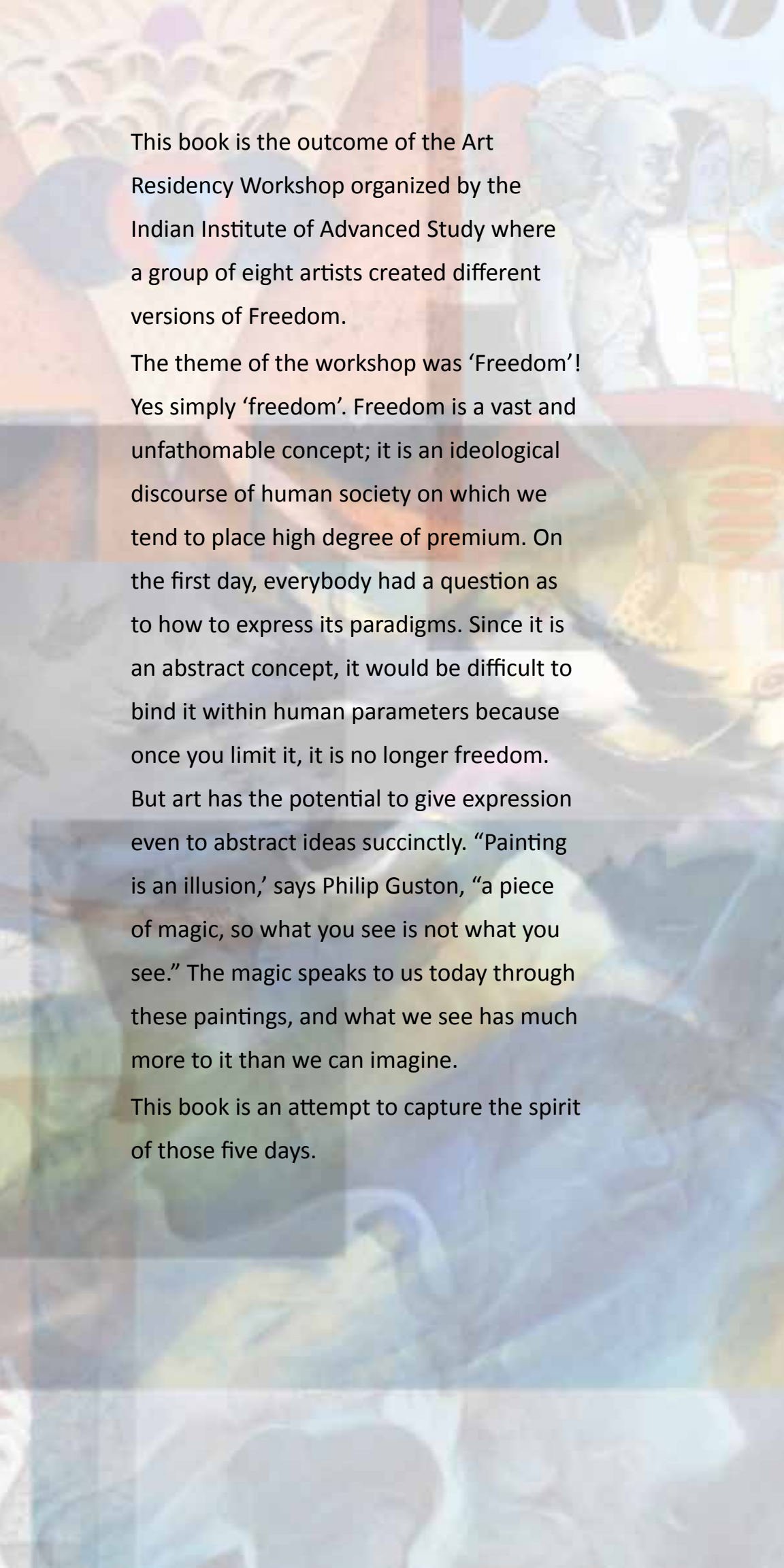


ARTISTS' ODE TO FREEDOM





This book is the outcome of the Art Residency Workshop organized by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study where a group of eight artists created different versions of Freedom.

The theme of the workshop was 'Freedom'! Yes simply 'freedom'. Freedom is a vast and unfathomable concept; it is an ideological discourse of human society on which we tend to place high degree of premium. On the first day, everybody had a question as to how to express its paradigms. Since it is an abstract concept, it would be difficult to bind it within human parameters because once you limit it, it is no longer freedom. But art has the potential to give expression even to abstract ideas succinctly. "Painting is an illusion," says Philip Guston, "a piece of magic, so what you see is not what you see." The magic speaks to us today through these paintings, and what we see has much more to it than we can imagine.

This book is an attempt to capture the spirit of those five days.

ARTISTS' ODE TO FREEDOM

USHA BANDE



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

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Dedicated to
Art and Artists
for the cheerful and colorful world they create

Before children speak, they sing;
Before they write, they paint;
As soon as they stand, they dance;
Art is the basis of human expression!

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USHA BANDE

THANK YOU to so many people who have been a part of this work of art for believing in me. That has been my strength!

Every book has a lot of people involved in it. Undoubtedly, the writer is at the core of it all, but without support system-- friends and colleagues, officials and librarians, peers and well-wishers—the writer cannot give his/her best.

First of all, I place on record my sincere gratitude to the Director for granting permission to document the journey of the artists in book form to keep the memory of the workshop preserved for future viewers and art lovers. The entire initiative of the workshop and the book would not have been possible without the direct and indirect support of the administrative machinery of the IIAS: Shri Prem Chand, then acting Secretary, the transport department making it convenient for me to commute; the administration ready with necessary arrangements; the canteen and mess providing timely tea and food; and the guest-artists who were more than happy to interact and talk

about their art. Besides, there was always the lively presence of Fellows and Associates of the Institute to cheer us.

A special thanks to Ujjawal Chathle and Yashodhara Raje Bundela, the two research scholars for sticking with me all through the five days of the workshop, helping me understand some tricky terms used in fine arts which often eluded me, clicking photographs and selecting them for publication. They need a special “shabash”.

Lastly, it was Prof Him Chatterjee’s idea to lock the five days into the form of a book for posterity. His suggestions as an artist and his tips were invaluable to frame the material. I thank him for giving me this wonderful opportunity.

FOREWORD

PROF NAGESHWAR RAO

Director, IAS

This book is an attempt to capture the spirit of the Art Workshop organized by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla with an aim to present a visual document for art lovers who may like to know about the artists and their creations displayed for public view. It is relevant to mention here that the Institute is celebrating Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM), an initiative of Govt. of India to mark 75 years of Indian independence. As part of AKAM this week-long National Art Workshop held from 26th October to 30th October is one among the series of seminars, conferences, lectures and workshops held from time to time.

The theme of the workshop was 'Freedom' and interestingly, the artists, though bound by the theme, were 'free' to evolve their own interpretation and offer individual perspectives of freedom. The finished paintings were just amazing in range; from Shiva as liberation incarnate; to Saraswati yantra signifying the freedom envisaged by gyan shakti, kriya shakti and dhyan shakti; to freedom as peace and love; to freedom offered by Mother Nature and much more. It was the

painters' journey. The journey signifies a condition of flux, symbolizing mental freedom to move from place to place, idea to idea. As the great Sufi poet says, "Go on a journey from self to self, my friend! Such a journey transforms this earth into a mine of gold."

The convener of the workshop, Prof Him Kumar Chatterjee did a good job in organizing the entire show right from planning stage to its final culmination. The idea that the proceedings of the workshop and the initial thought behind each painting be recorded for future reference was mooted by Prof Chatterjee which appealed to the Institute and Dr Usha Bande willingly accepted the challenge. The present volume is the outcome of their joint efforts.

The Institute is committed to encouraging forays into ever widening areas of knowledge. I am happy to give this book in the hands of the lovers of art and beauty. Surely, they will enjoy it and in their pleasure we would find fulfillment of our commitment.

WELCOME ADDRESS

PREM CHAND

Distinguished Participants, Fellows, Associates and employees of the Institute!

I, on behalf of the Institute, extend a very warm welcome and greetings to each one of you. My special gratitude and thanks to the participants who have come from different parts of the country for this five-day National Art Workshop. It is heartening to meet senior eminent artists who have travelled long distance to reach Shimla to participate in this workshop. I hope you had a comfortable journey and your stay in the Institute campus is comfortable. I take this opportunity to thank everyone for joining us and I once again welcome you all.

We have organized similar workshops in the past too. The first workshop was organized by Prof B.N. Goswami, one of the greatest art historians; the second one was organized by Prof Him Kumar Chatterjee; and for the present one, third in the series, the onus is again on Prof Him Chatterjee. I thank him for taking the lead so willingly and enthusiastically and compliment him for formulating and conceptualizing the overall format and theme of the workshop within a short time.

The theme of this workshop is Freedom. Considering the present context of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav when India is celebrating 75 years of its Independence, the theme is not only topical but also appropriate.

The workshop is different from our routine workshops in several ways:

first, the guest artists have been provided with all facilities to spend these five days in drawing and painting sitting in the comfort of their respective rooms; secondly, they have the liberty to focus on any facet of freedom and portray it on the canvas; since the connotation of freedom can be varied and vast each artist will be free to draw different versions and interpretations of freedom; and thirdly, at the end of the workshop these artworks and paintings will be displayed for public view and later these would be presented to the institute. Our august audience here may have noticed a wide range of paintings decorating the walls of the main building and our guest house. Let me mention that these paintings are the outcome of the previous workshops, thanks to Prof Him Chatterjee who made it possible for the Institute to proudly display these wonderful artworks. I am extremely happy and honored to have Dr Usha Bande, former fellow who agreed to compile and describe the journey of the artist and artwork of each artist and their thoughts on Freedom which will be published in the form of a book after the workshop.

At the end of the workshop, you will get an opportunity to witness the wide range of paintings which will be the outcome of this five-day workshop. I once again thank everyone for being a part of the inaugural function of this National Art Workshop and I hope our guests will enjoy their stay here.

On our behalf, I assure you that the Institute will try its level best to make your stay comfortable and memorable.

Thank you ever so much!

CONCEPT NOTE

PROF HIM CHATTERJEE

Good morning, everyone.

We all were waiting for this day and finally 26th is here and comfortably ensconced in the historic Seminar Hall we are ready to discuss and know the concept and ideas of Freedom. As Shri Prem Chand, just briefed about the history of our Art Workshop, the present one is the third in the series. I remember the day when Prof B.N Goswamy initiated the idea in 2008, to have an Art Workshop. It was titled 'Artist in Residency,' and was conceived as a kind of transdisciplinary event and was led by Prof B.N. Goswamy. After that, there was no looking back. I got the opportunity and privilege to organize many other workshops in 2010, 2012, 2013 and 2016. The 2016 workshop was the last one and it was on 'Essential Tagore' under the Tagore Institute. The intervening period was one of lull because of Covid-19. Now that the threat is over, we have again geared up to take up the challenge.

I would thank God for making it possible for us all to be together. The eminent artists are here with us in residency, and we are looking forward to have a fruitful week full of colors, deep thoughts and enthusiastic discussions on art. I thank the Institute and especially Prem Chand ji, for his suggestion and his inspiration to hold this workshop. I remember the day we were walking towards the Chaura Maidan when he knocked me awake, saying, "Prof Chatterjee ap bahut kuchch karte the, ab kuchch kar nahi rahe ho..." (translation- "Prof Chatterjee you used to do a lot of activities, but you are not doing that now"). That was a great stimulant for me. I said to myself, "Prof

Chatterjee do something for the Institute and let's again invite artists in residency." So, he is the spirit behind this workshop.

The mandate of the institute is that we have to work under one banner, one title as we generally used to do during earlier seminars and workshops. That means, we have to choose a theme. I understand that it is very difficult to impose a theme on an eminent artist; it would tantamount to saying, "look, we are taking away your freedom from you and giving you a subject." A big challenge, indeed! I had to do the intimidating job of inviting the eminent artists and tell them, "You have to think freely on Freedom."

Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, a great national festival, is being celebrated across the country in all universities, institutions and government bodies and organizations. My thought process zeroed in on 'freedom' as the theme. Freedom is there but we are celebrating the amrit, amrit is freedom, freedom's freedom. When we think about freedom we always go back to history of national freedom, but in the true sense for an artist, a poet, a dancer, a thinker, freedom is very special. Freedom is important for creativity – be it a painting, a sculpture, a dance step, a musical note or a literary piece.

Freedom is of three types – freedom from, freedom to and freedom to be. Of the three, the first freedom from is an aspect of our 'dhyani shakti' where we have freedom from, let us say 'freedom from Covid' or freedom from our economic problems and the like. Freedom to, governed by our 'kriya shakti' indicates the role of action. Here we

are engaged in creating something, like freedom to write, freedom to speak, freedom to paint, freedom to dance. Freedom to be is governed by our 'ichcha shakti', the will power which leads to the concept of Being. Humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow, in his theory of 'Being' postulates that people have an inborn desire for self-actualization, which the Gita calls self-realization, that is, to be all they can be. Creativity leads to peak experience and self-actualization.

An artist thinks visually -- be he/she a litterateur, dancer, sculptor or even thinker. For artists, even freedom is envisaged in visual form and a kind of visual connectivity with freedom is forged in everybody's mind.

Freedom is a concept, an idea, an ideology. For the artists of this art event, the first day may be blank. Our slate is wiped clean -- we have only one blank white canvas, it will get its colorful existence soon after. The end-product, we all are sure will be eye-catching with an explosion of colors and freedom coming to the forefront as a concrete idea.

This is an ice-breaking session and I, as convener, welcome you all -- eminent artists, fellows, associates, and all distinguished guests --from the bottom of my heart; I also welcome you on behalf of the Institute. I hope and I strongly believe that on 30th that is the final day of this workshop we all are bound to be pleasantly surprised to see the marvel worked on the white canvas, some innovative ideas that give shape to 'Freedom'. As is said, "One picture says greater than a thousand words."

Though our artists have been bound by the theme, they are indeed free to think, discuss, to converse with the canvas, and create 'Freedom' each as per his vision, assigning forms and texture to the canvas. We have lodged you in Siddharth Vihar to savor the freedom of creativity, to knock on your artist friends' doors, and exchange notes on the process. This time, we have thought of organizing the process of creativity in the form of a coffee table book with small write-ups illustrated by photographs of the artist and his work so that the efforts of our artists are not lost in time. Visitors to the Institute, who wish to know about the paintings and the artists can have access to the book. For this, the onus falls on Dr Usha Bande, former fellow of the Institute who has been specially invited to watch and discuss the process daily. These paintings would be placed in the Art Gallery in the Museum for the benefit of visitors who can have a visual treat of these wonderful creations. The artist leaves his work behind but the work binds the time and the thought. If we combine the time and the thought with the written document the essence of your thought would live forever.

So friends, I hope these four days would be fulfilling for us all, evocative of creative freedom and the joy of innovation.

Thank You

KEY-NOTE

DR USHA BANDE

I am glad to be a part of this National Art Workshop and be in the august company of eminent artists. For me it is going to be a new experience. I am not an artist, never painted or drawn except as a child as we all do; but I love art, I love the colors, the perfection and the deep ideas artists incorporated in their work. My love for painting resurfaced after I came into contact with Prof Him Chatterjee and his father Prof Sanat Chatterjee, a veteran artist and our colleague in the college. With them I learnt that art does not mean just dabbing colors on canvas; on the contrary, art has deep psychological, philosophical, mythological and tantric meaning besides its aesthetic value. This Art Workshop offers an occasion for art lovers to experience the beauty of creativeness in the pristine backdrop of the IIAS.

Art and artists change the world we live in by adding new paradigms to our perceptions about life. Artist's touch is 'The Touch of the Master' as Myra Brooks Welch's poem puts it. Sweet musical strains flow from a violin lying as junk in a pawn-shop when a musician picks it up, tightens the knobs and touches the strings. This is what God, the great artist, does to us when we come close to Him. This is what happens when an artist touches the white canvas with his brush and lends it shape. This is artistic freedom to wring out the best from something non-descript.

The theme of this workshop is 'Freedom.' But this one-word-theme has massive potential to fill in reams of paper with literary outpourings; it can sound the bugle of liberty; it can make music; and it can lend

color to the canvas. The term is broad and deep and intense. When we talk of freedom in terms of Art we enter into cultural, socio-political, metaphysical and psychological fields. Art is a cultural activity with its own eco-system that has symbiotic activities at its base. Being associated with culture, art cannot be insular; it requires participation, encouragement, and mutuality. Since the last decade, several art workshops have been held at the IIAS, Shimla with some unique themes.

Shimla, with its salubrious weather, scenic grandeur and its azure blue sky, is ideally suited for art ventures like these. Besides, the atmosphere of IIAS is meaningful as the edifice has been a witness to history; it vibrates with memories of yore when we were fighting for our freedom, that is, political freedom.

During their stay at the Institute the artists would savor artistic and physical freedom as they move around the IIAS campus, enjoying its soothing ambiance. This would be their physical freedom. Spotting different meanings in the same environment with different intensity, and expressing it with different colors would be their artistic freedom.

I am tempted to recount a story I recently read: a teacher, to keep her class 1 students occupied, told them to draw her (their teacher). What the children sketched was just amazing. How each child saw the teacher differently was the crux of the drawings. The teacher shared some of the sketches on her Instagram and the netizen-parents enjoyed seeing the teacher with a broad smile though in reality the

teacher was known as a serious sort who would rarely smile, some showed her with two pleats like a little girl and so on. This apparently insignificant exercise can have bigger meaning. It shows how each one of us sees the reality differently and how we choose to represent it as we see it. No two persons can see identical meaning in a thing. “Do you see what I see,” is a consequential proposition. It is a matter of perception and vision. On the same analogy, each artist’s perception of ‘Freedom’ would be different and it would be enlightening to see the outcome at the end of the workshop.

Art is a pleasurable activity; it gives pleasure -- the pleasure of idle curiosity; but it also enlarges the field of freedom by giving us the pleasure of imagination. If man had no imagination, he would not have choice. Freedom means freedom to choose – choice of action, choice of value judgment, and choice of authority. Artistic freedom can be defined as the “freedom to imagine, create and distribute diverse cultural expressions free of any interference or pressures”. Generally, artistic freedom describes the extent of independence artists obtain to create art freely. He/she has the choice of action and artistic expression and also choice to take part in cultural life. In 2013, the Human Rights Council of the UN put forward artistic freedom as a basic human right that included the right to create and right to participate in cultural life. It stresses the range of fundamental freedoms indispensable for artistic expression and creativity.

It is a matter of our national pride that the Indian Constitution is an artistically oriented document having illustrated plates of Nandlal Bose’s paintings, ascertaining visual identity of the nation; again it is heartening to know that one of the paintings depicts the Himalayas -- a manifestation of our national, cultural and geographical identity. Hand-written in beautiful calligraphy with each page decorated with floral border, the document signifies that nationhood and national identity are not imaginary entities, existing as representation; they are like faith, a belief that sustains and responds to the human desire to belong, to be rooted.

Human beings are creative by nature. Man has a sense of wonder; and the natural phenomena, the elements like nature, people, religion and even imaginative thinking have captivated and inspired him. He expresses his awe and wonder through various art forms, and painting

gives him the outlet to give visual representation to his ideas and imaginations. Being a visual medium it evokes our feelings of joy, sadness, anger and pain. Being subjective in nature it can appeal in different ways to different people who marvel at the shape of things.

Albeit, it is natural for humans to live with the sense of wonder and retain it all through their lives. This has given us our paintings, our sculptures, dances and music, tales of miracles, our myths and legends, stories of gods and demons and at the human level, travel accounts to unknown lands. It is the sense of wonder that keeps us active, discovering, going on and renewing ourselves. If we stop being moved by it, we shall become a deadpan, losing all excitement of living, giving in to depressive thoughts.

Sense of wonder brings us face to face with the Immanent, the sublime. The sublime initially disturbs our sense of rational, natural classification but by expanding the consciousness inward it generates response to the objective world. Those who are aware of the force that moves the universe, stay attuned to it which ultimately leads them to cheerfulness and contentment. That is the key to their childlike happiness and their aura of youthfulness. When William Wordsworth wrote cheerfully, “My heart leaps up when I behold/ A rainbow in the sky,” he gave expression to his sense of wonder and seamlessly blended the poetic, the scientific and the contemplative.

In simple words, “to wonder” means to admire, to be amazed, to be in awe, to marvel. It also stands for a strange or remarkable phenomenon. Sense of wonder signifies developing an approach to life whereby one is moved by the new, the bright and the exciting. It can be anything: observing children at play, grooming creativity, taking to photography or travelling. Indeed, in short, it means being “alive”. Art is dynamic with ever evolving new forms, styles and trends. An artist wants his art to speak to the viewers and interpret his ideas in a variety of ways. Art opens up new streams of consciousness, appeals to the subconscious and intends to personally touch every person that comes across it.

Freedom brings us to the question of freedom from and freedom to, as envisaged by Eric Fromm. Freedom from means ‘to be free from restrictions’. Freedom to is a positive idea; it generates feeling

of belongingness. The artists here have freedom to paint as they wish. One often wonders if it is liberty we take pride in or freedom. What do we enjoy liberty or freedom?

Restraints generate conflict when new values clash with the established value-system and people feel resentful of restrictions. But, freedom can never be absolute. Rousseau's famous dictum, "man is born free but everywhere he is in chains" voices the fact that freedom presupposes restraints. It is never perfect or permanent. A political thinker, Lorin McMakin puts it thus, "freedom denotes the absence of restraints, its referent is the ability to choose. A person is free to the extent that he is not controlled; he is free when he can choose his action."

Whatever be the distinction between liberty and freedom, both require vigilance and restrictions – vigilance so that liberty and freedom are preserved; and restrictions so that these are made authentic and workable. All these 75 years, we have enjoyed the freedom vouchsafed to us by our Constitution; we have had the liberty to live as we wish to live. We have thanked our stars for being the citizens of a free country that values freedom and liberty both – a country of democratic spirit.

When Rabindranath Tagore wrote his poem "Where the Mind is Without Fear" and prayed to God to let his country awake into the dawn of freedom, he had in his mind the highest connotation of freedom --freedom of thought and action, freedom to pursue honest dreams and freedom to discard narrow-minded parochialism and embrace a broad-minded approach. Freedom has existential and psychological connotations besides social and political.

He wrote:

Where the mind is without fear
And the head is held high
....
Into that dawn of freedom,
Let my country awake."

The creative process is "painful" as Khushwant Singh puts it. It originates in the mind, interacts with the world outside and takes shape. Sheer hard work, dogged persistence and a lot of perspiration are mixed with inspiration. The story of the spider and king Bruce holds good here too, as ever. It is "try and try again boys, try and try again."

And once you take the road there is no stopping en route. Like Robert Frost's rider going through the 'snowy woods' and reminded of the 'promises to keep', one must always remember to go on, not to digress but to persist.

This workshop gives freedom to the artist to choose, to create and to express themselves as witness to the glorious year of the diamond jubilee of our freedom.

Let us not compromise these—whether liberty or freedom.

This way lies our survival!



JOURNEY OF THE ARTISTS STARTS

The journey begins as the white canvases of first day slowly acquired background colors – orange, or green or blue or yellow. Texture came into being. The second day, vague figures could be seen, third day these figures took shape and fourth day we saw what was in front of us. Day 5, all the works were displayed in the lounge.

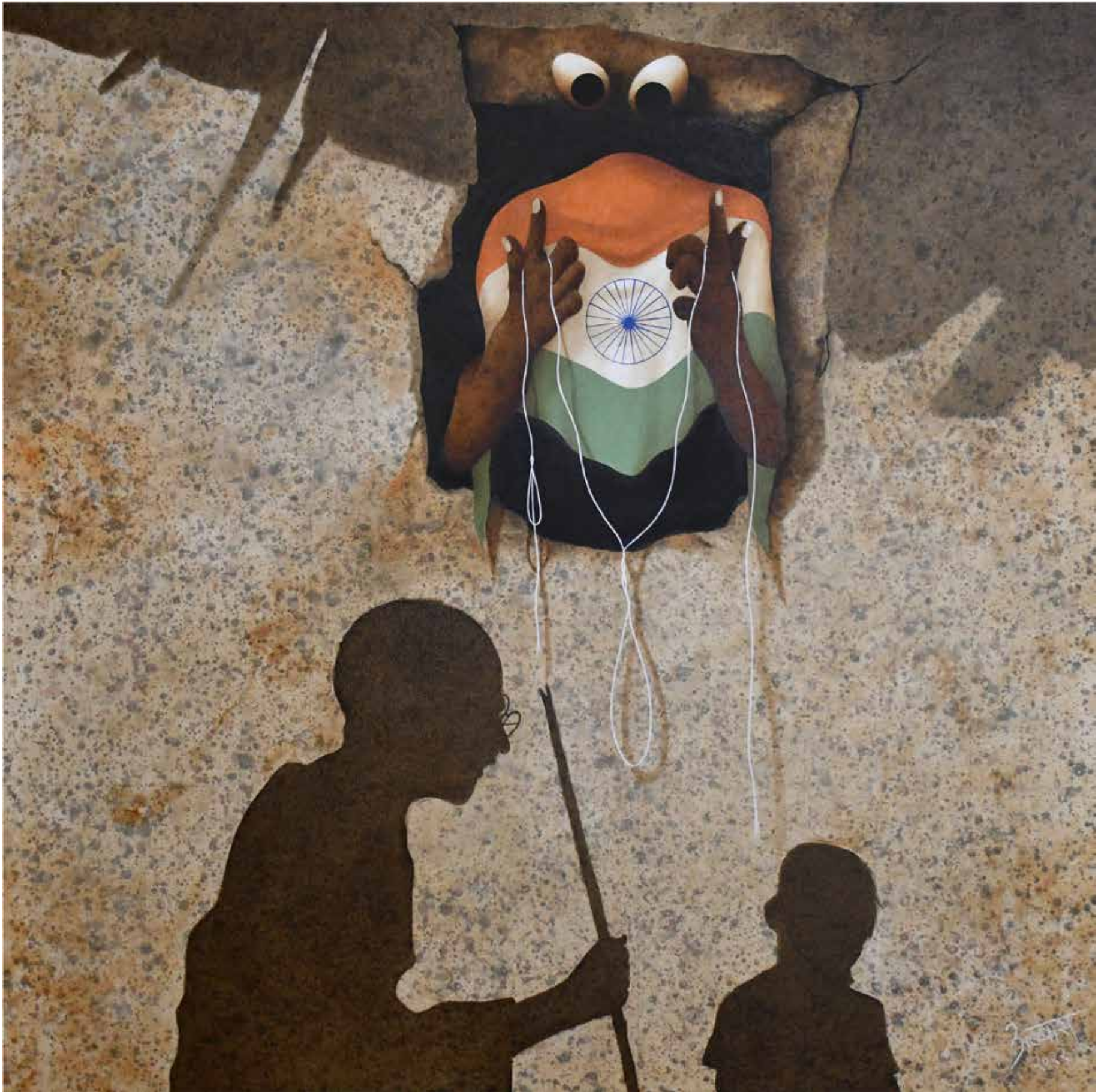


Ravinder Sharma

CHIDAKASHI/चिदाकाश

Ravinder Sharma's concept of freedom has Kashmiri Shaivism as its inspiration. Shiva in deep blue colors symbolizes peace and meditation. Shiva, the Pashupati Nath is looking out of the bondage of painting and setting us free from our animal instincts. The female devotee in the painting is releasing the snake of bondage;

it is the ego. The lotus bud suggests freedom from the quagmire of the worldly desires, ego and Maya. These are the 'Pash' that bind us. Shiva is egoless and that is why He is 'Freedom' incarnate. "Freedom embraces us in a thousand ways," explained Shri Ravinder Sharma who presents his concept of freedom through Kashmiri Shaivism.



Abbas Batliwala

FREEDOM


Abbas Batliwala looks at freedom from the kaleidoscope of his semi-realistic style. He says he painted the Tiranga on the canvas first and the texture evolved later slowly with each stroke. The Tiranga signifies 75 years of our Independence. Two big protruding all-seeing eyes are watchful; two hands with fingers holding a thread are balancing freedom. Freedom is a philosophical concept

reflecting an inalienable human right to realize our human will. Freedom begins exactly where a person deliberately restricts himself. Outside of freedom one cannot realize the wealth of his inner world and his capabilities. Interestingly, eyes and the thread are Batliwala's signature style -- always present in his works.



S. Pranam Singh

JOY AND HOPE OF FREEDOM

 Pranam Singh shows the happy abandon of a female figure. Look at it closely and you will realize that she is Mother India -- youthful, joyous, and ecstatic in the kingdom of pastel colors. She is free and is in a mood of celebration. Other symbols of freedom are painted with subtle touches -- tiranga above and a chain with a locket of Ashok Chakra. The predominant

color in his work is blue --the color of peace and depth. The beauty of this work lies in its expressive body language. A ray of light peeping through the blue color and other subtle touches are in harmony with the cultural context of the country. Ultimately, the canvas is transformed into an explosion of colors.



V. Nagdas

FREE FROM FREEDOM

For V. Nagdas, freedom is not a word, it is an ideology. He opines that painting should be commensurate with the socio-political reality of the times which he represents in his present work. There are emaciated, lean and thin people, hungry looking human beings, suffering down-trodden poor. They are depicted through their thin legs and feet signifying destruction. The tree is

black and dry; it is just a standing log, inert log. But the artist is not pessimistic. He sees hope as some leaves sprout on the dry tree indicative of new growth. Masks, knives, scissors are elements of destruction while the capsicum chilly lying nearby is the belief which sustains life.

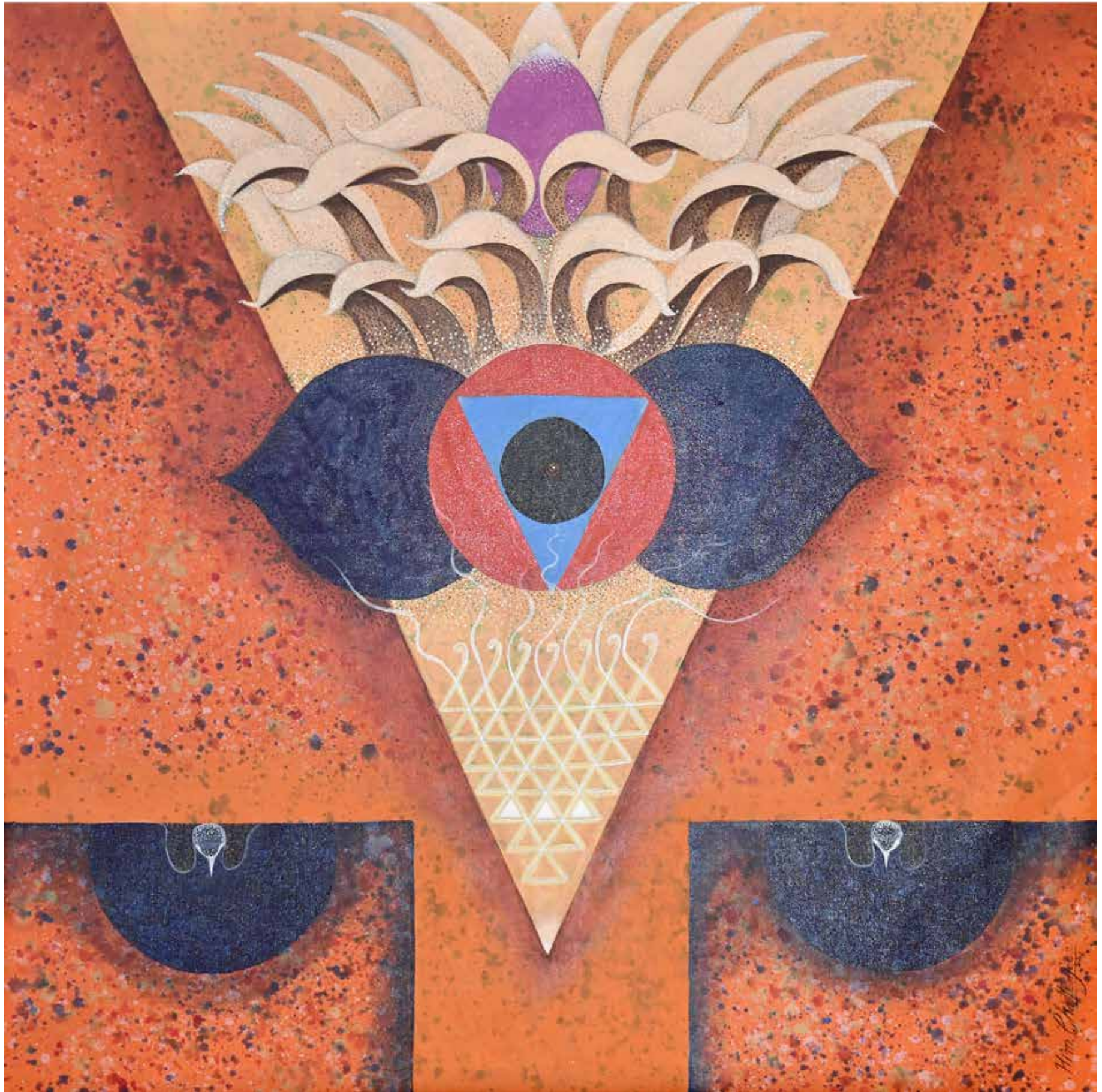


Ram Viranjan

MOTHER NATURE


Ram Viranjan's style is dominated by nature. His painting of Mother Nature has almost Shakespearean vision of art holding mirror to Nature. It is full of myriad colors of Nature that brighten his art piece. Mother Nature is the central focus with birds, flowers, leaves and people surrounding her. According to him

Nature gives you freedom, but she likes freedom to be within bounds otherwise it turns un-freedom. Take what you need, enjoy and do not destroy or exploit. Nature is beautiful and bountiful; there is nothing more beautiful than nature.



Him Chatterjee

THE FLOWERING OF FREEDOM

rof Him Chatterjee represents freedom with Saraswati yantra supplemented by Gyan Chakra and Saharstra Chakra. Freedom resides in the brain, if your brain is clogged you cannot create may it be literature or sculpture or any other art form. One needs freedom to create and this can be achieved through invoking 'Shakti' the energy which resides in its subtle form in Dhyan,

Kriya and Ichcha. He elaborates his concepts of freedom to, from and freedom to be through Dhyan shakti, Kriya shakti and ichcha shakti. Orange color in his painting depicts knowledge and wisdom, the two eyes are symbolic of watchfulness and the birds denote freedom. The red spiral is our thought process that goes into every creation.



Rama Suresh

FREEDOM

Rama Suresh's specialty is his impasto technique using knife, rollers and filter rollers on colors to give depth to his works and etch out rough surface. A human figure with tiranga fluttering on his back denotes his concept of freedom which corresponds to amrit mahotsav of azadi. Birds flying freely in the sky highlight a sense of abandon –symbolic of freedom; the sense of place (Shimla) prevails with a faint depiction of hills in the background.

What one notices in this work is the transparency of the Tiranga through which a viewer can see the figure of the man who is carrying it on his back. Symbolically, the onus of preserving our precious freedom is on the shoulders of us all—the citizens of India. Rama opines that he wants his art to appeal to everyone and be understood by people of all walks of life. The present painting is eloquent. The texture is rough.



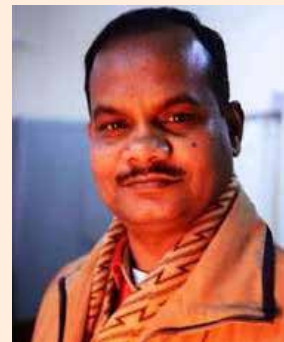
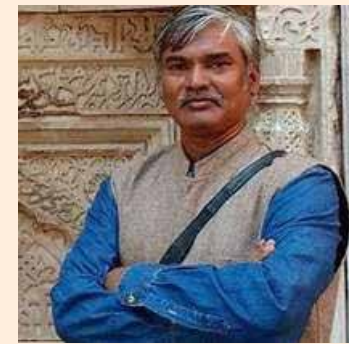
Ajay Samir

DIVINE FREEDOM

Ajay Sameer's pen and ink drawing in origami style equates freedom with peace and love. With his pen and ink as drawing tools, mixed with paint he has produced a human form with a combination of origami and represented freedom as peace and love beautifully rendered through butterflies, doves and the folding and unfolding of the geometrical patterns. Peace and love are universal

human values eulogized as satya, dharma, shanti, prem in our metaphysical thought. A faint smile on the lips of the human figure and peace on his face exhibits the spiritual peace that freedom from bondage brings. The lock and key are symbolic of opening a locked mind and setting it free.

ARTISTS AT A GLANCE



RAVINDER SHARMA



Born in 1957 Ravinder Sharma hails from a remote village in the picturesque Himachal Pradesh. His fascination towards art started from his childhood which led him to pursue it later in life as a career. Shri Ravinder Sharma did his Diploma in Art and Craft from the Government College of Art, Chandigarh and his Post Graduation in History of Art from Punjab University. He retired from the College of Art, Chandigarh as the Head of the Art History Department. Shri Sharma continues to serve the cause of Art in various capacities – as Vice-chairman of the Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi, and President of Shankar Bharti, Panchkula. His works are part of many museums and art galleries and

are also in the private collections of Art lovers in India as well as abroad. His forte is Kashmiri Shaivism which he explores through painting.

Founder Director RSAA (Ravinder Sharma Art Academy), Shri Sharma is an inspiration to many.

In the words of the artist, “Art enables us to seek the latent powers of our spirits. In the frenzy of creativity, we could experience those unknown realms of our spirits where the drop of experience emanates the joy of becoming an ocean.”

ABBAS BATLIWALA



Abbas Batliwala was born in Udaipur in 1958. He did his Masters in painting from the University of Udaipur in the year 1982 and after that he became a freelance artist. He has participated in various art exhibitions and has received various awards as well. In 1991, Triennale India established him as a painter of mundane. His initial works include folk motives inspired by Mollela folk sculptures near his hometown, though his later work shows a delineation of the folk motifs into varying moods. The characteristic element of his works are the 'eyes' which can be seen in all his creations. The artist has been a part of several art shows such as 6th Asian Art Biennale, Bangladesh, 7th Triennale, India to name a few. He

has been a part of numerous art camps and seminars as well. His work is in the collection of the galleries of India and abroad.

Batliwala draws his subjects from his surroundings, and his varied creations can be termed as his interpretations of the activities of the world around him. He uses realistic imagery with contorted elements such as his own hands in his work. Apart from 'eyes' he uses thread as one of his reoccurring elements. He belongs to the Bohra Community and many of his compositions also are composed on this theme as well.

S. PRANAM SINGH



Born in 1958, in Imphal, the capital of Manipur, S. Pranam Singh is a well-known artist from the North-East. He received his Arts training from Govt. College of Art & Craft, Kolkata and did his MFA from Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan in 1985. The artist is a recipient of the Senior Fellowship in Painting from the Deptt. of Culture, Govt. of India from 2000 to 2002. He has held a large number of solo shows such as at the Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai - 1988, 1991, 1995, 2001, 2008, 2015 and Sirjana Art Gallery, Kathmandu, Nepal-1996 just to name a few and also participated

in more than 150 group shows held in India and abroad. A glorious moment came when he was commissioned to create an oil painting of 9 Mahapurush sized 4.5x6.5 ft. by the Vidhan Sabha, Raipur, Chhattisgarh Govt which is now installed in the Central Hall.

His style is mostly figurative, beautifully complimented by dynamic and expressive strokes. At present he is heading the Deptt. of Painting, Faculty of Visual Arts, BHU, Varanasi.

V. NAGDAS



Nagdas was born in 1957 at Palghat in Kerala, India. The artist did his National Diploma in Painting from College of Fine Art, Trivandrum, Kerala in 1982. In 1984 he did his post diploma in Graphic Art from Kalabhavan, Viswabharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal under the able guidance of Somnath Hore. Since 1986 the artist is working at the Department of Graphics, Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya, Khairagarh, Chhattisgarh.

Recipient of several prestigious awards such as “B.C. Sanyal Award”

for Achievements as Artist and Art Teacher by Collage of Art, New Delhi, the artist has been actively participating in Art events in India and abroad. V. Nagdas has exhibited his works in a number of solo and group shows in India and abroad.

The beauty of his works lies in his socio-cultural-political approach to exhibit the contemporary problems through Art. His creations can be called a mirror to the things happening in and around us. The artist wishes to evoke emotions of his viewer through his creations to generate awareness.

RAM VIRANJAN



Ram Viranjan was born in 1964 in Chitrakoot, Uttar Pradesh. He did B.A. from the University of Allahabad and his post-graduation in painting from the University of Allahabad in 1988. His work was exhibited in many solo exhibitions such as Astana, Kazakhstan at Russian Culture centre and Jahangir Art Gallery, Mumbai to name a few. He has been a part of numerous group shows in India and abroad as well as various national and international seminars and conferences. He also participated workshops such as All India Art workshop at Gita Jayanti Mahotsava at Kurukshetra organized by Department of Culture, Government of Haryana and International art workshop organized by A La Prima, Astana, Kazakhstan held at Burabay. He has received numerous awards such

as Kala Award by Kausa trust, Amritsar, the Raja Ravi Verma award of honor by Megh Mandal Sansthan. Rajasthan. His work is in the collection of various galleries of India and abroad.

His artistic compositions capture the harmony between flora and fauna. Through his paintings, the artist hopes to convey and spread the gospel of a peaceful world. The overlapping forms are beautifully combined with complementary and monochromatic color schemes, which are simplified yet thoroughly detailed. He is currently the Dean, Faculty of Indic Studies and Professor Department of Fine Art, Kurukshetra.

HIM CHATTERJEE



Him Chatterjee was born in 1968 in Shimla. He showed an early propensity towards the Arts. He developed his talents and made a name for himself in this field under the guidance of his father Shri Sanat Kumar Chatterjee, the pioneer of the Bengal School of Art. Recently, he was honored by the Vice Chancellor for making the longest Outdoor Mural of the World at New Delhi and was given Award of Honor by the Governor and also by the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh for his contribution to Art and beautification of H.P. University Campus. An artist of national and international repute, Him Chatterjee has hosted numerous solo shows, group shows and has the honor of being in the collection of several art galleries in India and abroad. His most notable and recent contribution is the Mural over 28,991 sq m area at the Integrated Transit Corridor in New Delhi as the World's largest Outdoor Art Mural.

An academic as well as a practitioner of visual arts, the artist beautifully balances both these aspects and ably combines them in his art. His works exude the fragrance of spirituality which when combined with his knowledge and expertise in technique mesmerize the viewers.

Needless to say, Him Kumar Chatterjee's creations are a direct reflection of his love for the grandeur of the Himalayas. The myriad plains, the expressive strokes combined with a balanced use of light and shade through colors take you into a world of their own. At present Prof. Him Chatterjee is the Dean of the Faculty of Performing and Visual Arts, Himachal Pradesh University.

RAMA SURESH



M. Rama Suresh was born in 1976 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. He completed his Bachelor's and Master's of Fine Arts in Painting from Govt. College of Arts & Crafts, Chennai. During his early college days, Rama Suresh was deeply inspired by K. M. Adimoolam. As a part of numerous solo and group shows in India and abroad, and of Art camps and workshops, Rama Suresh is a name to reckon with in the Art field not only in Tamil Nadu but also across the country. He has received prestigious awards like Karnataka Lait Kala Academy Award, "KalaiValar Mani", Tamil

Nadu. The artist's work is in the collection of many private and public collections in India and abroad.

Rama Suresh's style has the fragrance of the typical Indian character and the technique that he follows is impasto which gives a feel of a low relief. His realistic compositions show the backs of his subjects; this is done intentionally as the artist wishes to portray emotion through gestures and postures of the people. He uses varied textures in his paintings that have the ability to visually mesmerize the viewer.

AJAY SAMIR



Ajay Kumar Samir did his Masters from the College of Art, Delhi. He was inclined towards Art from early childhood which he nurtured gradually. The artist has exhibited his creations in numerous solo shows in various galleries such as Jahangir Art Gallery, Mumbai and Triveni Art Gallery, Delhi and many more. A recipient of many awards such as the AIFACS All India Award (For Drawing) in 2003 Ajay Sameer has participated in about forty art camps, group shows and has the honor of being in the collection of

national, and international galleries as also in private collections.

Ajay Sameer works in pen and ink on paper. His treatment of drawing is similar to painting. He creates a base initially and then layers it with consecutive tones and textures. His work is symbolic and often poetic as well, where he transforms the realistic forms which are derived from Indian themes yet represented in a western style with the use of origami and cubistic treatment to them.

APPRECIATORY NOTE

PROF SACHIDANANDA MOHANTY

The week-long residency in art at the premier Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, brought together an eminent group of artists from all over the country. Curated by Prof Him Chatterjee, himself an artist of repute, an academic and the Manager of a well-known local art gallery, it was ably coordinated by Prof Usha Bande, acclaimed author/translator/critic and an aficionado of local culture. The festival drew an impressive gathering of art lovers, comprising students, visitors and the larger academic community of the Institute. Housed in the salubrious campus of the Siddharth Vihar Complex, the artists, meditative and lost in their world, carried out their artwork undisturbed in individual rooms, while breaking for meals at the Dining Room of the Guest House. It could not have been more ideal or idyllic than that!

The theme of the workshop was Freedom: the oeuvre dedicated to the 75th anniversary of India's Independence. The artists used their imagination to paint, creating a rich kaleidoscope of colourful images giving free play to their artistic sensibility.

While the artists and viewers came up with commentary and interpretations in the valedictory program, it was worth pondering as to what the real meaning and message were behind the impressive artwork that captivated all, including the artists themselves.

One recalls in this context, the place of Art amidst the squalor of the mid-Victorian culture. What was the answer of contemporary thinkers/artists like John Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti to the crisis of the 19th Century England? Art was to them a palliative, an antidote to the money-tainted industrial capitalism, aptly termed by Thomas Carlyle as 'cash nexus.' Others like Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde championed 'Art for Art's sake as a fin-de-siècle movement that would continue to have an afterlife.

During the first decades of the 20th Century, we meet the examples of Ananda Coomaraswamy, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo who drew our attention to the indigenous roots of Art; they signaled the way Art could serve the goals of an Indian Renaissance and free us from the shackles of a foreign Rule. In his pivotal book *The National Value of Art*, Sri Aurobindo declared that while every Indian need not be an artist, each of us ought to develop the artistic spirit. Thus, from the movement, Art for Art's sake, we now move to Art for the Nation's sake. In the Arya phase of his writings, especially in *The Foundations of Indian Culture* and *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo would go further and underline the essential function of Art. In the best and most profound sense, he declared, Art is spiritual in character and serves the goal of reaching the Divine.

As one viewed the art displayed in the foyer of the hall leading to the wood-paneled library, nearly a century old, one had the unmistakable feeling that the best of the paintings on display contained a higher touch; they captured quintessentially the meaning of Freedom that constitutes the bedrock of our nationhood. What we beheld,

mesmerized, was not so much a spectacle of colours on the canvas that meant different things to different people; rather it contained magically what the critic Walter Benjamin memorably called the aura behind the artwork. It is time the Nation moved towards such a meaning of Art.

Prof Sachidananda Mohanty, Ph.D., was formerly Professor and Head, Department of English, University of Hyderabad, [an Institution of Eminence], and Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Odisha.

POEMS

DR ANAND KUMAR

Note: Inspired by the total ambience of the five-day art workshop, Prof Anand Kumar, Fellow at the Institute offered to read two of his poems at the Valedictory Function, that are reproduced below. Uncannily, the metaphors, similes and images appearing in these poems written long back fit in the artistic creations of Freedom.

LOCKS FOR THE KEY

The crow took a fancy
To the metal key
That glinted unusually
In the twilight
Each morning.
It disappeared at noon
In the heat of June.

On the top of a grave
Shrouded by a thorny thicket
In a remote field,
It had its own magic-mind;
The key
Fixed the crow's sight,
And stiffened its neck.

Too surreal!
The hill, the thicket
The grave and the key.

The crow struggled
And succeeded in rescuing
The ignited key and ending
His meditation spread over days
And nights, sunshine and twilight.

One day,
The key lay at my window,
Overlooking the thicket
And the tree that harboured
The meditative sufi

On its huge, still arms
For days and weeks
Till his enchantment broke
And he got it into its beak.

The beautiful key
Had to be fitted in a lock,
Good as itself.

An ancient gnome
In catacombs of Mehrauli*
Cawed
To make a good one
As he had done in the past
With such orphaned keys.

But this was too special.
The key was a marvel.

He forged locks,
Finely fitting
But not enough complicated
As the one he wanted
For this artefact.

Each night the horror
Dismantled the old,
Assembled a new one
Demonstrating his acumen
In devising problems
For one, simple solution.

* Mehrauli is the oldest town of Delhi with continuous habitation for over a thousand years. It has sprawling graveyards of sultans of Delhi and other ancient monuments including Qutub Minar.

Published in *Creative Mind*, 2013. April 7, 2011

THE MAYA

Grey fish
sketched on the air
drifted in with the wind
through the window
on the sea face.

Sweeping through papers
and pencils,
the inkpot,
the paperknife,
the swarm flew out
through the window
opposite the fish market
leaving me startled,
rocking on the chair.

Salmon rained on the street
like green bills
hurled in the air
by a mad man
across the faces of urchins

and poor old women
following a VIP's cortege.

Looted and chopped,
fresh fish were put on sale.

The miracle
was soon forgotten
as they noisily bargained.

It became insignificant
that not only fish
but the buyers,
the sellers,
stalls,
the road
and all others on it,
too,
were sketched in the air
by a stub of khol.

*Published in *The Screech Owl* (Sussex, UK), 2013 1:30 a.m., August 2, 2011.

Prof Anand Kumar, MD, FAMS, is a National Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. He is a Fellow of the National Academy of Medical Sciences. A poet-physician, he retired from All India Institute of Medical Sciences as Head of the Department. He served as Director, Literary Festivals of SAARC & BIMSTEK under the Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL) till recently.

VALEDICTORY

DR USHA BANDE

I start my address today with a quote by Andy Wahol which seems relevant here: “Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it.”

Today is the day of the culmination of the journey we started on 26th October 2022. Officially, it is “Art Workshop” but I choose to call it “Workshop of Beauty and Color”. When an artist creates his piece, his entire personality is drenched in color and beauty. Art is his worship, his offering to the divine being. We experienced this sense of worship of beauty for four days as we flitted across the Siddharth Vihar Complex, from room to room to see each artist at his work in progress. When I say ‘we’ I mean Ujjawal and Yashodhara, two Arts research scholars who were with me.

This has been the eight artists’ journey from blank surfaces of the canvas to eight different paintings, with different perceptions of the main theme “Freedom” -- an eventful journey from day one to day five. It has been not only a journey in colors but also a thought-provoking journey of companionship and renewal of friendship. In a ‘Tiny Dragon and Big Panda’ strip, James Norbury’s the Big Panda asks, “which is more important, the journey or the destination?” To which the Tiny Dragon replies, “The Company.” On the same analogy, when we met here on the first day most of us were blank, like the canvas, particularly we, the fellows and the associates gathered here who were not acquainted with the guest artists. However, some of the invited artists, old friends were now reviving their friendships. And then

slowly we developed companionship and now as we come to the end of the journey, we feel fortunate to have artist friends.

The theme of the workshop was ‘Freedom’! Yes simply ‘freedom’. Freedom is a vast and unfathomable concept; it is an ideological discourse of human society on which we tend to place high degree of premium. On the first day, everybody had a question as to how to express its paradigms. Since it is an abstract concept, it would be difficult to bind it within human parameters because once you limit it, it is no longer freedom. But art has the potential to give expression even to abstract ideas succinctly.

The joys of freedom, the responsibility that freedom places on us, historical facts, spiritual leanings have been beautifully illustrated by the eight nationally and internationally renowned artists. As the product of independent India, they have not seen the turbulent times of pre- independence but as artists they can feel it intensely with their artistic sensitivity. The eight paintings are on 4x4 canvases; the medium used is acrylic, oil and pen and ink. Every work is just superb in its own right.

It would not be wrong to say that it was the journey of the works of art. The white canvas of first day slowly acquired background colors – orange, or green or blue or yellow. Texture came into being. The second day, vague figures could be seen, third day these figures took shape and fourth day we knew what was in front of us – it was Shiva in deep blue

colors; freedom represented by the Saraswati Yantra; freedom equated with love and peace signified by the flying doves and a peaceful human figure; freedom vouchsafed to us by Mother Nature; freedom denoted by the Tiranga; Mother India as an embodiment of freedom; the concept of Amrit Mahotsav of our freedom expressed through the flag fluttering on the back of a common man; and the socio-political reality of our freedom which places a lot of onus on us all.

Our experience with the artists has been very healthy. All of them were humble, polite and gracious. We disturbed them off and on to see their work and take notes and they welcomed us with a smile. We all are aware that an artist can get disturbed and distracted when interrupted. Poet S.T. Coleridge's experience with writing his 'Kubla Khan' is well-known. He could not complete his dream-induced poem after he had to get up to attend to a visitor and when he came back to the poem, he could never get the composition. 'Kubla Khan' remains a fragment.

Art is a complex process as it involves interplay between momentum, impulse, persons and contexts. It is also dynamic, with new trends and styles emerging at a fast pace. It opens up the stream of the subconscious and intends to personally touch every person that comes across it and affords a unique experience when it speaks to the viewer on a personal level and can be interpreted in a variety of ways.

To see the depiction of freedom in various forms was, indeed, a feast for the soul. Some artists illustrated the mood of the nation with the symbolic use of bright colors while others used blue as the color of peace. A flying bird is a universal symbol of freedom because of its ability to take to the wings and be free. The artists have used bird symbols profusely along with the dove as a symbol of peace and purity. Thus, the very fabric of the country has been spread before us exuding the joys of freedom.

About giving artistic expression to the lived history of the nation, Him Chatterjee had observed at an earlier occasion, "The history of our freedom struggle is written by the historians and the political scientists; litterateurs write about it in their poems and fictions, and the cinema projects it on the screen. An artist is also part of that history who looks at it through his/her medium – the colors. Artists are able to offer a singular angle to the events through the prism of colors."

"Painting is an illusion,' says Philip Guston, "a piece of magic, so what you see is not what you see." The magic speaks to us today through these paintings, and what we see has much more to it than we can imagine.

WORKS ON DISPLAY



This has been the eight artists' journey from blank surfaces of the canvas to eight different paintings, with different perceptions of the main theme "Freedom" -- an eventful journey from day one to day five. It has been a journey not only in colors but also a thought-provoking journey of companionship and renewal of friendship. "Painting is an illusion,' says Philip Guston, "a piece of magic, so what you see is not what you see." The magic speaks to us today through these paintings, and what we see has much more to it than we can imagine.



Dr Usha Bande is an academic and critic by profession but a creative and journalistic writer by vocation. Usha Bande did her Ph. D. from Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla and post-doctoral research from University of Florida, Gainesville (USA).

She is a prolific bilingual writer in English and Hindi. She has translated Marathi stories into Hindi and English. She has more than a dozen books to her credit; some of them are *Violence in Media and Society; Culture, Nature and Literature, Ecology and Folk Traditions in Himachal Pradesh*, a Coffee Table book entitled *Forts and Palaces of Himachal Pradesh*, and *Writing Resistance: A Comparative Study of Women Novelists*.