

A Study of Indian Art Painting Techniques

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Abstract:

Introduction- In front of Jesus, on a high pillar, there is the big statue of Caesar; at some distance from it, in a dark corner, Jesus is standing in an extremely humiliated condition surrounded by Roman soldiers. Rembrandt passed before his mind the array of episodes relating to the life of Jesus; and having so reviewed them all, he chose for his portrayal, the superb moment when at the end of his strivings in the cause of religion, which Jesus regarded to be true, he was discarded by his own people and brought in a humiliated state before the Roman Judge. The choice of this particular moment, though revealing the great artistic insight of Rembrandt, fails to put Jesus in the proper perspective as revealed in a saintly personality taken as a whole. The Indian artists, however, particularly when they represented the character of the Buddha or the Bodhisattva, of the gods and goddesses, did not lay emphasis on any passing feeling of delight, anger, hatred or the like, but they tried to discover the true personality as the object of creation. This personality was perceived by them as dominating over individual moments of varying emotions and could be regarded characterising the soul or essence of the artist's object of creation.

This personality was not a passing phase and could not, therefore, have been visually perceived, but it was constructed by the artist's mind and intuited in contemplation. It was this intuition that the artist was delighted to give expression to. As such portrayals or representations do not depict any actually perceived mental state as affecting the expression, these cannot be called realistic in the ordinary sense. But from another sense it is more real than the ordinarily realistic representation, for here the attention of the artist is concentrated on the abiding inner personality which forms the basis of the varying passing emotions. When the Indian artists composed a group of figures with a central figure to which our chief attention was drawn, they never underlined the importance of the individuality of the subordinate figures. The subordinate figures had no importance by themselves; they were portrayed and carved only in the interest of the central figure to which they supplied a setting. The unimportant figures round the central figure all helped by their mutual contribution to the fundamental expression of the central figure. Quite contrary is the purpose of the 'Jesus before the Pilate' of Rembrandt. There the soldiers, statue of Caesar, the Pilate himself, complaining Jews, have all been given a separate individuality and character. It appears that they are all playing parts in the drama and by the co-operative activity of the different actors the peculiarly important moments of Jesus' life have been expressed. The whole picture is objective, a scene from Jesus' life. Here the artist has not tried to give us an idea of what he thought of it. He has not given us a shadow of his own mind which overshadows and transcends the figures drawn by him.

If we take for review the composition of an Indian carving, consisting of many figures, we find that in that assemblage only one figure stands out in bold relief, while other figures dedicate their existence to the expression of the central one. In literary art also we find the Indian critics speaking of the various emotions contributing towards the development and expression of one dominant emotion. The different emotions in a literary portrayal were like the different figures in a composition always leading to the heightening of the fundamental emotion or fuller expression of the central figure for which alone the others existed. This should be noted as one of the main points of

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Let us take for example the carvings on the gates of Sanchi. In the carvings of the elephant and the deer park we find much natural likeness with actual animals. Perhaps they show us the remnants of the oldest artistic tendency which sought to copy nature as far as possible. But in the carvings of Sanchi we find in one place a Yakshini leaning by a tree with her flowering youth. The Yakshini has been so depicted there as if she is a part of the tree itself. There is a natural suggestion of the similarity between the flowering life of the tree and the flowering youth of the woman.

A portrait is thus defined as an art of imitating the exact likeness of the inanimate and the immovable objects of nature as well as the animals. It has been further laid down that this likeness is not limited merely to a general likeness, but it should mean exact likeness of all the limbs or parts of the tree, creeper, mountains or the animals. It will be relevant here to allude to the Vedantic theory of perception. We find there that, howsoever idealistic the metaphysics of the Vedanta may be, it started with gross realism. In our perception our mind as associated with senses is in contact with external objects.

It is transformed in the first instance in the form of the object. The philosopher thus starts with objective realism. Probably for some reason the demand was made of the artist that he must portray in his picture things as we see them with our eyes. When merely the head of a person was portrayed, we may, from that, form a notion of his other limbs. But such a conception would be a matter of inference and not of portrayal. It was therefore demanded of the artist that he should draw an exact likeness of all the limbs of the portrayed object and should leave nothing for infer (Sarvanga-drisyakaranam Chitram ity abhidhiyate). It was perhaps for this reason that though the ancient Indian artists had a knowledge of aerial and other perspectives, they could not or did not use that technique for the demonstration of distance and spatial configuration. They would not often portray or carve on different blocks or canvas the object as it appeared at different distances. From the paintings of Ajanta and various descriptions of paintings, as well as from the "Chitrasutra", it can be proved that ancientness.

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