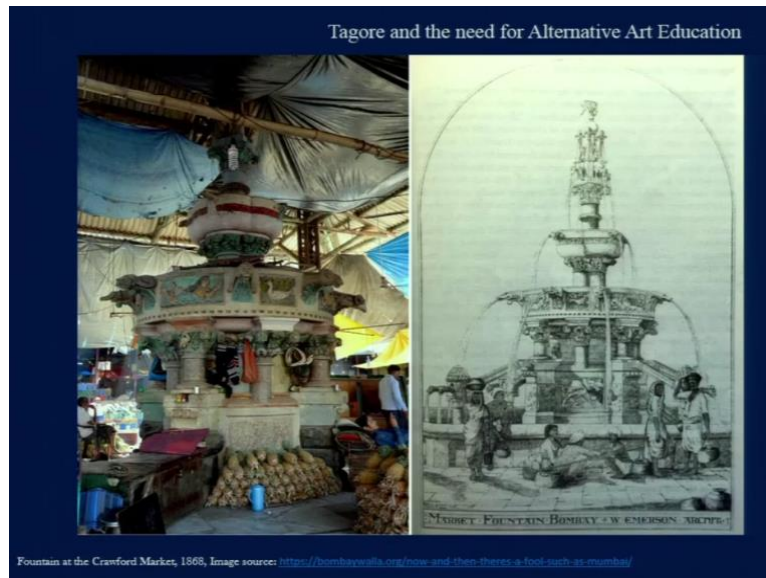


Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices
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Lecture – 48
Daily Practice and Nationalism

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Hello everyone. I am Rajarshi Sengupta and we are continuing our discussion on daily practice and nationalism. So, after we have discussed that what was the some of the different approaches taken by Abanindranath Tagore and Gandhi, now let us look into some of the aspects of colonial art education. So, in the 1850s, during that time as I have already mentioned in the earlier week that some of the art institutions that came into being.

So for example the Government School of Art in Calcutta, Government School of Art in Madras and then the J. J. School of Art in Bombay and Mayo School of Art in Lahore. So, what we find during this time the motivation for the colonial administration to have these art institutions was to produce people who will primarily be the drafts people, the draftsman, and then also the people who can actually get involved into helping the colonial administration.

So, they were not really interested in producing artists of Indian origin, eventually like people were there who established themselves as artists, for example as we have mentioned few of the people in the earlier lecture like Bamapada Bandyopadhyay and then Ananda Prasad Bagchi and of course Ravi Varma as the self-taught artist, so these people were there.

But at the same time what we find the motive behind having the art school educated students or the people was to help the colonial administration for different kinds of documentation and of course the works related to draftsmanship. So, for that reason what we find during this time there was also this clear divide between what is art, what is craft and the kinds of things which were taught in the art institutions were strictly European in their convention.

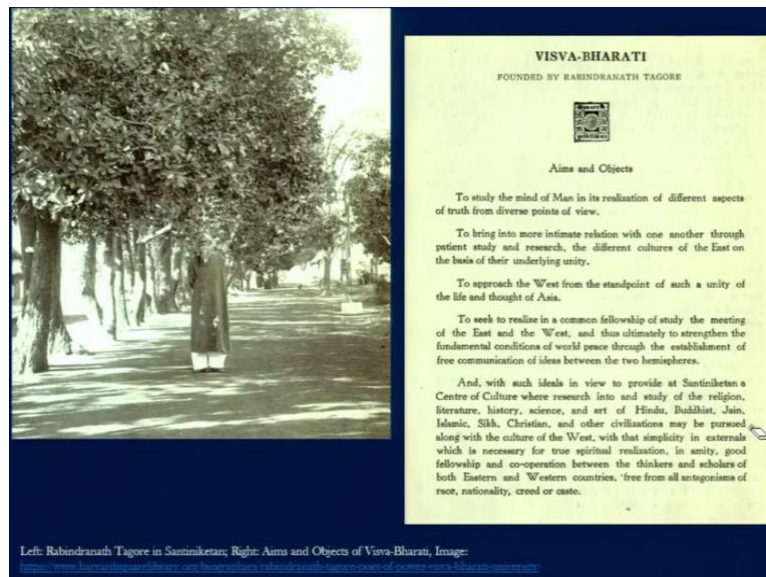
So, for example this the single point perspectival view and then also like anatomy, scale, proportion and then how to make the 3D modelling in the two-dimensional surface that means the use of shading and also how the human figures relate to the architectural sites and everything. So, those were some of the things we find that those were taught in the colonial art institutions.

Now, in terms of the techniques as we know that the oil painting was given priority, then marble casting at the same time slowly we also see the plaster of Paris that that could also become an important medium in the later times. So, this kind of different practices which did not really have their roots in the Indian subcontinent were taught to the people or the students in this colonial art institutions.

So, here there are I just wanted to give some examples that what kind of drawings and everything was there. So, there is this fountain which was made in the Crawford Market in eighteen sixty 1868, it was part of building the architectural projects part of building various sites in southern Mumbai that was the main metropolitan centre of Bombay in the 19th century. So, we see that have been how this kind of these architectural structures were erected and then how those were also used for studying the students in J. J. School of Art.

So, these kinds of drawings one can think about their likeness the actual site that was very important and that is something this evidential quality of these images was something that was prioritized more than capturing their essence or more than seeing that what their relevance is in the public life. So, that was the kind of approach that we find in the colonial art institutions.

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Now, from there we find that there was a shift and the shift was not something that did not take place all over in the Indian subcontinent, but it was something that started with Rabindranath Tagore. So, we are going back to this prolific Tagore family in north Calcutta now and it was the same house where we have already discussed this image of Abanindranath Tagore and Coomaraswamy and many other these great minds where there already situated.

So, during this time what we find that in the late 19th century and very early decade of 20th century that Rabindranath Tagore silently he established the school Bolpur in the Birbhum district of Bengal, that time it was Bengal, now it is West Bengal. So, then we see that in this particular area which then Tagore called as Santiniketan, it is abode of peace and so that particular place.

So it was away from this colonial metropolis of Calcutta and it was a place which was surrounded by greenery and rivers and the local santal or the Adivasi population. So, what we find there Tagore when he established his school and eventually he would go and establish this entire university that is called Visva-Bharati university where he imagined like the entire world would come so that marked a different path.

And that that sort of showed people a different mode of education, which was different from the colonial mode of education. So, this is a path we can consider in the early 20th century as an alternative mode of education from the mainstream mode which was already established in the Indian subcontinent by the British. So why this is important is because we see that Tagore's position in the nationalist movement was also something that was very interesting.

We find that Tagore was not necessarily aligning himself with either the violent or the nonviolent movements, but at the same time he was strongly critiquing the British government. But in that way what he was interested in doing was to think about that how the growth of a country, the growth of people is not something that is always related to the nationalist politics. The nationalist politics cannot just bring prosperity to everyone.

So for that reason, he was interested in learning from different sources and bringing the world to Santiniketan and so this was a very different kind of educational approach that we find in Visva-Bharati. So I just have this aim and objects which was there in terms of to understand that what all Tagore was thinking when he established Visva-Bharati. Now, on the left side of the screen we have a portrait of Tagore, perhaps in Santiniketan.

And this gives us a sense of like what kind of landscape I am talking about that even in the university campus where all the schools were situated, we see that there were trees and there were not really boundaries as such that will mark the space of the school from nature. So, bringing nature, bringing the daily life to the education was something that Tagore had strongly advocated for.

And even if we see these aims and objects of Visva-Bharati and also there is this strong argument for learning from different cultures and different religion and assimilating them together to think about a future which will be much more hospitable, which will also assure prosperity not only in terms of the material growth, but also prosperity of mind. So those were some of the things that Tagore had aspired to do through new university.

So, thinking about that what happens in terms of the prosperity of the mind it is also something that was revolutionary in terms of thinking that how the colonial institutions and if we consider the art institutions how they were definitely not concerned about prosperity of mind, but it was concerned about this painstaking skill which will eventually make people as fine draftsman and it was definitely not something about the spiritual or internal growth, something that Tagore had prioritized.

Now, if we also see what happened, so in 1919 we find that Tagore had established this school of art which is called Kala Bhavana. So this Kala Bhavana was established in 1919 and then

Visva-Bharati this entire place where there were already like multiple school for learning for learning art, for learning performance, learning religion, languages and various different things, so all that became recognized as a university in 1921.

So Kala Bhavana the School of Art actually was established two years prior to Visva-Bharati gaining its status as a university. So, what happened in Kala Bhavana we find that Tagore had appointed Nandalal Bose as the first principal of the school. Now, one can also think Tagore was related to Abanindranath Tagore, so Abanindranath Tagore this prolific painter that we have already discussed, so he was his nephew.

Abanindranath Tagore was nephew of Rabindranath Tagore. But then why did he not choose Abanindranath Tagore as the principal of this newly founded school and that is perhaps because we can see that how Abanindranath Tagore's point of view, his attempt of reclaiming the past which also feeds the nationalistic politics was very different from what Rabindranath Tagore was thinking.

So, Rabindranath Tagore was more open towards learning from the entire world and bringing the world to the site of Visva-Bharati whereas Abanindranath Tagore we can see he had his specific focus on reclaiming the Indian past. So, perhaps those are the things we find that ideologically that how even though they were in the same family and both of them were established in their own right, but still how they were different in their thought process.

Now, what we find the way Rabindranath Tagore had envisioned this School of Art, at the same time like the entire university, he modelled his idea on the idea of ashram or the place where people would go or the young people would go and be trained under a guru and many times in the depiction of the ashrams that we see at least from the Vedic period that there are no boundary in terms of where teacher teaches the students.

And that is the reason what we find that there are classes which held in the open air spaces like just beneath a tree and not in the formal classroom. So, this was a very conscious and careful attempt by Tagore that he denied the use of boundary, he denied the specific spaces which can promote education, but he wanted to bring education close to nature, close to our life, so that we do not consider education as something that is separate from our daily lives.

So, this is something and that is perhaps one of the reasons why I wanted to bring Tagore's contribution as part of our discussion today that daily life and even though this is not related directly to nationalism, but also to think about nationhood, to think about our position in the world, why all these things are relevant. The other thing that Tagore had also sort of stressed upon is this idea of art education. So, he considered art education as an essential one in the university education.

Instead of having very specific and specialized skill among the students to only to be trained in art, he considered that people should be free in terms of learning about the different, different modes of art making, artisanal practices and he did not believe in the boundaries as I have already mentioned, so it was a very different approach. And he also said how art is something that is excess, so the excess is something that he considered as not quantifiable.

So, it is not something that can be equated with like the material world, but there is always something that goes beyond that. So, he considered that art is also something that is essential for the growth of human beings internally. So, that is something that also reflected in his overall strategy of establishing the school as well as promoting different kinds of practices there. Now, the other thing we also find that how the local crafts practices were not discouraged.

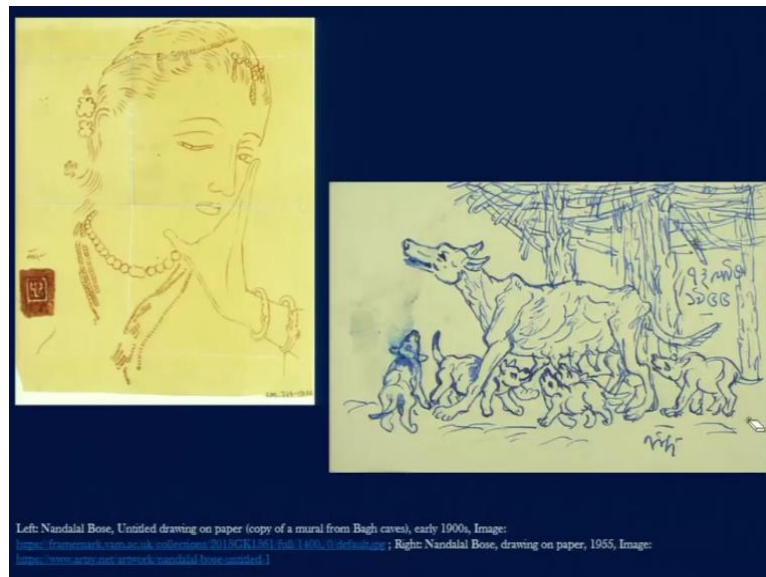
Something that we find that in the colonial art institutions there was a huge divide between what was taught in the art schools and what was there around them. So, in a city like Calcutta, there were already different kinds of artisanal practices like there can be woodblock making, there were textile making, there were also of course there were Kalighat paintings in the 19th century, but we definitely see those practices were not brought into within the institutional fold.

So, there was definitely this intended binary between what is considered as this formal art education, what is considered as fine art and what is not considered as fine art. Now, when Tagore established his school, by school I mean Kala Bhavana and in extension Visva-Bharati university, then he brought together the local artisanal practices. And that is the reason we do not really see that the artists who were trained or all the students who are trained in Santiniketan, they made a distinction.

At least in the early stages they did not really make a distinction between something that is artisanal, something that is part of our daily practices, and something that is taught in the

institution. So, these are some of the ways in which we find that Tagore's ideology and his approach made a drastic difference in terms of how we perceive art today.

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Now going with that what else was happening, so when we see that Tagore had appointed Nandalal Bose as the first principal of Kala Bhavana, so who was Nandalal Bose? Nandalal Bose is someone who was trained under Abanindranath Tagore as well as E. B. Havel, so these two figures from Calcutta who were essential for revitalizing the Indian artistic anatomy and the precolonial modes of visual expressions.

So, for Nandalal Bose what we find that in the early 1900s, around 1910 or so then he travelled with a group of archaeologists and historians to various cave sites, so for example to Ajanta, to Bagh and others. So, this is an image that we have on the left side of the screen and where we see that there is a copy of a mural from Bagh. So, as I have mentioned that in the 19th century, we find that there were practices of documentation.

The minutest of the documentation of the murals and different kind of the architectural remnants and everything from various parts of the Indian subcontinent, so we can imagine that why the British historians and archaeologists needed the help of people like the fine artists like Nandalal Bose in their trips to the sites of Ajanta, to Bagh and so on. And photography certainly can do the purpose.

But if we can imagine the condition of Ajanta and Bagh those are the places where the paintings are made in the recessed areas, so those are not really well lit, so for having them in photograph

is not very easy and that is the reason that the fine artists were needed for having documentation of those murals which were already deteriorating. So, what we see in the image on the left side, so this is actually made in very thin tracing paper.

Perhaps this is like one can see how there are those small, small tracing papers those are added here to make into this one giant piece and that is added here for tracing this one image. So, this is something that we see Nandalal Bose was also involved in reconstructing or making replicas of these murals in various different sites, on paper, also in in few institutions. So, this kind of trace drawings must have been very important for him to continue this work.

So, this drawing also shows something about Nandalal Bose's skill. So, there are only few lines that we find only the entire image is translated into the linear form. So, what we find that there are those broken lines which are used for depicting the overall shape as well as the details of this face and the lines that we see they are calligraphic in character, so the lines are not uniform, but some part of the line has greater depth than the others.

And then that is how this particular way of drawing we find that it was there in the Ajanta murals when the contour lines of the body are drawn. So, those characters were something those were also learned and internalized by Nandalal Bose and those are implemented in this drawing here as well. Now, the other thing that we also find that how line is used here for expression.

So this pensive mood of this woman that we find here with her drooping eyes and her overall expression in her face and her lowered lips and then of course how she rests her face on to her left arm, so everything that that adds to the mood of this woman. So, the expression and different these physiological features. So this idea that how the draftsmanship or copying is not something that is just involved in copying all the details of an image.

But perhaps to imbibe the essence of the image to understand the internal qualities of the image and express it through the economy of lines, so only few lines are used here, it is not really all the details are done, there is no shading and all the different other details are avoided, but even within that within those limitations we can see how he had managed to skilfully portray the overall mood of this woman as well as this image.

So, this understanding the internal qualities of the images or artworks as opposed to something that focuses strictly on the scale proportion and the details of a work like this, so this marks as a difference in terms of it is not just a difference of the East and the West, but it is a difference in terms of how we understand that what is essential, is the form essential that we see outside or is this is something that is as part of the internal character of any images that is essential and that needs to be captured and translated into the images.

So, these kinds of debates that we find that those came forward and these debates were possible and nurtured because of this different kind of art education. And on the right side of the image, we also have something another drawing of Nandalal Bose. And this is a drawing which was much later drawing, it was done in 1955. And in this one what we see is that there is a family of this dog, and then of course there are many of her children that we find here.

They are all gathered here and they are all sucking milk from their mother's breast, but the thing is what we find is that this essential character that how the muscles and the wrinkles in the body of the dog are being shown as a gesture of the mother struggle and then how this mother still keeps her face up and then also shelters all her children, so this is something we find that it is not just a drawing of this dog's family, but there are more things that can be gleaned from these images.

And these images as we can see this is an image that is done perhaps on site. So, Nandalal Bose and had promoted this mode of drawing that wherever we go, we do not really carry our easel and like all these elaborate set up for drawing, but we can just carry postcards or small books or notebooks where we can do our sketching. So, then sketching and drawing that also becomes part of our daily practice.

It is not something that requires always an elaborate setup or all different kinds of equipment for making paintings. So this is something what we also can understand that this philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore how he imagined that artworks and any kind of this education need to be closer to life as part of the daily life, it is not something that is just restricted to the institutional space, but it can be part of our everyday life just the way we breathe, just the way we eat and continue our life with.

So that is something that we find it was reflected in Nandalal Bose's lifelong practice. It is not something that we find that was only restricted in his early career, but as we see that even in the later part of his career, he still continued doing this kind of sketches and drawings from the daily life as how these different objects and different entities they become part of his understanding of life and also his silent revolt against the colonial art education.

So, we will continue on these aspects, also some of the other aspects of Nandalal Bose's practice, and how that also contributed directly to the nationalist movement in the later lectures.

Thank you.