

Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices
Prof. Rajarshi Sengupta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology – Kanpur

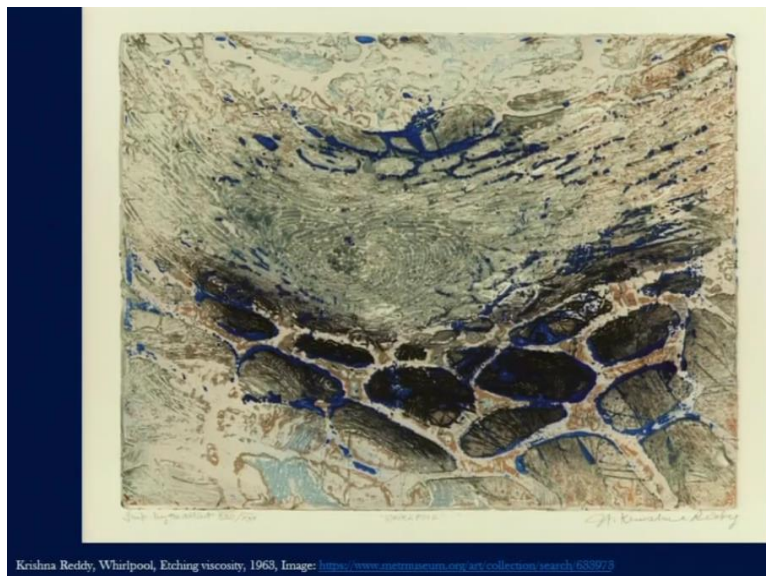
Lecture – 54
Multimedia Approaches - 1

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Hello everyone. I am Rajarshi Sengupta and we are talking about the multimedia approaches in the post-independence Indian art. Now, we have looked into the use of printmaking by Somnath Hore in the last lecture and how this printmaking media have assisted him to achieve certain expressions and how to express his concern through those works.

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Now, a similar kind of approach I would say that how he had utilized etching these plates, doing these deep acid bites onto the etching plates Somnath Hore for achieving these wound marks onto that, we see a similar kind of practice was happening elsewhere as well. Now, the thing is if we consider that; if that had any similarity in terms of its thematic with Somnath Hore then we find that perhaps they were on very different path.

So, here I am talking about another prolific printmaker that is Krishna Reddy. So, Krishna Reddy was born in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh and we find that how he was trained in Southern India and then he moved on to go to Paris and later on he settled in New York and remained associated with the NYU, the New York University. But what we find that in the 1950s he had worked in Atelier 17 and had worked towards developing this technique called viscosity.

So, in viscosity technique what happens is again that when there is this etching plate, it is etched deeply in acid and that is how those big marks these large areas are created by that the way we have also seen for Somnath Hore. However, we see in the viscosity process multiple colours are then used on the same plate. So, in the same plate what happens is that the rollers for rolling ink onto these etching plates that is used.

So, there are different density of the colours that is used on the roller. So, if some colour would have more linseed oil, some colour would be much more sticky so that is how what happens is that there are those difference in the density, some places would catch certain colour and the other places would not catch that colour and that is how multiple colours would be there on the same etching plate.

And when it is printed onto the paper then these kinds of visuals they emerge out of that where there are those complex lines and then of course the accidental marks all those things that come there. Now, if this is the process that we find and a kind of similar process was also utilized by Somnath Hore, but then what we find in Krishna Reddy's work it is much more about different kinds of forces of nature and his commitment remained in terms of understanding different textures, different forces, different forms and how dynamism works.

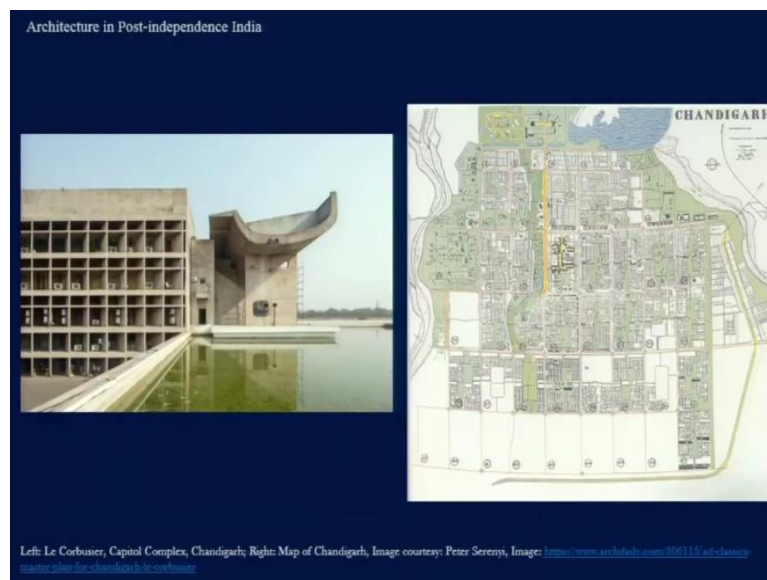
And that is the reason we see that he had developed his etching plates in layers. In some places, we find there are those lines like the etching lines that we see, which is conventionally drawn

onto the plates. And then on top of that, he had also allowed the plate to have those the acid bites. For that reason, in some places those lines are lost and then like those deep recesses are created and in the other places we find that the lines are intact.

And that is how it is just an example to show that how he had developed each of his etching plates in layers in multiple layers and with lines and with these different kinds of gestural marks with forms. So, we find that this is much more like an inward-looking process. So even though Somnath Hore and Krishna Reddy, they perhaps explored this same printmaking medium that is intaglio printmaking and viscosity.

We can see that how their own practices or their experience and background that made an impact upon how they have perceived this etching plate and how that also made an impact on the end result, how Somnath Hore's works are very different from how Krishna Reddy looked into different forces of nature.

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Now from there, we would probably look into some of the other practices during this time. And this practices for example, making architecture, making textiles and furniture, we do not really consider strictly as part of fine arts and that is one reason why we find that in the history of fine art or like history of Indian art there is also a division in terms of what is understood as the institutional art practice and what we do not address.

Now if we see that how the historic Indian art had developed, we have always studied architecture. We have always studied different kinds of objects which are used in daily life.

But the thing is that when we look into the post-independence development of contemporary Indian art, then we usually exclude them. So, this also comes from the colonial division of what is art, what is not; what is acceptable, what is not.

So through our study we need to question that, through our study we also need to critically look into these categories and their impact on our education. So, what was happening in terms of architectural development in the post-independence India? So, we see that there were new cities those were coming up during this time and there were new buildings, there were new institutions, there were dams, there were silos.

There were different kinds of infrastructural setups which were coming up and that is the reason there was a huge importance of architecture that how do we understand these new spaces. And of course, in the architecture in this newly independent country also had to mark this difference and that is the reason we find that during this time some of the architects, for example Le Corbusier and then Lucan they were all invited in India.

So Lucan was celebrated American architect and Le Corbusier was a French architect. And we see that after India's independence, both of them were invited and they were given the charge for developing certain architectural sites. So, for Le Corbusier we find that he was in charge of developing this city of Chandigarh. Now Chandigarh was this newly founded city in the state of Punjab in India.

Now, part of the Punjab province was there as part of Pakistan after the partition of India, so in the Indian part of Punjab there was a need for this new capital because Lahore being the most important city or one of the most important cities in the Punjab province, so that being gone with Pakistan there was a need for a new capital city and that is how Chandigarh came into being. So, this place was not populated and it was a site which could be developed from the scratch and that is the opportunity which was utilized for developing the entire city.

So, what we find that there is this north south orientation in this city and there are this grid like roads that we can find here that how there are those vertical road, there are those horizontal ones and that is how the entire city could be arranged or divided within these grids which also becomes easy for the administrators to understand the entire city plan and everything.

And on the top of the cities, it is the Capitol Complex and the Capitol Complex is the administrative quarter and we also see how that perhaps had a view of the Himalayan foothills around that in distance. So, in both sides of the city of Chandigarh, we find that there were two rivers which also sort of gave; it limited the span of the city but at the same time it also sort of gave protection to that.

And then on the northern side, there was this large natural water reservoir. So, those spaces were also utilized when the Capitol Complex was built. And here on the left side, we have an image from the Capitol Complex where we can see that how the water was used and then how the architecture was built. Now, during this time we find that in the modernist architecture and of course in Le Corbusier's practice that he had emphasize the use of geometricity and then the spaces.

And then he had also in favour of the simplicity and not extravagance and that is the reason we do not really see that extravagant decoration or the elements like various kinds of ornamental elements or something that is not utilitarian, those things were removed from the architecture. And then what remained there are those basic forms and we also see this this particular material that is used here and that is concrete.

So, concrete was also this new material that was utilized and as I have mentioned that this is this new capital that came up and it was also during the time when India just gained its independence. So, new material was also important for marking its identity differently from the other architectural projects there. So, what we see here is this use of concrete. So, what happens with concrete is one can mould the concrete, one can cast the concrete in moulds and that is how different kinds of forms can be created.

So, for example if you are looking into this geometric this box like structures, but then also this kind of form can also be easily created this massive this upturned form, this half circular form that can also be created with concrete. So, this is not something that is easily achievable when we are working with stone, when we are working of course with iron structures and so on.

So, these are some of the things we find those were prioritized in the architecture and how the architecture also responded to the nearby landscape. So, for example this carving this roof here that we find here and then there are also some of the arch like forms that we find, they had their

reference from the nearby Himalayan foothills, but also called Corbusier had looked into some of the Mughal architecture.

And have taken reference from them that how the administrative quarters that should promote the idea of democracy should be on this horizontal plane and how that is different from the buildings perhaps which are used for office spaces. So, he had looked into the natural landscape, at the same time also have looked into some of the historical buildings in the independent India and brought them together with the use of concrete and his already established style to make the new capital complex of Chandigarh.

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So, from there we find that there were also a group of Indian architects who were trained during this time and they have started practicing. So some of them will be B V Doshi, and then Charles Correa and Rahul Mehrotra and so on. So, what we have here that there are two architectural projects by Charles Correa. Now Charles Correa had a very different approach from Corbusier.

So, what we see in Charles Correa's practice is that he grew up in India and that's the reason he understood the climatic condition, the requirements of people very differently from the way Corbusier implemented that because Corbusier after all was a visitor and his experience of the land, his experience of understanding the demographic of the people was very different from how Charles Correa had looked into it.

So, for that reason what we see that Charles Correa also he made very thoughtful decisions when he engaged in architectural projects. So, for example we see this apartment building that

is called Kanchenjunga apartments and this is one there in the heart of Mumbai, and in this apartment building what we see that this part of Mumbai was already populated, so there was less option for spreading on the horizontal level.

But there was a need for having those vertical expansion of the buildings and by keeping these criteria in mind we see that Charles Correa had implemented his thoughts into this building where there is this block like this vertical tower that is there, but at the same time that if we have balconies, which run side by side with each other, then perhaps there would not be much space for the residents to have a quiet area.

So that is the reason we find that the balconies the way they are situated in these buildings are not really facing each other or not really side by side with each other, but there is space in between two balconies or open spaces so that people can have their privacy. But at the same time, the balconies would allow air circulation into these buildings and in Charles Correa's writing we find that he had privatized how sunlight and air all these things are very important as part of any habitable space.

So, those things and as I have already mentioned that as he grew up in India, he was born and brought up in India and that is the reason his understanding of the land, his understanding of the requirement they were very different and they also sort of responded to this tropical climate and atmosphere and how even though we need this kind of this vertical apartment buildings, but still how there are efficient ways to allow air and sunlight in those buildings

And still like by keeping these areas of like the balconies and all at a distance from each other so that people can have their quiet time and not interrupted by other people. So, this is something we find that was a solution for this building here the Kanchenjunga apartments. Whereas then in another project that is called the Belapur housing project and that took place in Navi Mumbai and in this one we find that he had taken a very different approach.

So, in Navi Mumbai during that time in 1990s, and during that time we find that there were not really too much of construction and many people from this Belapur village site they usually travel to Bombay for work and then they would come back. So here what the situation if we see in this village, so there were these huts and these individual houses and then many of them they had cattle.

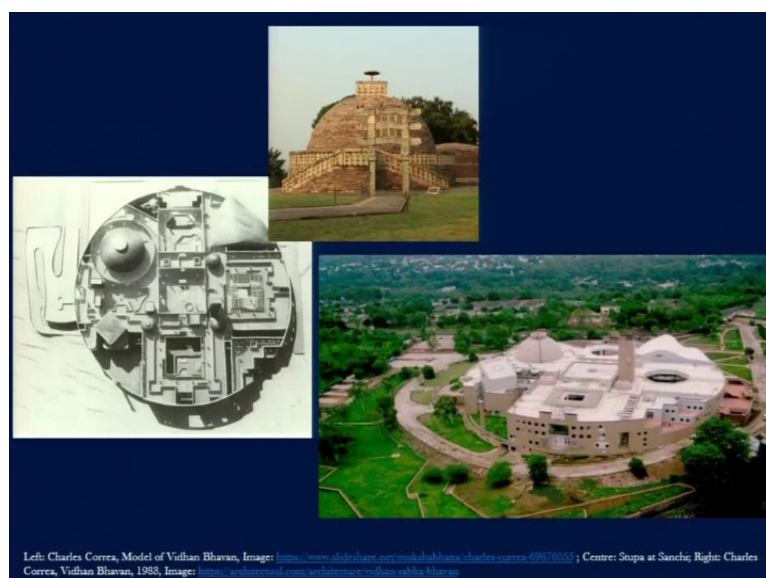
And those are the requirements that Charles Correa kept in mind when he developed this Belapur Housing project. And in this housing project as we can see that he went for horizon growth of this housing and in this village area there were people who encouraged meeting with each other unlike what we see in the urban spaces and then for that reason there was also a need for common areas for people to come together and meet and greet each other.

So, what we see in this Belapur Housing project, this is very humble in their outlook and modest materials were used for making this housing, but there is also provision, these open spaces for keeping cattle there. And then we also see that how there are this staircase which leads to this open space. People can also come from here, from here, all of them can gather in this open space which is surrounded by all those houses.

So, in that way what happens is that those ideas about meeting people, also keeping their cattle not abandoning them for the sake of this new housing, all those things were made possible in this architecture project. So, by that what I mean to say is how this architectural project of Charles Correa is highly contextual, at the same time it keeps the requirements of the people in mind.

At the same time the budget and then also how to develop their livelihood condition. So, in some ways we can say that this is perhaps a successful example of how the art and design can be employed in livelihood development.

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Another project by Correa that we find that is developing this Vidhan Bhavan or this Rajya Sabha Bhavan of Madhya Pradesh and for this one what we see that of course here we can see the model of this building and that is circular in its shape. And that sits on the top of a hill in Bhopal from where one can see the surrounding. And then this circular building also had its importance in terms of how the circle is one of the most stable shapes in the universe.

And we have discussed the utilization of circle in the Constitution of India, also if we see the Indian parliament, we also know how that also had this circular form there. So, this shape we find that also stood for Indian democracy and that was then repeated here in making this space that is the Vidhan Bhavan in Madhya Pradesh in Bhopal. Now, if we also see it was not just looking into this idea of democracy also the basic form of the circle, but it also had its reference from this nearby Sanchi Stupa.

So if we see the dome here that has a clear reference from the Sanchi Stupa which is situated around 30 kilometres from Bhopal. So, in other words what I am trying to say here is that he was involved in making this form which responds to the geometricity, which responds to this idea of democracy, but also acknowledging the rich history of this region in Madhya Pradesh and bringing all of those things together into an architectural form.

So that the history goes side by side with the daily proceedings of the Vidhan Bhavan and that also shows us the future of how to take the state and to ensure the prosperity of the people there. So, these are some of the things that we find that how history and then the exploration of form, and then context, all of these things they come together in Charles Correa's project.

So, the other thing what one needs to mention is that how in Charles Correa's project we see that there are those deliberate references to particular sites, so I have not included here more images, but for example if we think about the Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur there also we find that it is not just about referencing history of that particular region, but also looking into the city plans and bringing references from them also to understand that what kind of material can be used for expressing these thoughts.

So, in one of the open spaces, this one here as we see on screen, so there is this open courtyard and as I have already mentioned that Charles Correa was highly interested in allowing sunlight and air within the built architectural forms, so we see that this open courtyard was developed

as a space of meeting and then in this open courtyard we find that there were steps which almost replicate the stepwell forms or like the ghats where also people come and meet and then in the walls we have murals by Jangarh Singh Shyam.

Jangarh Singh Shyam is perhaps one of the most well-known Gond artists today. And during this time, we also find that how some of the artists did they came from the tribal and folk backgrounds, so Jangarh Singh Shyam certainly he is one of them that he came from the Gond community of Madhya Pradesh and he established himself as one of the most well-known contemporary Gond artists.

So, what we see here is that there is an acknowledgement of these different kinds of practices that sort of stay somewhere between history and contemporary practices, but also making them contextual for this very particular site. So, all these attempts were made by Charles Correa. So, this is something I would say that gives specificity to his project, whereas we find that there are if we compare that to what was happening with Corbusier.

So, if Corbusier was more interested in terms of like leaving a signature style in all the architecture he had built across the globe, then for Charles Correa we find that he was more interested, of course there are signs of his preferences, but he was more interested in terms of bringing different modes of knowledge production or bringing different kinds of references to this site, its history, its culture and people together into architecture.

So, for that reason, I think why this is important for us to understand architecture in the post-independence India side by side with the development of painting, sculpture, graphics and the media which are usually considered as the institutional fine art media. So, these are some of the overlapping we can find in these practices and that is the reason it is important for us to see that why understanding architecture or understanding these kinds of case studies can help us to understand the idea of art in a better way. Thank you.