-Kumva was acquired by Aakriti Art Gallery from a zamindar family in Bengal. It was initially unattributed and exhibited in 2023 under the label “Anonymous.”
2. Sent to the Kolkata Centre for Creativity’s Conservation Lab, the painting was cleaned and restored. A faint signature – “Ananda Mohan Saha, 1918” – was uncovered on the bottom-left of the canvas.
3. This signature led to a successful search for the Puja Number of The Indian Academy of Art (October 1920), where the painting was published as Ashru-Kumva by A. Shaha, confirming its title, composition, and authorship.
4. No other surviving works by the artist are known or have been verified. Ashru-Kumva is, therefore, the only authenticated known painting by Shaha.

Final Reflections: The Legacy of a Lost Artist

Ananda Mohan Shaha now holds a unique place in Indian art history – as a rediscovered artist whose only surviving signed work, published during his lifetime, resurfaced a century later through a convergence of scholarship, conservation, and archival inquiry.

His style – characterized by emotional restraint, technical mastery, and cultural rootedness – represents an important countercurrent to the better-known Bengal School. Where others turned to myth and symbolism, Shaha painted with quiet humanism, choosing a subject grounded in the ordinary experience of grief and introspection. Ashru-Kumva stands as a testament to a broader, more pluralistic vision of Indian modernism.

This rediscovery also reaffirms the value of patient archival work. It reminds us that the art historical canon is not fixed but evolving – and that each new finding, if properly researched and preserved, can shift the narrative.

Let this be not an endpoint, but a prelude to other such reclamations.

Concluding Note

The rediscovery of Ashru-Kumva and its creator Ananda Mohan Shaha stands as a rare and meaningful contribution to the evolving understanding of India's academic realist tradition. What began as a quest to identify an anonymous painting exhibited at Bengal Beyond Boundaries (2023) has culminated in the careful restoration and firm attribution of a forgotten artist, whose voice had nearly disappeared from the annals of Indian art history.

Academic realism in India found its early champion in Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906), whose fusion of European techniques and Indian narratives laid the foundation for a generation of artists who believed in the expressive power of realism. This tradition, while deeply influential, has often been overshadowed by the historiographical emphasis on the Bengal School's nationalist and revivalist ideals. Yet from the late 19th to the early 20th century, artists such as Hemendranath Mazumdar, Atul Bose, B.C. Law, J.P. Gangooly, and Samarendranath Gupta sustained and evolved this realist impulse, enriching Indian art with works grounded in observation, emotional resonance, and technical mastery.

Ananda Mohan Shaha, assumed to be active around 1910–1925, belongs to this lineage. His painting Ashru-Kumva (1918)—the only known signed and published work known to survive—demonstrates a similar commitment to academic methods: fidelity to the human form, mastery of oil painting, and the evocation of tender, introspective moods. Shaha's contemporaries sought to depict Indian lives not through mythology or stylized symbolism, but through the tangible textures of flesh, fabric, light, and emotion.

Their subjects were often drawn from daily life, capturing quiet moments of reflection, longing, and beauty in ways that bridged indigenous cultural expression with the techniques of Western realism. The fragile survival of Ashru-Kumva—traced only through a faint signature revealed during restoration and a single publication in *The Indian Academy of Art* journal (Puja Number, 1920)—underscores the precariousness of historical memory. Unlike Mazumdar or Atul Bose, whose works occasionally surface in collections and auctions, Shaha's artistic legacy would have been permanently erased had these slim traces not endured.

This rediscovery reminds us that the story of Indian art is far richer and more complex than the canonical narratives suggest. Alongside the celebrated schools of revivalism and modernism, the academic realists formed a parallel stream—one that was cosmopolitan, technically rigorous, and deeply engaged with portraying Indian life through an emotional and observational lens.

Today, the reclamation of Ashru-Kumva invites a renewed attention to India's academic realist tradition—not as a colonial relic, but as a dynamic, evolving force that deserves rightful acknowledgment. It calls upon scholars, institutions, and collectors to widen their gaze and recover the many nuanced voices, like that of Ananda Mohan Shaha, who contributed quietly yet profoundly to India's artistic heritage.

In retrieving Ashru-Kumva, we retrieve more than a single painting; we retrieve a missing chapter of India's visual history—one that affirms the depth, diversity, and dignity of its creative past.



Raja Ravi Varma



COLOPHON

This publication was researched, compiled, and coordinated by Vikram Bachhawat.
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The restoration of Ashru-Kumva by Ananda Mohan Shaha was carried out at the
Kolkata Centre for Creativity Conservation Lab.
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