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THE TWO GREAT INDIAN ARTISTS

EDITOR
PRASANTA DAW



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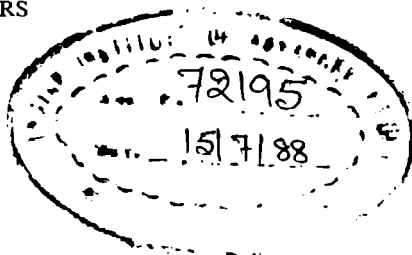
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PREFACE

The ultimate publication of this volume fulfils, so to say, a dream I have cherished for many years. Ever since I had the good fortune of coming in close touch with Jamini Roy and Deviprasad Roychowdhury, I fondly nursed the idea of some day bringing out a collection of notable writings on these two great masters of modern art in India. The essays selected have been chosen both from published and unpublished texts with an eye to represent the various creative aspects of the two immortal geniuses. What success I have achieved is for the reader to assess.

I take this opportunity to thank in the first instance Sri Kanailal Mukhopadhyay, an art lover, without whose insistence I might not have launched on the venture after all.

I also thank the authors whose writings have been included in this volume. My two essays have been translated from original Bengali by Sri Hirendra Nath Chatterjee, a friend of my father. I remember with pride the help and guidance I received from Sri Amiya Roy, worthy son of Jamini Roy, and Srimati Charulata Roychowdhury, widow of Deviprasad Roychowdhury.

Dr. Kalyankumar Ganguli, Bagishwari Professor of the Calcutta University, has very generously written a Foreword which greatly enhances the stature of this book. I convey to him my deepest gratitude.

30th Dec., 1977,
25/A, Beniatola Street,
Calcutta 700005,
INDIA.

PRASANTA DAW

FOREWORD

On a wary highway

Modern urban complexes in India have not inherited, nor have these been able to develop either a tradition in any branch of art, architecture, painting or sculpture involving the Society or the life of the individual. Waves of art however have been witnessed to roll from outside bringing in their train simmerings of colour or form to the view of urban masses but hardly have the people felt oneness with any of these incoming moves.

Calcutta, for that, had started with no tradition of art whatsoever. The pilgrim spot of Kalighat however had grown a centre of great attraction and sensing a possibility of a ready sale of miniature figures of the goddess Kali alongside with artistic bits like the 'Mami' doll and other toys, some professional *patuas* settled down near the precincts of the Temple at this place. From their acquaintance with or possible experience of preparing *pats*, they had produced *pats* of Kali in swift, bold lines, for the pilgrims to be taken by them back home as mementos. Gradually, apart from drawing figures of gods and goddesses these *patuas* developed a brisk and powerful idiom of sketch drawings, sometimes coloured and the Kalighat style of *pat* painting came to be an integral element of the pilgrim life of the city. This art, however much vaunted now for its essential purity and verve by one section of admirers or for the European influence witnessed in these works by the other, contemporary Calcuttans, as long as the Kalighat masters were active, are not known to have evinced any enthusiasm.

When lack of patronage and neglect had been pushing Kalighat artists into oblivion, artists like Vereschegin and Zoffany had come and gone, leaving some fruits of their gait

on Indian life. Well-to-do Indians sometimes engaged Western painters to draw their portraits, and finally a school of art was established by the colonial rulers in Calcutta to gain ready service in their endeavours. But these had no effect whatsoever upon the wide and expansive life of the Indian masses who completely lost the urge to view art and feel through it some spontaneous glow of pleasure.

The school of art began teaching the interneers Western techniques of drawing lines, designing sets and copying figures from drawing books brought from England. Drawings from life and nature were also encouraged but nobody in the precincts of the school knew whether India had any tradition of art of its own till Havell came to hold charge of the institution. The wide range of temple sculptures viewed by Havell while he was at Madras and the vast mass of miniature paintings in the collection of the Art Section of the Indian Museum at Calcutta opened up the vista of the prospective artists and it was in this train that Abanindranath tried to bring art to the Indian household. Much due to the enthusiasm of Nivedita who had deeply felt a strong need for the growth of a National art as a precondition for the regeneration of the Indian Nation, Nivedita had started a powerful movement for the attainment of her objective while Coomaraswamy had lent his scholarly and emotional support to the endeavour and Abanindranath stepped forward to give this a visual form. A national art movement was on the anvil.

Abanindranath had attracted quite a number of talented artists who had contributed liberally to promote this movement. Unlike Abanindranath who had learnt the Western academic discipline from Palmer and Gilhardy, his disciples preferred to imbibe linear structure and application of colour as formulated by their Guru. This Guru-Sisya pyramid, which at one time showed indications of attaining unassailable heights, have not however been able to sustain.

A collective endeavour attaining national dimensions remained unfulfilled and art strayed along unpredictable and chary routes.

Against an emotionally charged social environment fermented by colonial rule, poverty, unrealised desires and unfulfilled aims, Bengal had thrown quite a number of activists who were destined to leave their marks on the scrolls of history and in the field of art. There had been two genuine masters who will come into view of people looking back above the heads of many to deserve comments of distinction for their creative output in the field of art. One of these was Jamini Roy and the other Deviprasad Roychowdhuri who by the very verve of the art forms created by them will stand to remain in the domain of the outstanding few having left their mark in history.

By birth Jamini Babu was close to the earth, the son of a village *bhadralog*, a *grihasta* of some means who could gather courage to send his son to the remote city to join the art school. His art school training had given him a good command over painting of portraits. His efforts however transcended the limits of talent and urged him to seek for something off the beaten track. Thus came a period of intense inner qualm and uneasiness which drove him out of the urban environment to be sucked in by his native homeland with undulated expanse of coloured earth uninterrupted by much vegetal growth.

Wandering over this wilderness soaking himself in the sap of rural vitality, Jamini Babu allowed himself to be thoroughly absorbed in the tradition of Bengal's widening dimensions of visual realisation. He imbibed in the inner core of himself the true colours of Bengal's rural perspective, the warm grey-pink earth, the buoyant green of shrubs and trees and the flaming blue of the sky, the three vital colours which opened before him the pattern of all visual world. Beneath these colours and the sweeping curves of the horizon broken

by meandering rivulets and towering lonely trees, Jamini Babu moved about and soaked himself with the sap of the earth. Though stoutly denied by the master, the influence of traditional *pat* painting had undeniably come to take a deep root in him at this time.

Jamini Babu came back to Calcutta, not however to his old atelier of academic painting but to expound his newly discovered self through flat paintings of loud eggerious colours deliniated through sweeping and variegated lines. The accredited patrons of the artists of the age had no use of this style of painting which, for them, was out of purview and understanding. Grinding financial difficulty however could not compel him to revert to the easily acceptable and remunerative way he had abandoned under inner compulsion, wherein lay his greatness. The struggle was hard and protracted. Personal memories help me to recapture how my revered professor, Shahed Suhrawardy, glowed in ecstasy at his acquaintance with Roy and the art that was being poured by him disregarding all obstacles. Suhrawardy could speak little Bengali and Jamini Babu little English, yet there was effusive communication which was a treat to witness and share. The son of a middle class high court judge, the professor was no man of means. But the warm understanding patronage exuded by him led a long way to get released from the entangling environment of neglect and apathy. The horizon was cleared when Mrs. Casey, the wife of the then Governor of Bengal took a warm fancy to Roy's works and Mr. Casey went to the alley of Ananda Chatterjee Lane to inaugurate an exhibition of Roy's works. What the bubbling clan in the artist was erupting had reached the zenith of its creativity by 1944 when the American G. I. 's started envincing interest in the outputs of Jamini Babu. The happening was indeed a misfortune. Within a short time the soft glow of pent up emotion and expansive vision which had brought to the masses a sense of profound familiarity

and feeling of deep satisfaction had been left aside for newer experiments which were no longer sauce for the masses who could feel so long an intimate oneness with him. When the press reported about his exhibition in distant New York, and his abode in Ballygunje became a must in the itinerary of foreign intellectuals and connoisseurs, Jamini Babu, who it was expected would come nearer to the masses, was becoming remote, as a savant and a patriarch.

Yet Jamini Roy will live in what he has left for posterity ; an art which had touched the brink of the soul of resurgent India, vibrant and seductive with buoyant vitality of the wide unlimited expanse of Bengal's painted landscape both in nature and of mind. Jamini Babu will be hailed as one who had given us an identity in the field of art.

From Jamini Babu to Debiprasad it was a rather uphill climb from flat framed contraption to buoyant effusive dimensions both in painting as well as in sculpture. In his own admission, Debiprasad, a strong muscular scion of a semifeudal house, would find himself more at home with his hammer and his chisel than to be contained upon the surface of a canvas in which however he was no less deft than in plastic rendering of swerving forms. Debibabu freely acknowledged his link with Abanindranath as a Guru but sooner he felt his inner urge, he opted for sculpting which remained his most zealous and exacting pursuit till he laid down his chisel for ultimate rest.

He was being haunted by frustration till a call came from Madras to take command of the Art School there which helped Debiprasad's talents to blossom into its proper shape. His art was impregnated with utmost vigour and vitality. His forms were unobtrusive and always surged with a rhythm of vibrant life which the artist could infuse in those much under the surge of his own vital life force which he could exude wherever he would be present. He lived an active and fruitful life giving shape to ideas and forms which endeared him to the masses who have not so far found any sculpture

worthy of appreciation. In Debibabu's art people could find their own selves as powerful and vivacious entities. These could evoke in them an urge to live to the expectations of what was expected of them and make them dream for a bright and lively future. His martyrs would enthuse the onlookers to become participants of the upsurge and his Gandhi would beckon generations to take a course towards the dawns of the future. In connection with an interview which I had the privilege to hold for the All India Radio, Calcutta, I could for a short while view the master from a closer range. The softness and warmth which the man had so powerfully built around him could exude an unparalleled charm. His memory will be treasured by me as a very rare event of personal charm.

CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY.
CALCUTTA

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Bagishwari Professor
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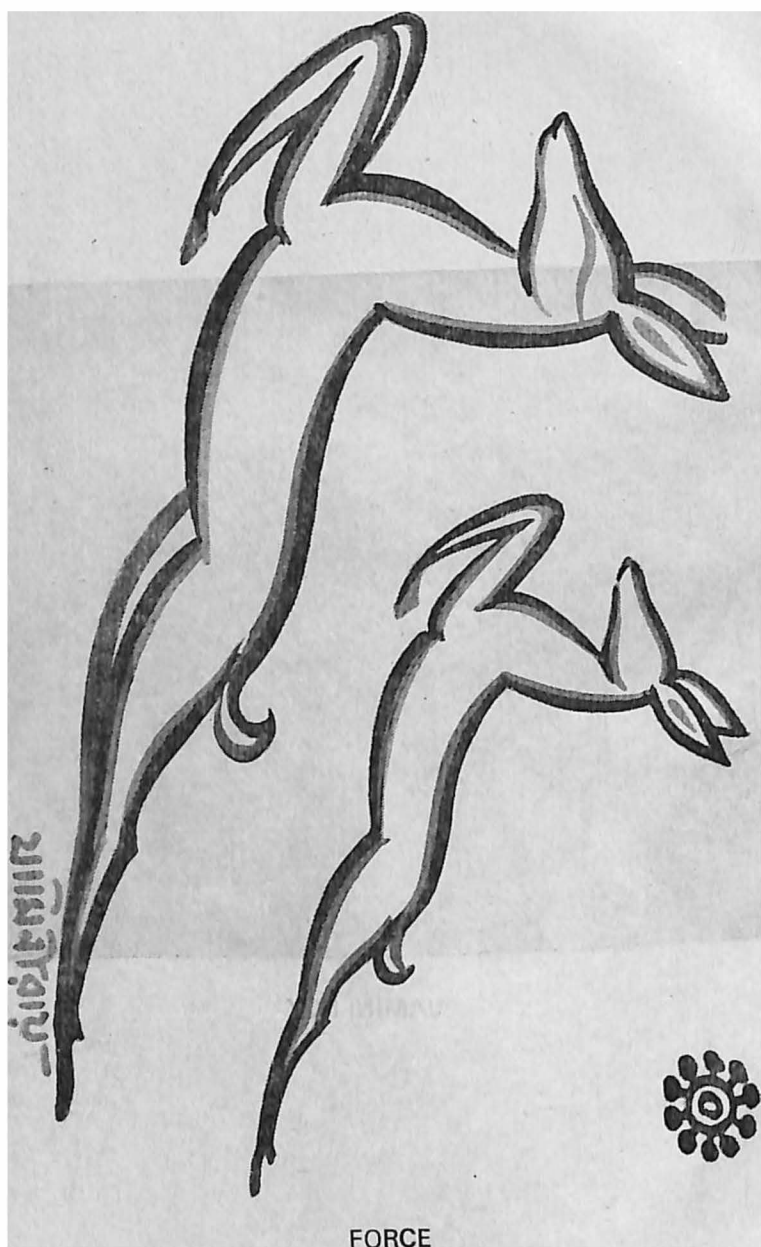
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JAMINI ROY
(1887-1972)

JAMINI ROY
(1887-1972)



JAMINI ROY



FORCE

An Introduction

Jamini Roy, the Everlasting Artist

—Prasanta Daw

In the history of Indian art and for that matter of the world Jamini Roy stands out as the moving repository of the traditional Indian painting. His work is distinguished because of its purity and spontaneity. He allows art to flit about easily like a simple child. That should explain why his paintings are so very bright and direct to us.

The world famous artist Jamini Roy was born on the eleventh of April 1817 A. D., in the village named Beletore within the district of Bankura. Ever since his childhood he felt strongly attracted by things artistic. He used to build numerous designs with pebbles, collected from the streets, of various colours like red, blue and white.

The autumnal worship of Durga came off every year at Beletore. This little artist used to watch the clay-modellers erect the different idols and in this he felt too engrossed to remember his bath or meals. From that time he dreamed to become a celebrated artist in time. At all hours of the day he would escape from his class-room or home and spend unending time at the clay-modellers' workshops. With deep intent he saw how the modeller carved out the nose, the eyes and the ears of the deities.

A few years later when he grew a little older and started to draw and to paint by himself it so happened that an art exhibition was organised to be held at Bankura. Against the wishes of his father the boy-artist Jamini Roy sent one of his paintings to that exhibition. The judging was done by the District Magistrate of Bankura who, being deeply impressed by Roy's painting entitled "Society", rewarded him with the gift of a gold guinea. This was the first recognition of merit in Jamini Babu's artistic life.

This acknowledgment of his excellence egged the artist in Jamini Roy to take up painting as a career. But in those days all middle class families looked upon a picture painter as a nightmare no less dreadful than an actor of the stage, because it was then only those who were good-for-nothing in everything else that took up either of these careers. Such people were untouchables, so to say, to the established society. Jamini Roy's experience in this respect was also not different. There was total opposition to this proposal to proceed to Calcutta for art education. It was only Jamini Babu's father who was on his side. This gentleman of great progressive ideas sent his sixteen-year old son to Calcutta to take up a course in art, thwarting all the adverse criticisms from relations and well-wishers.

It was in 1903 A. D. that Jamini Roy got himself admitted to the Government School of Art at Calcutta. It was a measure of the satisfaction derived from his work by the then principal, Percy Brown, that Roy was granted special permission by him to attend any class of his own choice. Brown also exhibited certain paintings of Roy in the class-rooms even while the latter was only a student. No other student of the Art College was equally fortunate to receive such honour and such opportunity.

The art-imbued soul of Jamini Roy failed to flower in the environs of the Art School : what he so intently looked for was hardly available in the official atmosphere of the school. To his mind's eye continually flashed the skies at Beletore, its earth and stones, its herbage, Santhal children, and, not far away from the village, the picturesque hill rivers of Behar and green deltas of fertile land skirting them. That was why he was unable to stick to his lessons at the Art School for a good length of time. In the long period of twelve years he joined and left the school on innumerable occasions.

During the early part of his life Jamini Roy was a past master of the European style of painting. He was then

acclaimed all over the country as a portrait painter. He earned lots of money from numberless portraits he drew during those days. His fame and position became much more covetable after he secured a gold medal from the then Viceroy of India. But the artist Jamini Roy had not yet been propitiated. He met Abanindranath, the artists' artist, but there too the answer to his question was not to be found. Once again he took a step towards something yet unknown.

In his great urgency to express himself in a manner which to him was the only method of his self-expression he began drawing pictures with lesser lines and minimum colour. His "Mother & Child" and "A Village Tiller" are products of this period. A story attaches to the creation of "Mother & Child". An exhibition was held at the Oriental Art Society at the instance of Gaganendranath Tagore, the other famous artist. Gaganendranath was struck dumb when he saw "Mother & Child" and lost no time to purchase the picture. An artist thus was recognised by another of great stature.

In 1928 A. D. another storm of restlessness swept over the creative mind of Jamini Roy. He took up live drawing, relinquishing the refuge of flat technique and drew a host of line-drawings in black and white of different beasts and animals.

The artist had no peace of mind as he traversed over daily changes of form and technique in search of something new. After much experimentation he derived an absolutely fresh technique by combining the methods of flat technique and line drawing. The products of this period like "The Wife", "The Face of a Tiller" are quite well-known.

During the days of the Second World War the fame of Jamini Roy crossed the country's frontiers and reached alien lands. His drawings sold like hot cakes both in inland and overseas. There grew a craze amongst the intelligentsia and the practising artists for appreciation of Roy's work. Unqualified praise was at that time showered on the pictures of Jamini Roy by amongst

others, R. G. Casey, the then Governor of Bengal, Shahid Suhrawardy, Bagiswari Lecturer, Stella Kramrisch and John Irwin, the noted art critic, Vishnu De, the poet, Atul Bose, the artist, poet Sudhindranath Dutt, Mrinalini Emmerson and Arun Sinha.

Experiments and adventures perhaps are a part and parcel of an artist's life. An artistic mind remains even moving with the pain of expressing in new techniques and newer methods the sentiments, ideas and ideals of both its conscious and sub-conscious states. There was no exception to this rule in Jamini Roy's case also. This would explain his constant break-away from existing forms and search for fresh media of expression. His was an effort to reach new frontiers all the time, travelling over unbeaten tracks every now and then.

In the last period of his evolutionary history as an artist Roy became as simple as a child and as beautiful as a flower. He allowed his ideas and lines to move on their own at ease. Purity of expression is writ large in all drawings of this period. He introduced a new method of picturisation by mixing the primary conception of beauty as cherished in his own mind with the folk art of ancient Bengal. At this time the artist's mind remained absorbed in expressing either the fairy lands or the delightful dancing mood of Sri Chaitanya. In the rich colours and confident lines came to life the divergent subjects like those in the Ramayana, the Mahabharat, Kirtan singer, Baul, farmer, Fakir, Santhals and the last but not the least, children's stories.

The basis of Jamini Roy's paintings of those days was to be found in the Bengal 'pats' and hangings, bed-spreads, scrolls and illuminated manuscripts. There was a great attraction at the time for folk and village arts and crafts. He used indigenous colours in his pictures. The canvas was prepared by smearing hessians with cowdung-water. He used to paint with ordinary native paints like vermillion, robin blue, white chalk, plain earth. He himself manufactured his brushes with cotton or jute tied around sticks. All in all it was a

revolution which he ushered in the world of art. History was made.

After a year's illness Jamini Roy left us at the age of eightysix, but the artist in him will remain ever-living and immortal in his versatile work of art, in the purity of his creation.



GOPINI

A Letter to Jamini Roy

—Rabindranath Tagore

When we are able fully to make use of our sense-perceptions, we realise that we exist. This endows every act of our sense-perception with an element of joy which has no direct casual origin—it being part of our joy in existence itself.

Take for instance the act of seeing. We enjoy this act not so much because what we see is beautiful or pleasing, but because the flow of the visible world across our eyes stimulates our sensibility. I remember in my childhood when I was shut up in a room and left all to myself, my lively interest in all that I managed to see through the shuttered windows kept my mind keenly wakeful. The world of pictures is like that—a world seen and enjoyed with the keenest appetite. Our eyes, as much as our minds, recoil from all that fails to attract us, all that is tedious because it lacks diversity. This is similar to our distaste for food which fails to nourish because it does not stimulate appetite.

The secret of true art lies in this : it gives us things to see, things that we cannot help seeing and the seeing of which makes for our joy. From primordial times man has been giving himself things to see. Thus, the mind of man to-day is stored with the memory of a tremendous diversity of forms and impressions.

If the lines constituting a form are essential because they are inevitable, if they seize the mind because of some destructive quality inherent in them—irrespective of whether the forms are beautiful or not in their total effect—they claim man's attention or acceptance as extending or rounding off his plane of vision.

We want to see because we love to see things. Out of this desire there is an upsurge of visible objects in their varied forms. They do not carry any philosophical concept,

they do not claim to solve any problem of our day-to-day existence, nor do they impart any moral lessons. The only message they have to convey is the fact that they exist and exist indubitably, absolutely. The fact of their existence enkindles in us the awareness that *we* also exist.

What is a picture? It is that which bears witness to this sense of absolute and perceptible truth of our positive existence. The more categorical its assertion the more unique it is as a statement and better suited for its purpose and fulfilment. All else is irrelevant. If it conveys some message—moral or ethical—it is something over and above, a surplus.

When I had not yet taken to painting, out of this phenomenal world melodies would enter my ears and give rise to feelings and emotions which would make their aural impact on my mind. But when I turned to painting, I at once found my place in the grand cavalcade of the visual world. Trees and plants, men and beasts, everything became vividly real in their own distinct forms. Then lines and colours began revealing to me the spirit of the concrete objects in nature. There was no more need for further elucidation of their *raison d'être* once the artist discovered his role of a beholder—pure and simple. Only the true artist can comprehend the secret of this visible world and the joy of revealing it. Others who seek to read senseless meaning into the pictures, are bound to get lost in a maze of futility.

Most people do not or cannot use their eyes well. They go about their own little business—unobservant and listless. The artist has a call and must answer the challenge to compel the imperceptible majority to share in his joy of the visible, concrete world—directly perceived. He sings not, nor does he moralize. He lets his work speak for itself and its message is : Look, this is what I am, *Ayamaham bho !*

[Translated by Kshitish Roy]

Jamini Roy

—Mulk Raj Anand

I think there are few countries of the world where the position of art in its relations to the artist, to the community, to science, religion, politics and other departments of life is being more eagerly reevaluated than in contemporary India. All these conferences, symposiums, art-annuals and prolonged discussions (often very wearisome, sentimental, muddled and boring) bear witness to the fact that we are involved in a 'complex' which must be analysed clearly before we can go any further in producing art-works. For we are heirs, in the realm of art, as in other fields, to vast accumulations, ranging from the great ancient and mediaeval tradition, which ended with the disruption of the Mughal Empire, to the age-old folk tradition which broke down under the 18th and 19th century European influence. Until the forces of 'civilisation' imposed themselves like a thin veneer on our lives, the ritualistic needs of Indian village society had kept the arts close to most people. But with the growth of new groups and patterns the old crafts have been increasingly destroyed, until they remain a survival from which the new integration can arise only if certain basic questions are asked. For instance, we have to analyse the creative process itself and see how an individual artist integrates by gathering together certain split off parts of his own nature, and of his audience, in a work of art. Also, we must see how far a particular work is the expression of the personal unconsciousness of the artist, that is to say, of his psychological type, and to what extent, given the spark of genius, the similarity of background and development of the artist and his public is responsible for that authentic utterance which strikes a note in various layers of society and is acclaimed a masterpiece. And there are a host of other questions : what is the true basis of an artist's inspiration, of his

technique and influence? How much does a particular style owe to the structure of the community of which he is a part? And if the existing, social and aesthetic relations are inadequate, how can they be changed, if at all?.....All these considerations arise when one addresses oneself to a review of the art of Jamini Roy, certainly one of the few important painters in India today. For, if he has not himself self-consciously asked such questions, he has at least solved some of them in the only way in which a painter can—through paint. So that his work mirrors not only all the current conflicts in India, but marks the turning point of a completely new epoch of development.

It was at the house of one of his earliest friends, the poet Sudhindra Datta, that I first met Jamini Roy. A somewhat stocky figure in homespun, with a kindly, wellmoulded round face, crowned by greying hair, and with mellow Bengali eyes, he seemed so simple, unassuming and unostentatious to me and such a refreshing change from some of the frustrated, attitudinising artists of cosmopolitan, dirty Calcutta.

After showing us some canvases which he hoped to include in the then impending 1938 exhibition of his work in British Indian Street, Jamini Roy went away. Catching the enraptured look in my eyes, Sudhin told me a few facts about the artist's life. Apparently, Jamini, the scion of a small landlord family from a village in Eastern Bengal, had been trained in the current tradition of the Calcutta School of Art, a once vigorous movement based on the revival of the motifs of the frescoes of Ajanta and Bagh. But he had become dissatisfied with the spurious elongation of eyebrows and fingernails which was increasingly sentimentalising the productions of this school, and was reaching out to new forms.

For a time he became a 'fashionable' painter, then he fell under the influence of Vincent Van Gogh and such European painters as he saw in reproductions. One fine morning, however, he deliberately cut himself adrift from all this and went

back to the survivals of the folk tradition in his village. And he evolved that extraordinarily rich, sensuous and musical art which some of his critics have called a 'modern primitivism'.

What exactly is meant by primitivism? It is obvious that it does not mean 'going native', as some even of the most celebrated artists between the two world wars thought it to mean when they began to copy negro sculpture and Javanese masks. For 'primitive art', in its African and other folk forms, is neither technically nor emotionally simple. The scientific use of the word 'primitive' denotes a condition of the imagination when the unknown potentialities of nature or man, the fates, arouse fears and dreads, and are appeased by the offering of prayers and the evolution of magical formulas. Since the twentieth century, man has not, over the bulk of the world, travelled far from this condition, in spite of his much vaunted 'civilisation', and it is natural for many artists, in full view of the terrors and hallucinations of the European jungle, to try to soak themselves in the influence of the 'prelogical' survivals of the earliest art of the world. The difficulties of achieving those changes which make an infant into a self-aware man have naturally also tended to make the magic of the child's view of life more important as a new starting point in modern art.

But though at a superficial glance the return of a middle-class Bengali artist from the world of 'fashionable' painting to the folk tradition would seem like 'primitivism', in the above sense, Messrs Bishnu Dey and John Irwin are right in explaining the peculiar difference between the return of some contemporary European painters to the Altamira caves and Jamini Roy's return to the folk tradition of his country: 'The important point to recognise', they say, 'is that he approached folk art not as an outsider, but as one who had an intimate knowledge and understanding of the living experiences of the people where lay the roots of the folk culture itself.' Again: 'Jamini Roy never had to pursue Gauguin's far-away search for

equivalence and symbolism, nor was it necessary for him to study the paintings of Matisse in order to develop an "integral vision". For he was going back to the cohesive and comprehensive culture of his inheritance accepting its myths and legends, basic forms and primary colours as a birthright.

At the same time, however, it must be admitted, as these critics indeed admit, that Jamini Roy had to wage his own peculiar struggle, because he was not content merely to copy the level surfaces, the flattening out of design in depth, etc. or to revive folk painting, but to create a new forward art from the elements of the somewhat damaged village tradition. The breakdown of the 'feudal' system in India, and the artificial as well as natural obstacles in the way of a modern synthesis makes the transformation extremely difficult. For, on the one hand, the self-conscious artist has to retain the quick of the ancient magician, and, on the other hand, he has to avail himself of the fruits of scientific knowledge. And because of the clash of the several surviving layers of civilisation in India, the attempt at the communication of one's vision by mastering the fantastic nightmare of hunger, cruelty, oppression, pain and psychological disorders, becomes a heroic struggle against all kinds of doubts and hesitations, especially in pictorial art, which has an indirect, subtler and deeper connection with immediate local realities than science or even the written word.

The pertinacity of instinct, then, with which Jamini Roy went back to the sources of primordial inspiration in the village would not alone have qualified him for respectful attention ; for, often, the attitude towards an unknown art can become the sheerest sentimentalism. It was rather his discovery of the truth that much excellence lies in inheritance, as in the conquest of environment, and that the artist transforms his material. The ordeal which he went through to reach the point of concentration amid the many strains that were intertwined in his middle-class experience by focussing his attention

on everything in contemporary India, simultaneously, makes him uniquely important.

Let us see what are the characteristic elements of the Bengali folk tradition. The old folk culture is an amalgam of two mainstreams, the anthropomorphic beliefs of the Dravidians, the original neolithic inhabitants of India, and the more abstract poetising of the Aryans, the earliest invaders. As in most conquests, the conquered culture took its revenge on the conqueror. So that the indigenous nature myths and the dark magical cults, with their pantheon of tree spirits, snake gods, fauns, nereids and ghosts, thoroughly infused the invading strain. But it was not until after the decay of classial court culture and the emergence of the humanistic revolt of the Buddha that the slow, intricate folk practices became the predominating culture. The decay of central authority and the disruption of Vedic religion through the contentions of the schools was aided by the dynamic undercurrents from the village republics, and thus arose the three great mediaeval forms of Hinduism—the worship of Vishnu, God as the Blessed One, in Northern India ; the worship of Shiva, God as creator, preserver and destroyer in South India ; the worship of Sakti, God as Mother, in Eastern India. The last of these schools of religion was the main source of those weird Yogic practices which Sir John Woodroffe has described in several volumes of translations of Tantric Texts, embodying the apocalyptic philosophy of the Iron Age and enclosing a psychology of ritualistic worship which was to be the main source of the continuous folk art of Bengal. Ecstatic dancing, the rhythms of music and song, river worship, snake worship, the various cults of the Mother Goddess—are all evidence of the insidious triumph of folk imagination over the orthodox mind. Bankura District, where Jamini Roy was born, shows the process of revolt and assimilation more intensely than many others in Bengal. His village of Beliatare still retained, even in our own age of railways and motors, its self-sufficient

mediaeval economy. Group life was closely knit together by communal ritual and immune from contact with the outside world.

There is a phrase of Aeschylus which very aptly describes the attitude of the artisan in such a landscape : 'The eye of the soul is bright in sleeping and dark in waking.' Certainly, the village craftsman is not a self-conscious artist, fulfils his function in the community by drawing upon folk imagination and expressing the communal taste for age old primary colours and designs, the conventional forms in making things for daily use, such as pats, pans, toys, printed fabrics, scrolls, ritualistic images, etc.

Jamini Roy had seen the skilled men of his village at work in his childhood. And, ostensibly the instinctive love of the child to potter about, in spite of social and class taboo, led him to copy their motifs and patterns early. His father, perceiving the boy's predilection, had done what was befitting the status and prestige of a small landlord—sent Jamini Roy to the Government School of Art in Calcutta. When, after about thirty years of the imbecile curriculum and European fashions, he 'returned' to the folk tradition, it was, therefore, not difficult for him to regain the sense of awareness which inspires the devotees in a family who collaborate on certain festivals to draw one line each in the collective picture called the 'Pat' drawing ; and he sought out the myths of the Bhakti (love as devotion) cult.

On the surface, this attempt at a departure from the stultifying rules of the art school is reminiscent of Matisse and Derain. But, under Indian conditions, it was, as has been said before, tantamount to a revolution. For Jamini Roy restored to the picture not only the state of mind of the indigenous artisan, but he consciously revived that respect for the quality of line which is an Indian speciality, the result perhaps of centuries of effort to attain rhythm, almost as though it were a spiritual exercise. Organisation, balance proportion—these

too accrued to him from the folk tradition. But he transformed them as only a forward looking emotive scientist could have done by bringing out the primary characteristics of the figure and formalising the less important features.

No doubt, as Professor Shahid Suhrawardy suggested in his pioneer essay on Jamini Roy, his training in European techniques helped him greatly. For instance, his departure from the straight line to the curvilinear may have been influenced by what he saw of the French contemporaries ; and he certainly learnt to experiment in the penetration of light into the texture of a painting, from the Europeans. But the synthesis he carried out is significant for his nearness to the basic Indian tradition and his transformation of it into a new style. The sure economy and restraint with which he gets a picture in two or three strokes shows as though he is a medium possessed by the singleminded vision of the 'Pat' draughtsman and yet in alliance with the mood of the most genuine elements in world of art.

It is perhaps for this reason that one is particularly impressed by most of his preparatory drawings and sketches. But those who remember the 1938 Calcutta exhibition of Jamini Roy's work will see in his painting a development which now seems to have achieved phases. Messrs Bishnu Dey and John Irwin have not reproduced many examples of the early period. Therefore, I would like to press the claims of one of the *Mother and Child* pictures in the collection of Humphrey House in the style with which Jamini Roy first startled us by getting away from the idiotic exuberance of the Calcutta art world. The tall panel called the 'Peasant' showed the peculiar discrimination with which Jamini could select abstract characteristics and infuse in painting the strength of simplicity by an appropriate handling of home made colours. The drama of compositions like the *Santal Dance* which was to develop in the later *Kirtan* pictures is the quintessence of his magical genius, for here painting is approximating to music.

But it is not merely a new way of handling paint that distinguished Jamini Roy's work. In his satirical pictures and cartoons he was already, before the war, aware of the clash of social forces : money-lenders and landlords with the heads of beasts of prey, were symbolic of the emerging peasant struggles, as the dream birds were haunted by the sense of malevolent spirits gathering on the horizon. And apart from the childlike gaiety of the singing parties and the innocence of virgins, there was the almost insane look of dazed horror in the highly formalised open eyes of most of his figures. The exaggerations of the toy style paintings were also used to show a crazy humour.

If I admit the bias of literary appreciation that enters this way of looking into pictures for some kind of message, there still seems in the development of Jamini Roy, from the paintings of village beasts, birds and flowers, through his comments on human beauty and dignity to his concentration on the life of Christ, a selfconscious attempt at asking the question : What has happened to us ? Why are we so plagued ? Where are we going ?

Some academic person might say, of course, that Jamini Roy is seeking the peace of the abyss. But the artist denies that ; 'Art', he says, 'is work of experience, of stress and strain, wrestling with problems, intellectual and physical'.

That is the nature of his approach to painting. At the best it is a search for value in the manner of a poet who asks : What is the true world behind the veil of words ? But, always, it is a search for integral form, for a new kind of naive beauty which can yet reproduce the disorientated romanticism of our age.

Jamini Roy

—Austin Coates

Jamini Roy is India's most renowned artist, with a world-wide reputation. Often called the Picasso of Asia, he has been the subject of furious controversy in his own country. His annual exhibitions in Calcutta in the 1940s were exciting events, with newspapers devoting entire pages to praise or abuse of his work. Since 1950 he has not exhibited publicly. In that year he moved into a house of his own design in south Calcutta, where visitors can see his work at any time, the ground floor being a series of very simple display rooms. Each year he receives a steady stream of visitors from all over the world. He himself has seldom left his native Bengal, and has never been out of India. Born in 1887 in the Bankura district of Bengal, he studied at the Government School of Art in Calcutta, where he was trained in the European academic tradition. Like many young artists he felt dissatisfied, unable to find real self-expression in these un-Indian forms. But the native alternative, currently popular, was an insipid pseudo-Indian style, sentimental and lacking in vigour. He tried his hand at this but concentrated on portraiture in which he achieved rapid success. By the age of thirty he was India's most sought-after portrait painter.

His main commissions were to paint the wives of wealthy Indian businessmen but by the conventions of the times no lady, even chaperoned, was permitted to sit for a male artist. The portraits had to be executed from photographs. This lifeless form of art induced an increasing depression. At the height of his popularity he was painting two portraits a week, but as time passed his work became slower and slower, till finally one portrait remained unfinished on his easel for six months. He never finished it, and he never painted another.

Abruptly, around 1920, he abandoned Western technique,

and turned to the traditions of the peasant painters of Bengal who ply their humble, inherited craft at the gates of temples and at country fairs, ignored by the intelligentsia and despised by the art world. From these sources he evolved a new and unique style.

For seven years he hardly sold a picture. He lived in the wilderness of the big city, regarded as an incomprehensible crank whose work was worthless. To the sophisticated Indian eye his new way of painting was childish, deserving only of contempt in an adult. He was too poor to buy canvases; his work of this period is done on packing-case cardboard, soft covers of books, railway timetables and telephone directories. Unable to afford to buy paints, he made his own from the original sources and has done so ever since.

The sophisticated did not understand him—many of them never have—because he had become sophistication's antithesis. His goal in art had become what he called the child mind. Here he was helped by his fourth son Amiya (known as Patal), who as soon as he could hold a pencil began to draw. His father watched him, and among the things he saw was the feature which was to become the most famous characteristic of a Jamini Roy painting. Patal saw that Bengalis have very large eyes; but try as he might to convey this in a picture, he could not make the eyes fit inside the face. Part of them was always outside. As Jamini Roy told me years later, "I learned from Patal. I watched and remembered everything he did."

In the 1930s an important section of Indian opinion came out in support of him. Leading Indian writers and poets, critics and connoisseurs, recognized the emergence of an artist of international stature. Like Picasso, it was said, Jamini Roy had introduced a new conception of form in art, but intrinsically Indian and owing nothing to the West. In the same decade his works were exhibited in the United States

and passed into a number of overseas private collections, notably in Britain.

Then came World War II, which brought to India hundreds of Western art-lovers and connoisseurs, temporarily in uniform. Emphatically they endorsed the view that Jamini Roy was the one truly Indian artist of international rank. He was already the most controversial figure in the Indian art world. Foreign acclaim on such a scale gave his detractors a field day. Jamini Roy, they thundered, was cunningly cashing in on folk art because of its appeal to foreigners. They conveniently overlooked the fact that Indians themselves were the first to acclaim him.

He had the distinction of representing contemporary art in the famous Indian Exhibition at Burlington House, London, in 1947 ; and he was the first living artist to be represented in the permanent collections of the National Gallery of India.

Jamini Roy's work is divided into eleven phases of style. In each phase can be seen the same consistent theme of struggle away from the sophisticated towards the 'child mind'.

"In all art", he once said to me, "the essential is the child mind. Not the unconscious child. A child produces the things of a child. But the conscious child..."



SANTHAL MOTHER AND CHILD.

Jamini Roy

—Samir Dasgupta

If Jamini Roy baffled many of us by his enigmatic personality, his paintings did so by their austere simplicity. And like the painter often used to unnerve people who put him a question, by replying with his favourite paradox: "The answer lies in the question itself", his work baulked popular comprehension because much of it was so primitively thin. People understood young Jamini Roy as a portraitist thoroughly accomplished in the western tradition, but other artists of the time—among them the so-called Revivalists—derided him as being a copyist, a cultural slave. Yet, when on a couple of occasions Roy's paintings were put up in major exhibitions of Indian artists, between 1924 and 1929, his canvases had no dearth of buyers. And when about 1930, Alfred Watson, then editor of the *Statesman*, organised a one-man show of Roy's paintings, much of which smacked of French post-Impressionism, fashionable art lovers of Calcutta once again talked about the artist. Contrary to what a number of people have tried to suggest, therefore, Jamini Roy did not languish in near obscurity for some forty years of his life; nor did he suffer pecuniary hardship for all those years. What is true, however, is that not until the late thirties, when Shahid Suhrawardy wrote systematically on the artist's work and its significance and persuaded Indian art lovers to take a good look at Jamini Roy, did they stop talking about him as being basically an emulator of a foreign style. During the war-years, foreigners felt for and bought Roy's work by the dozen while the general run of cultured Indians felt impelled to "keep up with the Joneses".

Jamini Roy is an interesting case of a major artist who achieved material success before he succeeded in discovering his own form. ~~The much needed~~ economic security therefore

could not bring Roy immediate happiness for he was still groping uncomfortably for a "forward solution". In this, however, he was soon eminently successful, and the direction and manner in which he arrived at his solution had a lot to do with the fact that he had practically no regular formal schooling. He discovered his form by dint of creative introspection.

Essentially, for Jamini Roy, this discovery was an intuitive journey back into the still living, anonymous folk-art tradition of the western districts of rural Bengal where the artist himself hailed from and was deeply rooted. Stella Kramrisch described the event as a "conscious and productive homecoming". Not that Jamini Roy was the first to discern the beauties and verve that had remained latent in the old art idiom "primitively" used by the original village *patuas* or (on a different plane) by the makers of *nakshi kanthas*. Yet it took no less an artist than him to impregnate that indigenous soil again and harvest a crop more consciously health-giving.

What did Jamini Roy accomplish, really? Certainly his object was not to refurbish or simplify the traditional *patua* styles and techniques. Yet his work bore an unmistakable affinity with *pats*. Was he trying to be an exponent of primitivism as it might be understood in the Bengali context? No, if by primitivism is meant naivete, wrongly ascribed to his stark, toy-style simplification that retained only the very minimum of basic forms, shapes, colours and patterns. Nonetheless, it remains true that the rigorous formalism of Roy, often shorn of the familiar signs of decorative sophistication or literary embellishment, came directly from the artist's conviction that the real purpose of painting as a visual art was to express in the barest possible manner the essential manifestations of the world of nature which stimulated emotive responses in human beings. The primitives did this much in the manner children often say wise things,

“unconsciously”. Equally seminal was Roy’s belief that the traditional *patua* art of Bengal, unlike the primitive arts in various other regions of the world, had a sustaining basis, fortified as it was by a pervasive system of living myths.

It is not my intention, however, to suggest that decorative sophistication never occupied an important place in Roy’s paintings. In fact it did, although its significance on the purely technical level may not have been fully appreciated by most commentators. To avoid a longer digression, I would only touch upon one particular development in the artist during his later years—a proper comprehension of which should once more explode the popular myth that Roy was an “unconscious” artist in the sense of being primitive. It is often said about his pictures that they were done on strictly flat (i.e., two-dimensional) surface. A look at the artist’s canvases done between 1950 and 1970 would, however, convince the discerning observer that during this final phase Jamini Roy was largely concerned with transferring his linear (and curvilinear) designs on a surface intricately prepared to give a textural quality that rather tended to militate against the conventional concept of flat surface. This is true not only of the “woven” mat-like canvases he was so fond of working on, but more importantly, of plane surfaces studded with dots or large mosaic-like “breakers”. Technically, such surfaces might still be called flat, but the effect so created transported a kind of visual tension that suggested more dimensions.

Jamini Roy appeared at a juncture when the urban culture of Bengal was already falling away due to a profligate seduction from tradition. Unawareness about the necessity of a continuity (not to be confused in any manner with parochialism) was fast becoming a cultural vice. Jamini Roy, as a prophet, sought to retrieve what had already been existing for centuries not only in Bengali folk art but *ipso facto* in all primitive art. Evolving a purely formalistic,

new, "forward art form" to give an enduring visual expression to that cultural objective was the achievement of the other half of him—Jamini Roy the artist. Under Indian conditions, the achievement was no less than revolutionary.

Perhaps Jamini Roy did not mind being called a *patua* himself. This may make honest sense if one comes to think of the extreme economy and restraint with which he used to make his pictures. To be sure, he was not only possessed by the singleminded vision of the *pat* draughtsman, this primordial faculty was an inalienable trait in him. But that is about as far as one can go in drawing the comparison. For, the village *patua* is no more than a craftsman who can neither have the magical genius nor the power of Jamini Roy to select abstract characteristics capable of transfusing verve of simplicity in a picture.

A doubt, however, that has bugged many an admirer of Roy concerns the propriety of making copies his own pictures which the artist did profusely and without compunction. Often the labour used to be shared by his artist son, Amiya, who learnt the craft from the father through years of conscientious exercise. Jamini Roy had his own way of justifying this, and the justification came again from the fact that he was rooted to a tradition in which works of art usually represented collective rather than personalised effort and were thus not necessarily unique. Also, he was insistent on keeping the prices of his pictures low enough so more and more people could buy them for their homes. Why, one might argue, shouldn't copies of Jamini Roy reach every home when graphics of famous European artists keep changing hands at fabulous prices? I think the trouble lies in that a sophisticated art collector here may not hesitate to spend fortunes on an anonymous *pat* which in its turn may be a straight copy from another anonymous piece, while he would shrink away from a competent Jamini Roy copy. I also think that this phenomenon goes a long

way to prove that for all his personal success Jamini Roy remains an artist little understood by his own countrymen. His message went over their heads.

Jamini Roy is looked upon by foreign art critics as the completest Indian painter and they adore him. At home, more and more people are buying his pictures, often for the wrong reason or at least not knowing what it is that they like about his work. It is not difficult to imagine that the great master himself realised that he had failed to educate us, his own people. He was the poorer for the experience.

Meeting with a Great Master

—Rolf Italiaander

From India I flew directly to Africa. Right now I am sitting in a big garden. During the last few weeks I have spent some delightful days in India and as I gaze here upon Hibiscus and Jasmine I am reminded of her gardens. Although I should write down my reflections on Indian art and particularly that on Jamini Roy, I am deprived of the benefit of my notes and points which I had jotted there on the spot, because my luggage is still on the way. This is really a pity and I am destined to sketch only impressions.

No sooner had I arrived in India, than I started visiting art-exhibitions wherever I could snatch an opportunity. I was indeed puzzled by all that I saw. However, I was soon able to conclude that Indian artists have a superb sense of colour. They often show a delicate refinement like the French painters. Notwithstanding this I was unsatisfied. Too many of the graphic art and oil paintings were merely akin to that of the old and new European Masters. This became evident when I visited the "32nd Annual Art Exhibition" of the "All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society". I remember having put a remark in my catalogue, "much after Miro, Klee, Feininger, Poliakoff, Kirchner, the French Primitives, Moore, Sutherland, only about 10 per cent Indian motifs".

I did not appreciate the majority of the abstract paintings. I myself collect abstract paintings and at home I am surrounded by the works of some Masters of modern art. Despite this, I find it terrible that everywhere abstract painting is in vogue. Abstract painting developed in Europe in the course of a certain cultural process. In other parts of the world they follow the abstract school—or else they fear that they are not up to date. I felt this above all in the States, in Mexico, and in a few islands of the West Indies.

I have come to India as a foreigner and as such I loathe seeing an art which is common all over Europe and even prevalent in the countryside. I expect to see an art which is typical of the country, in this case of the magnificent land, India.

I sought long for this, in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, but all in vain, Occasionally, I came across paintings born of a mind completely Indian and rooted deep in the Indian tradition. I was then always very delighted. By the way, I saw most of these paintings in an exhibition in the Grand Hotel in Calcutta, probably the best one that I got to see in India.

After all these experiences I became very eager to meet Jamini Roy, the Master, about whom I had heard many a time. His personality and his works had been to me until then only a vague conception. I called at this atelier in the cosy Dehi Serampore Lane, East Calcutta, twice and I was shown around by his son and grandson. They were very kind to me and had much patience in showing me pictures and paintings usually not shown to a visitor. Soon I was able to gather a panoramic view of this grand old Master.

His early works, executed when he was studying at the Academy in Calcutta, were very informative. He was copying Van Gogh and Rembrandt. He did not deviate from the usual practice of the European artists. In the end he gave up this experiment, resorted to his Indian-ness and the tradition of Bengal. His paintings immediately took an interesting turn, they became powerful, glittering, stirring and set one to thinking. They showed the continuation of something which had already been existing for centuries. From now on the Master painted with the blood of his heart.

I have come to learn that some young Indians reject Jamini Roy's art as simple folk art and as such monotonous. During my second visit a few Europeans were present and they also did not appreciate his art. Their objection was "we know such motifs from the old temples, folk art and

decorative paintings in official buildings''. What a peculiar objection ! Why should we not be able to discover in the art of the Master similarities with the paintings seen earlier or with classical art ?

To my mind Jamini Roy is surely a Master. I feel myself very lucky as I have been able to obtain one of his paintings for my art collection. My meeting with Jamini Roy is to me as important as the poems of Tagore, whom I met personally as a young lad in Germany. Certain snobs smiled disdainfully at that time and even now he is discarded in many circles as "antiquated". Undoubtedly Tagore has importance not only in India but outside India as well. Eternal India speaks through the works of Tagore, apart from the fact that he has been one of the greatest educationists of his countrymen. Eternal India speaks also through the paintings of Jamini Roy although his art is deeply rooted, above all in the folk-art of Bengal. Indeed Roy's art is at times uneven, some pieces are often more important, more perfect, than the rest. This of course we discover with all great Masters. Never has an artist exclusively created only Masterpieces.

I had also the great honour of talking twice to the Master himself who was over 70 years old. Modern artists and authors speak to foreigners so often of remuneration, agents, copyrights in the various countries. But he spoke only of personages, how he was happy, that I, coming from Germany, was visiting him and how he is always eager to meet people on the human plane. He said that Governments and Organisations were important but more important were personal human contacts. Here again spoke the Indian tradition, the voice of the Indian philosophers and the Wise.

It stripped my heart as he sat in front of me in his long, timeless, white attire. I was deeply impressed by his so noble, I would say, classical head. He spoke to me in very simple sentences and words. However, all that is great is simple, uncomplicated, unpretentious, and therefore everlasting.

Jamini Roy is a simple man and his works reflect the Indian world in a simple way. India being involved at present in huge developments and reforms as many other countries in Asia and Africa should feel happy to possess an artist with such simplicity and clarity. With the realism of children, like they, he simplifies shapes and colour. We praise Picasso for this. Why should we not also praise Jamini Roy for it ?

Much more than other artists Jamini Roy continues what was begun in former centuries and creates thereby a bridge between the past and the present. Our whole world and specially the world of art suffers from radical seduction from tradition. Jamini Roy is aware of the necessity of a continuity. I see in him not a petty provincial artist but the national artist of India. I wish him many followers, students. This is in the interest of Bengali art, Indian art and the art of the world.

Only the deeply rooted, the typical, the original has an everlasting value, especially in our time and in the future which would probably be controlled by the mass spirit and the art of the masses. I approve of the modern time, of our contemporary experiments, including that of Engineering and Physics. But they are only then of value if we have also prophets. Jamini Roy is the prophet of eternal India.

So I greet today as a European, living at present in the African jungles, with all devotion and thanks, this gracious and magnanimous, aristocratical, aged artist of Bengal, nay of India, and I wish him many creative years, so that not only the Museums of India but also those of the world should be enriched by his original art. The gods will present him with a happy smile. They will bless Jamini Roy.

Jamini Roy

—Hamdi Bey

Jamini Roy is famous as an artist but as a person he is obscure. He is neither shy nor naturally reticent and far from being unassuming, As in his pictures so in his life ; he would rather be discovered. You must find things for yourself, whether you are looking at his austere simplified pictures or talking to him. He would not help and if put a question, he would reply with a paradox : “The answer lies in the question.” That is true of his pictures too, in fact of all pictures, because one finds what one seeks. In the matter of the trifling details that make a long life like his—he was born on April 11, 1888—neither his work nor he personally are of much help.

He does give a few dates. He would call in his son to bring the turmeric-coloured roll of paper which is his horoscope and have his date of birth read out. You can have the hour and minutes too, if it is important to you—to him it is not. The next date is only approximate, about the age of sixteen he came to Calcutta from his village, Bellietore, near Bishnupur in Bankura District.

He had very elementary schooling before he came to Calcutta to enter the School of Art. Yes, E. B. Havell (who contributed such a lot to the revival of Indian painting) was the Principal and was later succeeded by Percy Brown. A member of the Italian Consulate in his spare time taught drawing. Abanindranath Tagore was a senior teacher, but he broke away for a time and attempted to establish a rival institution, where Indian art could be taught. Lord Curzon was the Viceroy and lived within a mile of the art school where Jamini Roy was painstakingly drawing in the best Western *academique* manner.

In the cultural history of India, Lord Curzon's seven years constituted a hectic period. Ancient monuments were being protected from vandalism ; pride in the artistic heritage of the

country was being fostered. The revival of Indian art began. How these movements touched Jamini Roy, we do not know. He does not enlighten either, but he makes an oblique reference: "Lord Curzon was a wise man, he could foresee the end of British rule over India and tried to retain Britain's hold over this country even after the inevitable formal transfer of power." It is thus that he describes revivalism in art, the creation of a special category of Indian art—that is a movement inspired by British Imperialism.

A Long Period of Suffering

About 1909, Jamini Roy (21) was a portrait painter following the western school. He was established, for he was earning his living by painting and did not become a drawing master teaching the rudiments of the art to indifferent pupils at a secondary school—then the usual career for those passing out from the art school. What were Roy's relations with Abanindranath and his pupils? Polite and affable of course, for Roy is neither brusque nor rude. But did not the revivalists run him down as a copyist of Western masters? Jamini Roy prefers to be silent but one can guess and between his widely spaced words—he never talks fast—one gets glimpses of a long period of suffering when he had never seriously been considered an artist and had been derided as being a cultural slave. Both as an artist and a person, he had been condemned and completely negated. Nationalism has its victims as well as martyrs.

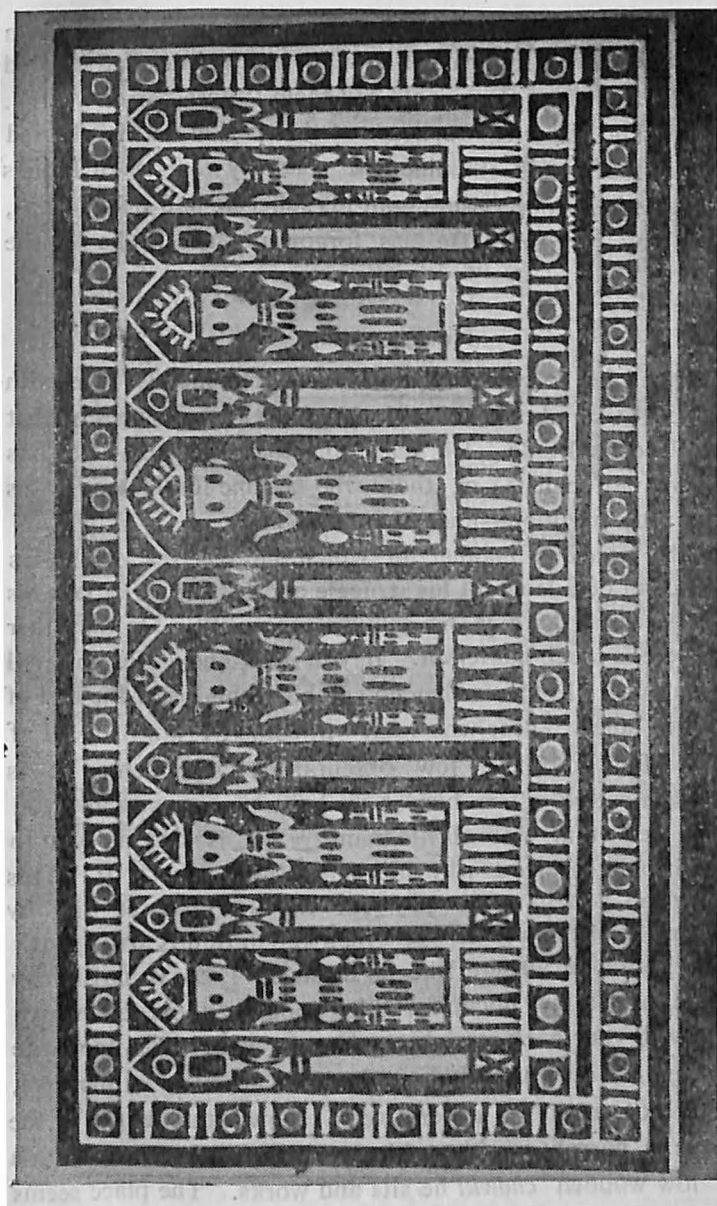
Of his days as a portrait painter there is much work preserved in the aristocratic homes of Calcutta. In his own studio there are only a few pieces. He does not hide them and shows them to a visitor, even the copy of Van Gogh's self-portrait. When revivalism had spent itself out and the French Post-Impressionists created a ripple in the placid waters of Indian fashionable art, some people took notice of Jamini Roy's landscapes. Art critics returning from Europe could recognize

the resemblance to Pissaro and yet miss the greater simplification in Roy. He suffered such appreciation with patience till in 1930 (the date again is approximate) he held the first one-man show of an Indian artist. Alfred Watson, then Editor of *The Statesman*, who later became the object of an attempt at assassination by extremist nationalists, opened the show and called attention to the fact that this artist had to be watched.

In 1938 Shahid Suhrawardy, Bageshwari Professor of Fine Arts at Calcutta University, wrote much in praise of Jamini Roy. By 1939 he had quite a reputation and was shocking fashionable art lovers who had been induced to see his work by reading articles in *The Statesman*. There was so little of representational and descriptive work in his paintings that he left young women twittering and young men bored.

Yet he inspired respect in a different way. He was even less pictorial than the other Bengal painters who were drawing as the Mughal and Rajput artists had been doing. He had found a method even more primitive : and yet it was not wholly strange ; his work had affinities with folk art and drawings by children. People were baffled, but the contact with the West had been increasing and information about Picasso and Matisse was becoming more widely available. People had also come to hear, though distantly, about African masks and wood carving. Jamini Roy swept through the country as a rage, though little understood. Foreigners, notably Beverley Nichols, who wrote the much hated book "Verdict on India", praised him. Other foreigners bought his pictures and soon Roy made a fortune. In 1948 he shifted to a large house in a garden in South Calcutta from the humble dwellings he had tenanted in a narrow North Calcutta lane. His own house is modern and well-built and is in a locality which could be considered fashionable.

This was success, but almost since 1922 (when he was 34) he had been experimenting in his new style. It was years of toil



PATTERN

that he had undergone. And between the discovery of his own *metier* and his early success as a portrait painter had elapsed full thirteen years. One could call them "those barren years". In them and his dreary solitude of that period much is buried and lost that could illumine the shadowy recesses of India's recent artistic history. But about his suffering and tribulations, Jamini Roy is silent. He has forgotten them as he has the dates.

No Forgetting

But has he forgotten them? The tremendous rage with which he talks about art criticism glows at the fringes of that lost well of solitude. He tells you that foreigners—persons hated by nationalists—or those who became foreigners to this country after partition—understood him first.

In the gracious manner in which he receives you, in his avoidance of details about his struggle and his silence about his contemporaries, there is no genuine generosity. On the other hand there is much contempt. If you must know him you will find him out. "My house has no signboard and is at the end of a tortuous lane. Those who want will come; I am in need of none." Beyond these few obscurantist statements he is uncommunicative. The burden to know is on you and you at once feel that with all his manners he is driving you to the position where you will feel small and mean. It is his revenge and you have to pay for the hurt caused him by others, most of them gone while their reputation is still great.

The house is austere like its master. There is hardly any furniture, only a few uncomfortable wooden stools on which you sit with your back straight against the wall. The floors are in shining, red cement and along the walls are his own pictures, stacked, not arranged decoratively. Down the length of the house is a narrow corridor—his work room. In a corner on a small low wooden *chowki* he sits and works. The place seems cramped, but he prefers it to any other part of the commodious

house. The corridor is crowded with pictures, with wooden stumps he has carved and clay figures he has modelled.

You are aware of a singular absence of love, laughter and the excesses you have usually associated with artistic life. And as you watch the straight white hair wildly coiling round a broad head, you feel that there was never any of these things in his life. Never, not even as an escape from the lost helplessness of the barren years. You could essay a question but you hold yourself back—you have a mere enigmatic indication from him : “One should have sex first before he can overcome it.” You are welcome to take it as a sign-post to the road he has travelled or as a general aphorism. His talk is not easy ; he has no formal schooling and, therefore, did not get in the habit of using cliches. What he has learnt he has from introspection and so is largely unintelligible.

You had come to spend an easy hour with a celebrity so that you could claim him as an acquaintance and satiate your spirit of social climbing. The quarry is elusive and you give up the hunt. You are aware of being singled out as the arch philistine—you are aware of the genius recognized late and of the hauteur of a saint together with the simplicity of the craftsman. And yet the words exchanged have been so few.

His incoherence, however, holds a bargain. If you would discover me, you must experience me and my pictures. Dates, tendencies, influences, schools are paraphernalia of knowing which merely clutter up an otherwise broad, smooth and easy path, that of intuition.

Jamini Roy

—Sandip Sarkar

Encounter

Some years before Jamini Roy's death a friend took me to his house. Jamini Roy was in one of his expansive moods and talked freely about what he thought of the younger generation of artists, which was not much. Finally he paused and looked at us. Not having much to say, I asked him why he did not have an exhibition for the benefit of people like me who had not had the opportunity of seeing his work except for the paintings bought by some of his admirers.

Jamini Roy looked straight at me and after a brief pause he asked me to sit on his mat which I did. He brought a couple of paintings which were on the floor but leaning against the wall and placed them in front of me. Immediately the two paintings were transformed. I confessed the experience to him.

He said, "That's right. So you are not blind. Actually I do not paint at the eye-level as the European painters always do. So hanging my pictures on the walls is beside the point. I am a *Patua* and galleries are not for people like me."

Hebber on Jamini Roy

I met Mr. Hebber in the early seventies when he held an exhibition in the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta. He told me he had not included Jamini Roy in his show called 'Twenty-five years of Indian Painting'. To justify Roy's exclusion he said, "I don't consider Jamini Roy to be a painter. A few years back when I was coming to Calcutta, a friend who happens to be a Christian asked me to buy a Christ by Jamini Roy for him. I went to Roy's studio. On hearing my errand he brought out two paintings of the Nativity. One was bigger than the other and had one more cow or donkey. The bigger one was rupees

hundred and twenty-five while the smaller one seventy-five only. I was flabbergasted, you know ! It was like being in a photographers' shop, the bigger the size of photograph the costlier the price."

I told him, "Mr. Hebber, Jamini Roy was acting in a very Indian fashion. If you went to a Dokra or Gharua metal craftsmen and wanted to buy a man on horseback or an elephant, he would ask his price according to the size you chose. The big sized horseman or elephant would be identical to the smaller variety. Jamini Roy identified with the folk artists and copied his work in different sizes without having any qualms. He did not borrow dark glasses from Europeans but used his own eyes."

Mr. Hebber fell silent and said, 'Maybe you are right. I have not thought of Jamini Roy in this light.'

From eyewitness accounts it would perhaps not be wrong to say that Jamini Roy tried to assume an artistic personality free of colonial trappings. He did not want art to flourish in a hothouse plant atmosphere. He was like the shepherd boy David matched against a touring giant—Abanindranath Tagore. The secret of Jamini Roy's success lies in his ability to declass. He refused to identify with the urbanised Bengali babus and Brahmos. His whole stance was fraught with pitfalls and even perhaps with unavoidable contradictions. He was willing to accept for instance electricity or cars in his stride, as Budhadewa Bose has pointed out in his memoirs, but not allowing this to have an impact on his creativity.

Problem of Identity

Two recent studies by Asish Nandy of J. C. Bose and Ramanujam have showed how the problem of identity was faced in scientific disciplines. It was impossible for Bose to arrive at a satisfactory solution because physics and botany demanded strict adherence to certain inherent principles. Ramanujam remained a South Indian Brahmin because pure

mathematics did not create problems for his personality. Moreover he was a Brahmo, so to say a Protestant Hindu, while Ramanujam was a Catholic Hindu by the same token. In a similar fashion Jamini Roy was a Catholic Hindu as writers from Bankim Chandra to Tarasankar and Bibhutibhusan have been in their various capacities. They are people who try to work out a synthesis between modernity and tradition. They are like citadels built on rock unmoved by the mighty onrush of a cyclone or the tremors of an earthquake.

Jamini Roy might have felt the problem of identity acutely or not at all, but he rejected systematically the western artistic norms he had learnt in Art school and did not even think of acquiring the beautifully designed shock absorber that Abanindranath and his disciples manufactured. He could do this as he did not believe in the rarefied version of Indian artististic tradition which was the brain-child of the Orientalists and art historians. To him the tradition of Indian art was the sum total of various local traditions which at times were dissimilar to each other. In other words, he looked at tradition as a social scientist would look at it rather than the historian prone to system-building. So he did visualise a glorious golden age and look back in nostalgia to classical or medieval periods but to the grassroot level of folk tradition. He was modern because he became at-one with proletariat folk art. This explains the vigour of his lines and the simplicity of his stylisation.

How he arrived at this point needs detailed investigation and one could only guess about the socio-economic forces that made him what he was. Suffice to say that in spite of his lapses and failures he brought Indian artists face to face with the real problem.

The Retrospective Exhibition

A tree painted by a *patua* is unmistakably a tree. But you can hardly call it an actual tree.

In all art, the essential is the child mind. Not the unconscious child. The child produces the things of child. But the conscious child...his Jamini Roy on art.

Sometime after Jamini Roy's death a retrospective exhibition was held in his house. The exhibition was an experience in itself. It was a strict selection from his works and no wonder : Bishnu Dey tells us that Jamini Roy has 20,000 paintings to his credit. The selection was as good as it possibly could be as many of his most outstanding paintings are with collectors outside India. Many people forget that it was Bengali poets and intellectuals who acknowledged his greatness before 'hundreds of Western art lovers and connoisseurs temporarily in uniform' during World War II arrived on the scene. So his folkish approach was not to guile foreigners as some idiotic critics would have us believe.

The selection has paintings which date from 1910 to the very last painting of 'Last Supper' he did in 1970. One goes through various phases and does not encounter development in the European sense, but growth and maturity. There are the academically handled portraits he had to do for keeping body and soul together. Then there were certain copies he did as those of Rembrandt and Van Gogh self-portraits. There are outdoor scenes and landscapes done in gouache—a medium which he wished to improve and adopt specially—where he tried to understand the impressionist in general and Van Gogh in particular. He was searching and trying to understand what light meant in painting and finally he came to a point where he rejected it. He seemed to have experimented in different modes of paintings before he chose and matured in a particular style which was his own. From his earliest period one saw two water colour studies. There is a lady done in wash which has grace and feeling and a bull done from the hind side that has vigour.

He seemed to be fascinated with women and their graceful postures and is particularly attracted by the mother and child

theme. Wherever he has tried to capture certain movements he seemed not to be in his elements, but wherever he has been able to freeze a movement or to make it static, or to study the immobile part of a rhythm he has been very successful.

The drawing part of his paintings is strictly two-dimensional even where he has studied women in terms of volume as a sculptor would do. The lines have vitality and grace and break up the monotony of the flatness of his colours, which he was so prone to use. In the more mature period there were instances where he would vary deliberately his flat colours with the use of tonality and use gouache as one would use oil—using one colour on top of the other and letting the opaque colour peep from underneath the transparent one, a trick he taught himself during his oil colour days. There are paintings that had affinity with Byzantine mosaic and Russian icons and even perhaps with stained glass—that is he identified with the Oriental part of Europe and was at home in its painterly values. As a Hindu he had no difficulty in understanding the life of Christ whom he makes into another avatar.

A Nikhil Biswas or a Rabin Mondal would demythologise the life of Christ and emphasise the passion of Christ to symbolise the suffering of people in India. On the other hand Jamini Roy depicts the whole of Christ's life in terms of simple myths that even the villagers of India would understand, not just the passion. It is in the Christ-theme where the age-old catholicity of the syncretic Hindu comes to the forefront. There is Mary with the child Jesus done as the Queen of Heaven which has a folk flavour. There is the massacre of the children by Herod done in terms of folk puppets and several versions of the flight to Egypt. In fact there are various versions of incidents from Christ's life where he tackled the problem of stylisation and utilisation of space in a variety of ways. To him the pictorial problems and the handling of a theme were complementary. There are times when he failed

and times he did not ; finally this does not matter.

Jamini Roy has shown a rare awareness of the life around him and the myths the people believed. His farmers, women, tribals, birds, cats and animals all seem to be full of life in spite of their stylisation.

There were some wood sculpture done very privately for his own amusement. No one—not even Bishnu Dey or Asok Mitra—has written about them. For a long time Indian sculpture was engaged in the 19th century world of Rodin but Jamini Roy showed rare awareness of the search for form and rhythm and of shapes in their bare rudimentary essentials. Particularly I was fascinated with a bust of a man with a hat smoking a fag. In sculpture Jamini Roy was a 20th century man.

In his paintings there are brief periods when a madness and lack of inspiration affect him but there are equally inspired moments. There are drawings done in a very imaginative way where his greatness manifests itself. Even in later period when he overburdened himself with the limitations of his style he could be lucid and childlike.

Particularly one does not forget in a hurry his three small panel drawings and scenes from 'Naukabihar' and a black and white drawing of a bull. The fluidity and the vigour of lines take the breath away. 'Garud on Horse' has exquisite tonal variation of red. His 'Two Sentries' and three 'Vaishnav' women are masterpieces of sustained artistry. Here the drawing, stylisation and subtle modulation of colour synthesise to become a moving experience.

One remains amazed at the way he simplified and yet could be articulate. His colours, although limited in scope, are able to emanate poetry and warmth, and his subjects whether Krishna or a cat, Christ or a Santal woman, vibrate with the vigour of his contours. In spite of his imitators and calender-makers he has still the power to move us visually. It can be safely said that he is the greatest modern artist India has produced to date.

Jamini Roy's art : is it folkish ?

—Ahi Bhusan Malik

A few years back while interviewing Rajanikanto Chitrakar, a famous Patua of Kalighat, now dead, I asked if there was any similarity of the works of Jamini Roy with Kalighat Pats. His quipping was : 'There were many things in common in the works of Patuas of different parts of Bengal. Jamini Roy who was not a Patua of course, did a kind of art which looked like Pat but that which made Kalighat Pat different was not there precisely in the works of Jamini Roy. But some well-known critics said that Jamini Roy revived the Kalighat School of Painting. I do agree with Rajani Chitrakar. Jamini Roy took many things from the Patachitras to recast them with well-measured and well-polished lines which are not folkish. He nevertheless created an art of his own and it is very much sophisticated. Sophistication is definitely a quality. He opened a door to the contemporary artists to go out to a vast field to explore. But his followers, unfortunately, only copy him.

Jamini Roy started painting in European technique, having been taught by European teachers. He executed beautiful portraits in oil and did paint even in Pissarian Neo-Impressionistic idioms. But when to the call of the nationalists the Bengali artists responded to the call of the nationalists they responded and carried on their works in nationalistic style. Jamini Roy too sought for the national form he found it in the folk art of Bengal. The terracotta art of Bankura and elsewhere influenced him greatly. He studied the glass panes of the doors and windows of Basu Bhawan at Bagbazar. The panes were supposedly painted by the Kalighat Patuas. Nandalal Bose, the owner of the house, was a disciple of Thakur Ramakrishna. Ramakrishnadev used to visit the house from time to time to see the beautiful religious paintings on the

glass panes. Jamini Roy, who lived in the neighbourhood of Basu Bhawan, I am told, while looking for the traditional art to develop his own art thereon came to know of the panes of Basu Bhawan. The Bengal School, the then prevalent influence upon the younger artists, failed to knock down Jamini Roy. He strongly resisted, rather fought that and ultimately was successful to form a school of his own. It was not actually revival of Kalighat Pat. It was a result of studies on varied folk forms.

Jamini Roy became famous all over the world because in his art the experts found originality. In art, however, there is nothing absolutely original. Talented artists develop upon something left by their forerunners and where they leave their art the following generations, as in the relay race, start from there to proceed on. Jamini Roy proceeded with the folk form and developed it into an art which is hardly folkish. Jamini Roy is one of the great pillars which support the Indian art today. His admirers have written many appreciative words on him but I think correct assessment on his art is yet to be made.

I Met Jamini Roy

—Karuna Saha

I felt like a pigmy standing in front of a giant. But the simple conversation that followed quickly eased my excitement and embarrassment. A patch of green grass behind the corridor was also comforting and lent reassuring freshness to the entire episode of my first meeting with an outstanding personality of contemporary art whose fame crossed the frontier of countries and continents. While there was novelty in the first meeting my second encounter with his works at the exhibition of his paintings in retrospect sponsored by his son Patal Babu proved to be more intimate and also illuminating. This was two years after the artist's death and in the meantime almost quarter of a century, restless and eventful, had passed by since my student days.

Now I could rediscover Jamini Roy as the irresistible modern painter skilled in the academic styles, who had found his own captivating idiom of expression and the Indian pictorial language. His commanding height of mastery of Indian pictorial tradition had its roots in the folk toys and scrolls; terracota tiles of Vishnupur and the Vaishnava cultural heritage of Bengal. His coloured bands, daring lines, and uncompromising adherence to the true pictorial forms spoke as if in gentle whispers down the breeze heaving in an era marked by fierce conflicts on art form. He succeeded in remaining alone, a stranger almost in exile in a calm of fragrant contemplation. He did not permit distractions, decorative overgrowth to interfere with the richness of true pictorial form. Colours used in his paintings were earth colours that could be employed exclusively by him to attain a certain lyrical quality. Jamini Roy used to think himself as an artist craftsman in the tradition of the patuas or shilpis. He painted with a variety of indigenous colours mixed with gum

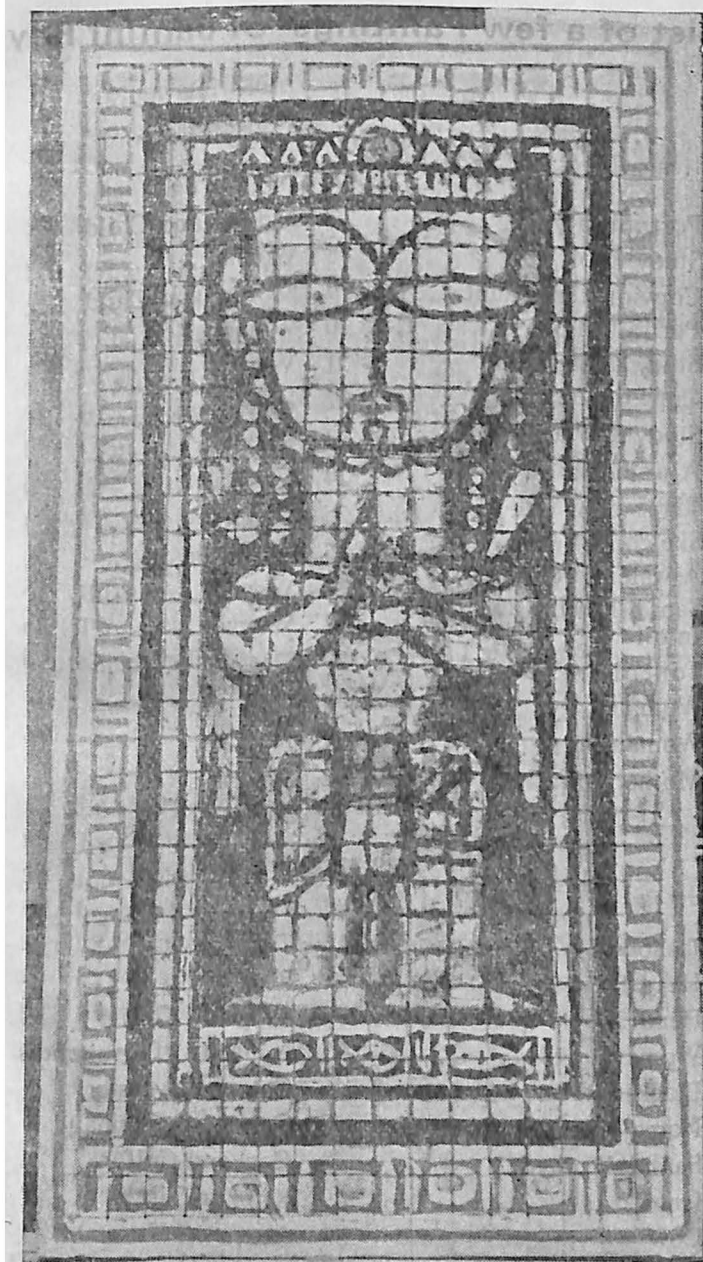
and other ingredients. Paintings were mainly on cardboard, paper and wood.

My first encounter with the world of Jamini Roy's painting took place years ago when I was a student of the Government College of Arts and Crafts, Calcutta. An architect friend of mine accompanied me to Jamini Roy's house at Dihi Serampore Lane on a Sunday morning, a casual and unconnected event that just came about in the life of a student still a fresher in art education struggling to grasp elementaries of grammar of painting, modelling and trying to understand light and shade and viewing in varied perspectives. Little did I comprehend that an event, small in itself, could become an overpowering, lingering experience. My suspense was intense to have the opportunity of seeing the great painter himself but the preparation to expose myself to the glimpses of his world of pure painting, unique in unity of design and rhythm was lacking.

Entering into his studio I found a number of rooms and corridors and his paintings were resting on white coloured pine wood stools instead of adorning the walls. The studio rooms were characterised by simplicity, a sort of naturalness with provision for entry of profuse daylight. From the studio room I stepped into a long corridor. There I could see many of Jamini Roy's paintings, some hanging on the bright white wall overlooking the floor coloured Indian red, most of the big size paintings were on the white pine wood stools. At one end of the corridor there was a big covered verandah. I saw the painter tall and attractive in his simplicity, engaged in a leisurely conversation with Sri Atul Bose and late Ramendranath Chakravarty, well-known figures among the artists' circles and also Sri Bishnu Dey, an eminent poet. Ramendranath Chakravarty who was the Principal of the Government College of Arts and Crafts at that time could recognise me and he introduced me to Jamini Roy. His view was that an artists should use the simplest possible materials at hand to

create his works of art. He was a traditionalist believing in the life of a shilpi's painting and it should be easily available in large quantity. From experiments with academic styles to his own decorative paintings I could follow the footprints of the artist through a long winding path. In his paintings, the moment could become true in its stillness and exceed the limits of time in a peaceful embrace of eternity. The great city of Calcutta with its throbbing vital life does not seem to exist for his paintings. No modern man, no machinery, neither the everyday reality has come out in his paintings. To him a self-created world was important and enriched with the eternal in its pure simplicity.

Choosing the episode of Christ and Krishna legend, the Ramayana sequences, the mother and child, the Santhal girls, he could stir the depth of a human soul and Jamini Roy did not consider it very important to look beyond. His art was to the end a fascinating progression, the constructions being often repeated like the Vaishnava devotees' incantation of the beloved divine name but it provided no room for the violent turns and twists commonly found in the evolution of many great painters of our times.



JESUS CHRIST WITH BIRD

A list of a few Paintings of Jamini Roy

1910-28

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|------------------|
| 1 | Portrait in oil | 17 | Mother and Child |
| 2 | Study in oil | 18 | Woman |
| 3 | Copy of Rembrandt | 19 | Mother and Child |
| 4 | Portrait in oil | 20 | Woman |
| 5 | Study in oil | 21 | Woman |
| 6 | Copy of Van Gogh | 22 | Head |
| 7 | Study in water colour | 23 | Offering |
| 8 | A water colour sketch | 24 | Toilet |
| 9 | Three Heads | 25 | Child |
| 10 | Sketch | 26 | Musician |
| 11 | A water colour study | 27 | Woman |
| 12 | Santal Mother and Child
in oil | 28 | Woman |
| 13 | Toilet in water colour | 29 | Deer |
| 14 | Woman | 30 | Deer |
| 15 | Woman | 31 | Deer |
| 16 | Mother and Child | 32 | Sketch |

1929-32

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|----|---------------------|
| 33 | Jashoda | 42 | Cow |
| 34 | Head 1 | 43 | Blue Boy |
| 35 | Head 2 | 44 | A Santal Group |
| 36 | Woman | 45 | A Group of Drummers |
| 37 | Blacksmith | 46 | Cat with Lobster |
| 38 | Namaj (Muslim prayer) | 47 | Queen on Elephant |
| 39 | Santal Woman | 48 | Cow and Calf |
| 40 | Gandhi | 49 | King on Tiger |
| 41 | Cow | 50 | Queen on Horse |

51	Mother and Child	68	Black Cats
52	Mother and Child	69	Manasa
53	Deer	70	Durga on Tiger
54	Owl	71	Lady
55	Three Friends	72	Mother and Child
56	Santal Head	73	Marriage Procession
57	Two Friends	74	Man with Hookah
58	Three Hunters	75	Ravan fighting
59	Santal Girls	76	Baul
60	Black Horse	77	Dancing Girls
61	Lion	78	Three Sisters
62	Red Horse	79	Ganesh with his Parents
63	Mother and Child	80	Kirtan 1
64	Santal Drummer	81	Kirtan 2
65	Bird	82	Shiva
66	Two Cats	83	Three Boatmen
67	King on Tiger		

1935-40

84	Landscape	91	Street Scene
85	Landscape	92	Landscape
86	Landscape	93	Landscape
87	Landscape	94	Landscape
88	Landscape	95	Rabindranath and Gandhi
89	Landscape	96	Maharshi and Mahatma
90	Landscape	96A	Sketch

1932-42

97	Jashoda	102	Radha
98	Gopini 1	103	Kirtan
99	Gopini 2	104	Holi
100	Krishna	105	Krishna
101	Krishna and Balaram	106	Krishna

107	Krishna	111	Krishna with Gopinis
108	Krishna	112	Krishna with two
109	Krishna and Jashoda		Cowherds
110	Krishna with Milkmaids		

1940-70

113	Crucifixion	126	Christ
114	Christ	127	Christ with Followers
115	Christ	128	Last Supper
116	St John	129	Last Supper
117	Christ and Mary	130	Birth of Christ
118	Christ	131	Flight to Egypt
119	Christ and Mary	132	Mary and Christ
120	Annunciation	133	Christ with Cross
121	Christ and Mary	134	Last supper
122	Crucifixion	135	Christ with two Followers
123	Flight to Egypt	136	After the Birth
124	Flight to Egypt	137	Annunciation
125	Christ with child	138	Christ

Some rudimentary drawings & paintings—1925-50

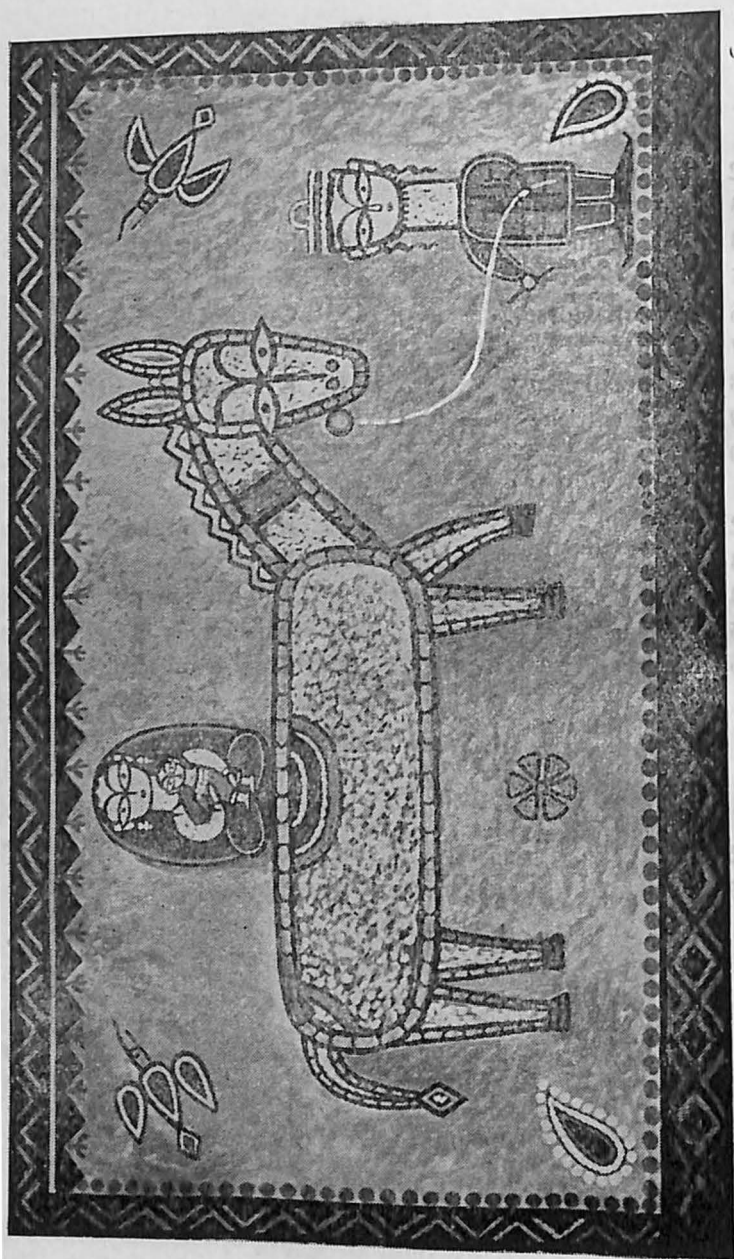
139	Tibetan Face	150	Two Women
140	Farmer	151	Drawing
141	Farmer	152	Drawing
142	Man with Hookah	153	Drawing
143	Man with Hookah	154	Drawing
144	Sketch	155	Farmer with Bird
145	Copy from a picture postcard	156	Sketch
146	Woman	157	Sketch
147	A Portrait	158	Sketch
148	Bird 1	159	Sketch
149	Bird 2	160	Sketch

1950-70

161	Copy of Byzantine Mosaic	177	Krishna
162	Kirtan	178	Radha
163	Jatayu and Garud	179	Garud on Horse
164	Krishna and Balaram	180	Cows
165	Chariot and Horse	181	Santal Drummer
166	Man on Horse	182	Woman
167	Elephant	183	Offering
168	King on Tiger	184	Toilet
169	Two Sentries	185	Krishna
170	Warrior	186	Mother and Child
171	Cat	187	Krishna
172	Cow	188	Gopini
173	Bull	189	King on Makar
174	Doll	190	Musicians
175	Krishna	191	Three Women
176	Makar	192	Vaishnavas
		193	Copy from Icon

Wood sculpture

1	Head 1	4	Head 4
2	Head 2	5	Doll
3	Head 3	6	Doll



FLIGHT TO EGYPT

DEVIPRASAD ROYCHOWDHURY
(1899-1975)



DEVIPRASAD ROYCHOWDHURY

An Introduction

Deviprasad, the Virile Artist of life

—Prasanta Daw

Silently was wiped off from the canvas of Indian art a portrait. On the Vijaya Dashami night (1975) at the age of 76 left us for good Deviprasad Roychowdhury, the artist, who carried the traditions of Indian art all through his life. It is needless to say that in the field of Indian art and culture his death marks an irreparable loss. This will hardly be an exaggeration to say that with him ends an epoch of art."

Deviprasad was an artist and an artlover—a creator and a seer. On the one hand he nursed the tradition of Indian art and on the other, easily brought to his works of art the beauty and sweetness of Western schools.

In the prime of his life as an artist he learnt his first lessons from Acharya Abanindranath. But his thirsty mind did not remain content for a long time within the bounds of Abanindranath's style. Deep in his heart there was a great yearning for learning painting in the Western style. It was, of course, at the instance of Abanindranath himself later on that Deviprasad got initiated in Western painting under Boyce, the Italian painter. Quite some time thereafter Deviprasad tilted towards sculpture and started learning it from Hiranmoy Roychowdhury. In later life, of course, Deviprasad became more famous for his pieces of sculpture which now abound in numbers at many places around the world. How many pictures he drew or how many sculpture pieces he carved throughout his life he was himself unable to say. But his more well-known carvings include Triumph of Labour, When Winter Comes, The Martyrs' Memorial at Patna, Go it Alone, Motilal Nehru, Raja Annamalai, Rabindranath Tagore and Vivekananda. According to his own opinion his My

Father in bronze was his masterpiece. Unfortunately this bronze statue of his father, Umaprasad Roychowdhury, can no longer be seen. While doing Gandhi that stands at Park Street crossing bronze was in short supply and Deviprasad melted his father's statue to pour at Gandhiji's feet. Two other remarkable statues made by him and erected at Calcutta are those of Rastraguru Surendranath in Curzon Park and Sir Ashutosh at Dharamatola Crossing.

Deviprasad, the artist and sculptor of world wide fame, could not finish the largest work he ever undertook. For the last nine years of his life he had been carving a national event composed of eleven statues. This largest group-composition in sculpture in the world was named Martyrs' Memorial. It was none other than Jawaharlal Nehru himself who invited Roychowdhury to his residence and entrusted this work to him in 1955-56. This was to have been erected in Delhi. The exact site has not yet been selected. All the bronze castings were completed. It would have fulfilled the sculptor's last wish, had the statues been placed at the desired site.

In the making of Deviprasad as an artist Michaelangelo's contribution was not insignificant. Yet he was, of course, largely inspired by Rembrandt, Rodin, Epstein without being totally influenced by any. There was surely some influence of Abanindranath too. But never did he blindly ape anybody, though he was no less eager in early years to pursue their ideas. Mixing his individuality with those rich streams he devised a new method all his own which in time flowered into a rounded characteristic unmistakably different.

The main trait of Deviprasad's work, was his virile but spontaneous structure. The same can be said of his drawings also. There is no obscurity, no complication. Each piece is absolutely clear and direct, capable of not only touching our feeling but also of uniting it with life itself. Like music his works course through our consciousness and drum in our blood.

Strength is by far the most remarkable feature of Devi-

prasad's art. Any of his paintings or sculptural piece is powerful in its own spontaneous strength. In his internationally renowned piece *Triumph of Labour* four persons are labouring to move a mound of stone. Two opposite forces of push and pull have been portrayed here. In such an environment the respective anatomical details of the four persons have assumed a moving pageant of speed. He did not forget, however, to invest his creations with the kindly and cordial touch of humanism. For example, one remembers the shabby old man in *When Winter Comes*, long after one's first encounter.

His strength showed in no less clear terms in his pictures. As a matter of fact, the spontaneous strength of soul and its mobility form the very basis of his art. Whether in the prime or the final years of his life as an artist this chief trait of strength distinguished all his works. It was so to say the one truth behind his paintings and carvings.

It is no exaggeration to say that in water-colour paintings artists as skilful as he are not many. He left an imprint of extraordinary skill in creating depth and dimension in his water colour paintings. And the tonal beauty thereof has to be seen not only with the eyes but with the mind as well. Examples : *The Peacock* and *the Peahen*, *Fishing*, *Whispering*, *Calcutta Rain*, *Famine*, *Evacuees* and *Lepcha Maid*, *Fakir* etc. This is why at one time Deviprasad was known as the "wizard of water colour."

Strength in art was the outcome of Deviprasad's strength in life. In his personal life he was masculine and muscular both physically and mentally. At one time he threw a challenge to Bhim Bhabani in wrestling. On the other hand, he was a born hunter. He was a connoisseur of classical music. To many would still ring the melodies from his sweet flute. He was both a gourmand and a gourmet. As a writer he used to express his thoughts and ideas, which were never light, in language equally weighty but graceful.

I had been in personal touch with Deviprasad for a long time. His house on Sambhunath Pandit Street is a temple to me. Many memories, many of his words crowd my mind. But over everything else I remember again and again his strong personality and loving heart. Though coming of a Zaminder family he used to mix with the common people freely and intimately. He was an excellent talker and loved telling stories. Man he loved, which is why all his life he searched for art in humanity and humanity in art. I think life and art became one and the same in his work. He caught virility and humanity in a strong embrace at the altar of life and arts.

Personal Feelings on Art

—Deviprasad Roychowdhury

Any form of art created by irresistible urge is a record of an expression. The expression serves a purpose. The purpose is related to the subject matter which is conditioned by the temperament and mood of the Artist. The expression, in the circumstance, is the vehicle which convey the thought rendered into speech to establish contact between the one who is in urgent need of being relieved of the disturbance within and the other is he or she who is eager to understand the sort of relief desired.

The reciprocation in such cases looks forward to satisfy mutual interest because one who speaks to relate the inner disturbance does not get satisfaction by speaking to himself but needs another to listen and share the substance of his emotion. Therefore, the medium used for communication of thought provoked by an emotion for a creative cause cannot escape the function of an understandable language. As such the language, in any form, has to be admitted as the *via media* that clarifies the contents of the emotion. The emotion thus harnessed to serve a purpose is committed to satisfy certain vested interests which may concern politics, religion, discipline social uplift, etc.

The other vital function of the visual art is to reveal beauty concealed in the form. The quality of the form delivers boundless joy to the receptive mind. It is a reward of the hard struggle undergone by the Artist in quest of the desired form of beauty which satisfies the emotional aspect be it sentimental or otherwise. The purpose thus served is identical with that of speech because when one who is spoken to is expected to lend ears to the speech and is prepared to respond to the reaction to what is heard.

Such understanding is possible when the form of expression



NUDE : Study from life

can identify itself with physical familiarity observed by optical vision. But change of vision has come to stay. We are faced with intellectual experiments which claim originality as the goal of creative art, but originality is not a thing which can be achieved just by asking for it, particularly for the reason that originality as such, in most cases, is only a consolation for what cannot be achieved, just because it is a matter of fashion.

Leaving originality apart let us see how we can deal with the idea of beauty which needs a definition for its clear cut meaning. But the question is always there 'can there be a definition of beauty', the acceptance of which depends entirely how new condition overwhelmed by foreign impacts would accommodate our traditional pattern motifs which, according to new ideas, are nothing else but repetition of patterns conveying no personal feeling of the Artist.

In the circumstance, it would be futile to argue on the points of progress either from technical point of view or organised pattern of a pictorial or sculptural theme since the idea of originality will at once stand in the way to defy the repetition of tradition as an act of outmoded following. Therefore, the uncompromising follower of originality has to refuse to learn from a 'Guru', as such learning is based on imitation. Hence I, being a member of the old school of thought, restrain myself from proceeding further on this point of controversy and would rather wait to see the result of the new impacts, if I can survive the intellectual invasion in the realm of expressing simple and earnest emotional feeling.

Artist Deviprasad Roychowdhury

—Chintamani Kar

To say my say about Deviprasad Roychowdhury, the artist, in a few words is impossible. It is correct, however, to state that in telling the history of modern sculpture Deviprasad Roychowdhury has to be reckoned as one of the most powerful sculptors amongst the pioneers in the field. In my student days I came across the photograph of a handsome youth, the details whereof I do not remember now, but, in introducing him, the following appeared below the picture—This youngman is not only a physical culturist nor just a wrestling hero, he is a flute-playing artist and sculptor, Sri Deviprasad Roychowdhury.

Some time later, I was elated to have come in personal touch with him. I think whoever came in his close proximity could not have been but moved by his simplicity and vigour.

The stream of art can never be stagnant. The novelty of it carries the stream further and further. In this process when our living present will become the dead past, it is not unlikely that, compared to the newness of that future our modern art of today will appear rather outmoded. Those who now command respect as forerunners of modern sculpture will, however, have been difficult to be spotted out, had not the contributions of artists like Deviprasad worked in their making. To keep a ladder erect there must be one on the ground holding it. The person who is on the top of a ladder and looks down upon him who is holding it below may at first thought consider himself quite high up and minimize the size of the person on the ground, but it must not be forgotten that, unless the ladder is held in position by the latter, the man up will find it impossible to stand in poise there. Although this example is hardly sufficient to describe the noted sculptor,

Deviprasad Roychowdhury, I trust this my brief note will help understand his true contribution to art.

To artist Deviprasad Roychowdhury whom I consider to be one of those closest to me I convey my regard and affection.



SKETCH

Unchallenged Achievement

—Asit Kumar Halder

It is indeed a great pleasure to record my views on the works and achievements of my colleague, Mr. Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury. In the sphere of our country's art Deviprasad's place can never be challenged. There is a Bengali proverb which runs : "As many men so many minds". It is therefore practically impossible for people, who do not find time or opportunity to study art, to have any 'say' in the matter. The difficulty is enhanced by the fact that artists also do not think alike. They are themselves busy in finding individual expression in their creative activities. Luckily, however, it is different in the case of the present writer who happens to belong to the same school of thought with which Deviprasad identifies himself.

Art has its spontaneous urge. It can hardly await critical opinion to mould itself accordingly. It is nothing but creative experiment, with freedom of thought and action. Artistic creation is not factory discipline or routine. In the matter of the selection of subject-matter, technique, medium or treatment, the artist is the final authority. This authority the artist enjoys in all his activities.

Only recently a learned professor, while opening the annual show of the Lucknow School of Arts, asked if one could make a selection of the best specimen amongst the poster designs exhibited in the commercial section. An English lady who happened to be there came to the professor's rescue and blandly told him that it would depend upon individual taste—the one he selects she might reject.

Therefore, generally speaking, art criticism can be real only when it helps to understand the significance of individual achievement. A distinguished scientist once asked the writer whether the work of the artists of our country in the past,

of Ajanta and Ellora, could still be improved upon by correcting their detail drawings of the human figures or their modellings. The obvious answer was of course 'no'. But that would not satisfy the mind of the scientist, because in science every research improves the former defects.

So a lawyer or a doctor would also think while viewing an object of art, each in his own way. A doctor would certainly try to find the anatomy faithfully adhered to in drawing the human figure according to his own standard of judgment. Similarly, a literary man would very much like to see his own vision translated into art, instead of finding out what the artist himself wanted to depict.

Art cannot depend upon the 'literary' criticism of the art critics ; they can only help to create interest and better understanding amongst art lovers, and also sometimes to revalue the achievements of the art of the past. We therefore welcome Ruskin, Walter Pater, Roger Fry and others who not only opened new vistas for the better understanding of art, but put the study of art on a high pedestal.

Art is nothing but the cultural expression of a nation and therefore requires time to understand. Even in pre-historic days the primitives never lacked in such creative expression. Even to understand their work or the work of children, it is essential to have some sympathy and understanding. The literary critic must come down from his high pulpit of aesthetics to judge their work rightly. Then only will he appreciate the primitiveness of the creative urge and its sincerity. Thus he will realise that art brings out the dynamic energy into that rhythmic play on a static canvas which is the order of the life and universe.

In life we love, build and invent in rhythmic cycles which can only be appreciated by intuition that is beyond all sense perceptions. The artist has this sixth sense. He not only perceives the rhythm but records it in his creation in canvas, stone, clay, music or verse. There lies the uniqueness of the

artist's soul.

The art critics of our country, while criticising works of contemporary artists, are either carried away by the personality of their subjects or else give themselves patronising airs. They have seldom got the power of discrimination and always find shoddy examples to illustrate their essays which only bring out their poverty in understanding aesthetic ideals. The artist cannot await the arrival of sincere art critics with the proper outlook, but he should work because he would love to. The Bhagavat Geeta directs : "Ma falesu kadachana"—'work without giving thought to worldly success.'

Deviprasad is actuated by this noble ideal and outlook. He worked on canvas and stone to achieve that end. His healthy body has got a vigorous mind. We notice in his work not only a high standard of creative zeal but also a proper understanding of art forms whether they originated from Asia; Europe or America. His example is full of hope for the future generations of artists. In praising him we pay respect to the art of our country and to the renaissance of Indian art which was started by our 'Guru', Dr. Abanindranath Tagore. Blessed are those who create and those who understand the creative activities of others !

The Story of A Struggle Evolution of Roychowdhury

—P. R. Ramachandra Rao

Deviprasad Roychowdhury has some of the bluest blood of Bengal coursing in his veins. He comes of an aristocratic lineage ; his ancestors were celebrated noblemen. His grand father in the fourth degree was a prince, Raja Keshabeshwar Roy of Mudagacha : Chowdhury's great grand-father was renowned throughout Bengal, while his son, Chowdhury's grandsire, Hari Prasad Roychowdhury was a noted Sanskrit and Arabic scholar.

Umaprasad, Chowdhury's father, was simply an affectionate and understanding parent ; he was the making of Deviprasad in every way. Chowdhury's portrait of him is a classic piece of severe modelling, devoutly rendered. The clay is masterfully impressed with the undulating planes of that broad forehead, furrowed by knitted brows ; the powerful nose beneath, supporting strong heavy cheeks, is pierced by shaggy moustaches, almost covering the parted lips ; while the dimpled chin rests on an ample chest, modelled vigorously, aggressively, the fingerprints lying anyhow, everywhere. It is a powerful head and belonged to one who bore an imperious character. Umaprasad was no spoonfeeding father ; he wanted his boy to grow up to be a man, fearless and straight. A great king of Macedon set to his greater son, Alexander, the wild task of taming an unruly steed. Umaprasad, in an humbler way, risked his son to ride an unbroken mare to prove his mettle. Deviprasad did not break his limbs. The Zamindar was a sport and indulged the boy's love for wild game ; proudly he would admonish his son, "if you must shoot, shoot tigers, not birds."

Chowdhury has since developed into a first-class shot and,

while he can tear himself away from his art, he is up in the woods shooting big game. For nights on end he has lain in watch for his unfortunate victim, waiting and watching heedless of food ; the beast would come prowling, with eyes flashing in the darkness ; then Chowdhury would bear down the startled animal, turned at bay, crashing to the ground, groaning and growling, in bloody and close encounter. He has not killed an animal unawares. I have asked him why he goes to hunt, killing mute, unoffending beasts ; he has simply answered—in *krceda*. Once he shot a wild, raving boar ; the poor thing came rolling towards him, with big, pitiful eyes, challenging and dropped dead at his feet. That look has burnt itself into his soul and pierced his heart ; it returns to him agonisingly, upbraidingly, like some wailing sound from the depths of despair. Yet, his hand returns to the trigger ; it snaps and the shot whizzes to pierce the target in a crack aim. I have watched Chowdhury, after darkness has fallen, aim lead-shot at tin discs tied to distant trees in the wide open space, and the metal resound to every unfailing shot. But some day again it will not be just a tin disc, but a mute, unoffending beast. I have never been able to understand.

This man is simple and kind as a child ; there is in his upstairs garden a little tree that he has nurtured these thirteen years with a father's care, tending its every pigmy leaf ; it is strange how heartlessly he can go out into that greater garden of the Maker of us all and destroy that he can never after revitalise. I have never been able to know.

Chowdhury's mother, like all Indian mothers, shaped him unobtrusively ; she put the benevolent touch to a reckless nature. He recalls how, when he had gifted a beggar a four-anna piece, his mother upbraided him, saying it was too little—"Why, that would not feed him ! Pay him at least a rupee". Chowdhury seems literally to have taken her advice to heart ; a native generosity has endowed freely, until some-

times he beggars himself by unregulated extravagance.

Chowdhury's aristocratic ties are far flung ; the Rajas of Rangpur are related to him through his mother, while the Raja of Gouripur and the Zamindars of Lakshmipur are among his kin by marriage. Quite naturally, the zamindari system enters not infrequently into the Byronic themes of his plays and short stories, and, by a severe introspection, he is its unsparing critic. For all his influential connections, Chowdhury has carved his own destiny from the humblest start, shunning the onerous advantages of his kinship. The landed aristocracy of Bengal will not easily let their scions engage in the 'common' occupation of breadwinning ; it is too proletarian a business. Eyebrows were lifted when Deviprasad chose to be an artist ; his noble kinsmen were outraged at his mad enterprise. They laughed at him.

II

As a boy Roychowdhury must have been a nuisance to his teachers, because he infringed all scholastic discipline and was extremely unmanageable. Self-willed, he cared for none ; only his father could keep him a little under control. He read but little, but played and fought most of the time ; he broke doors and furniture and jumped over six-foot walls. It was not an enviable record, as school records go, and he made little progress in his studies. Education, as it went, signally failed to interest him ; indeed, Chowdhury belongs to that distinguished band of intellectuals, like Tagore, who have never been to a university. He is wholly self-taught and self-cultured ; he has a refreshing, but understandable, contempt for academic degrees. If he had gone to college it would most certainly have wasted his time and destroyed, perhaps, a spontaneous intelligence accustomed to rove at will. The assimilation of much unwanted knowledge, laboriously practised in our universities, consumes valuable energy which an original mind can turn to creative use : to have put Chowdhury

on the intellectual regimen of unacademic diet would have been to flatten his mind to a dead level of uniformity—one lost soul more on the altar of education. Yet Chowdhury was privately tutored by European gentlemen of refreshing sympathy and ability ; his range of knowledge, indeed, is astonishingly wide. He has read at will and with avidity, and all his reading and study has not blunted a virile mind.

Lacking the sub-conscious spurs of a graduated intelligence, his imagination is apt sometimes, to course wildly, with a revolutionary fervour. This is especially so in his literary efforts, which border on the macabre, treating sex with almost continental frankness. An unsatisfied emotional sensibility conceives Strindbergian themes in reckless abandon ; it is a psychological blowing-off of repressed vitality. There is in him, however, no sex-worship as in D. H. Lawrence, the ennobling, passionate, unquenchable urge for the body beautiful, spiritualised in the process ; to Chowdhury sex is a disturbing hunger, motivating all human impulses, which must be fed at any impossible cost, or the current of life will turn against itself in a whirlpool of rank disaster. On a Freudian base, Chowdhury has developed a pragmatic sex-theory of brutal reality, so nakedly outspoken that the union of the sexes is robbed of all delicate idealism and grossly degraded into a carnal rite. This unholy emphasis can sometimes be fulsome.

It is a tragic commentary on educational systems that original minds have developed rather without their trammels. Shelley was driven out of a university ; Shakespeare was innocent of any ; Tolstoy was repelled by it and Maxim Gorki was a wonderful tramp. Scholarship is the laborious consignment of unproductive knowledge into a dead sink ; the creative mind recoils from this progressive dementation. Genius knows no laws ; they are deduced by industrious scholarship from the works of genius. The Professor of Poetry at Oxford can write little poetry perhaps, although he may be wonderful at explaining how poetry comes to be written.

The poet lisps because the numbers come : a rose just cannot help being beautifully fragrant. Genius is wild, ebullient and forthright ; it does not fit the clean-cut pattern of critical reason. The motifs of Chowdhury's plays and stories are staggeringly original ; life is unmasked and presented in grotesque vicissitudes. A drunkard is not the less human ; weakness is not villainy. A much be-womaned man is not the less a lover ; sex, the physical impulse, reaches across the land of the dead. Indeed, the marvel is not that Chowdhury should conceive so powerfully, but that he should write as virgorously. Raphael once wrote a sonnet and Dante painted a picture : Rossetti was not a lesser artist than poet. The great Polish dramatic poet, Stanislas Wyspianski, it was discovered, was an original painter of rare excellence, the most universal artistic genius since Leonardo da Vinci. Whether Chowdhury's literary work will rank equally with his great art I cannot say : but he is certainly the most eclectic Indian mind functioning.

III

The child Chowdhury was father of the man ; his original drawings at the age of nine had a quaint architectural quality. Without the school confines, the chafing boy sensed the rumblings of a momentous art renaissance that was sweeping over Bengal. The new art cult, like the Indian National Congress itself, was inspired by an Englishman ; E. B. Havell, the famous Principal of the Calcutta Art School, then stood at the threshold of his noble task of reconstructing India's cultural tradition. Our magnificent art galleries, Ajanta, Ellora, Elephanta, Karle and Bagh, lay hidden in ignorant or indifferent obscurity : the West had made powerful inroads into our cultural province and a Eurasian art flooded the country, glibly mouthing western artistic jargon. The cultural malaise was not less injurious than our sartorial mimicry ; the new impact, brought in its first onrush, much muddy water, the

flotsam and jetsam of an alien tradition. The idol of this new rush was Raja Ravi Varma. His Indian gods and goddesses, fancy-dressed, reigned in every home and showered strange blessings. Classical Indian art was elbowed out in cruel apathy.

When Havell, with revolutionary catholicity and foresight, launched his campaign of art revival, he was assailed by a self-destroying prejudice ; the public, newly proselytised, kicked out with astonishing fervour. But the wheel had come full circle. The partition of Bengal had lashed an emotional people into strong resentment ; the 'Swadeshi' cult, fatefully stirred up in the political sphere, invaded art's peaceful domain. The national soul, new-born, yearned wistfully for a legendary past, embellished and re-decked in colourful glory. Havell seized the hour. But the new movement was to be 'Swadeshi' to the core ; it demanded indigenous leadership. Then, by one of those fortuitous accidents that make history, an original genius of unspoilt virility swam into Havell's ken. Abanindranath Tagore, the Poet's nephew, not yet thirty, with imagination on his aristocratic brow, visionary and pioneer, dreaming powerful dreams of India's rebirth and steeped in her lore, was just the right collaborator for Havell. Jorasanko, the Tagore home, in Dwarakanath Tagore Lane at Calcutta, was a clearing-house of culture, the very spring and fount of the national renaissance. There, day by day, the cultural history of modern India was being written.

IV

When, at the request of Havell, Abanindranath went to teach at the Calcutta Art School, he was openly sneered at. His magnificent fresco, Kach-Devayani, which adorns the school today, was simply jeered at by his unseeing colleagues. His classes failed to draw despite freeships and scholarships, so fierce was the apathy. The old order of ensconced tradition

was loath to yield its place to the new. Tagore retired but not beaten. At Jorasanko he gathered around him a brilliant band of pupils—famous names now in Indian Art—among them Gogonendranath Tagore, his greater brother, Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Ganguli, Asit Kumar Haldar, Samarendranath Gupta and Khitindranath Mazumdar. The Indian Society of Oriental Art, established under their aegis, enlisted much enlightened support, chiefly European ; among them Mr. Percy Brown and Sir John Woodroffe. The guiding star of the new movement, however, was Lord Ronaldshay, Governor of Bengal, as the Marquess of Zetland then was ; in his "Heart of Aryavarta" he recounts, a little sadly perhaps, his distinguished connection which was much misunderstood. The Government, the ultranational press averred, was seducing the creative mind of Bengal from its high political destiny to innocuous artistic pursuits, buying it off with dubious patronage. All this of course was rank nonsense ; Lord Ronaldshay was, after Lord Curzon, the high curator of our artistic past—at its resurgence his sensitive mind welled up and he gave his blessings unstintedly, unequivocally.

Abanindranath was self-taught, self-disciplined and self-cultured ; he was no product of the soulless, grinding curricula then practised in our art schools. Yet it is a mistake to think that he despised western technique ; indeed his early training was under Mr. Palmer and Signor Gillardi—European masters both. Abanindranath, it is true, is intensely and deliberately Indian, but the fine draughtsmanship of his exquisite paintings bespeaks a fundamental western technique broadly assimilated. He is a great eclectic and, like Shakespeare, he has borrowed freely, adorning all he borrowed. To Japan he owes his almost spiritual washes of water colour—a technique since imitated without his subtlety and compelling artistry. He was tremendously influenced by Okakura Kakuze. There are too his Chinese mood, his Tibetan and Javanese moods, throwing surprising reflexes in his art. To our own classical

art, to the Moghul and Rajput schools, his debt is immense. With a superb imagination, he re-lived those glorious times in testaments of unsurpassed excellence. Never once at the Taj Mahal, he conceived the building of it in an eternal poem of a picture ; his masterpiece, "The Passing of Shah Jahan", was forged in his fine inventive mind, innocent of the historic fortress that overlooks the Jumna at Agra. His Buddha gallery is a glowing leaf from legend and history, not less authentic than its celebrated parallels at Ajanta and Bagh. His animals possess the transmigrated souls of men ; his studies have a startlingly human appeal. As a landscapist, he displays unsuspected prowess ; nature sentient, speaks with a voice and a conscience.

Abanindranath Tagore is our *magnum opus* in art ; this, however, is no place to detail his undisputed eminence. He has attained the very dazzling heights ; his precepts have achieved the sanctity of dogmas, and his writings, "Indian Artistic Anatomy" and "The Sadangas of Painting", have become the Bible of the new movement. Yet he was a most unobtrusive teacher ; he did not impose his methods on his 'chelas' ; they, rather developed in the sunshine of his genius, inspired and uplifted. It was a brilliant and distinguished tutelage. Like the mighty *Ficus Bengalensis*, distending roots which grow in strength and bulk in the shade of their giant mother, around her and about, Abanindranath's disciples attained full statures in their own right, transmitting the message and impulse of their master.

Surendranath Ganguli, a Chatterton of an artist, was taken away in the full prime of an abundant promise, scarcely twenty-one. Nandalal Bose is the greatest of them all—revivifying Ajanta's potent tradition, indulging now and again in his Japanese manner, superb painter of mythology, great interpreter of the cosmic Siva, refreshingly original each advancing year. Asit Kumar Haldar, lyrical, sensitive and refined, celebrated for his Rubaiyat pictures, gracefully tender

in every unerring line ; Khitindranath Mazumdar, unexcelled in the decorative drawing of "figurative creatures" ; Bireswar Sen, severely intellectual, of impeccable taste, breathing the old-world air of Moghul miniatures—these of the very first disciples are vigorously alive today. Gogonendranath Tagore, the most original genius perhaps of the Bengal renaissance, even surpassing his famous brother ; dashing versatile, idealist, impressionist, cubist and caricaturist ; functioning in all media and in all styles—he is not with us. Samarendranath Gupta, quaintly allegorical, skilful in colour washes, and Mukul Chandra Dey, of fine early promise, have languished somewhat in their exacting administrative functions. Sarada Charan Ukil, a poet of an artist, adept in graceful line and soft colouring and of prolific output ; Sailendranath De, decorative technician ; Promode Chatterjee, blossoming late, but pleasantly effective ; Roop Krishna, experimentalist and individualist—in these the flame burns steadily, not in any glowing spurt nor dimmed and murky. Hakim Mahomed Khan, Durges Chand Sinha, Surendra Nath Kar, O. C. Gangoly and Charu Roy, once sincerely bent on creative art and of much expectant promise, now function in other more prosperous fields, abandoning their first love : Pulinbihari Dutt, a Gray of a painter, polished and intellectual, now expounds the unsuspected delights of children's art, while Durgashankar Bhattacharya and Aswini Kumar Roy have paused in their careers, brightly launched. Last did go to Abanindranath, the Adolescent Ekalavya, barely twenty, Debiprasad Roychowdhury.

V

When first Roychowdhury showed his paintings to Abanindranath, the great artist pronounced them worthless. The 'misguided' youth was urged, as a corrective exercise, to copy the traditional 'Pata Chitras' of Bengal. Chowdhury, piqued, simply refused and walked out. He went forth to learn under

Boiess, that versatile Italian painter and sculptor. The pupilage was portentous ; Chowdhury today has achieved a rare mastery in the two arts. Boiess tamed the Bengali cub—patting him father-like. Chowdhury loved the Italian with an almost filial devotion, cleaning his floors and his eight revolvers. Boiess did what Abanindranath did not—he understood Chowdhury. He nurtured his distinguished pupil in the severest classical art, in form and in technique. The seed, so intensely sown, has merely borne maturer fruit today. Boiess's studio was the opposite pole to the Indian Society of Oriental art at Samavaya Mansions ; the Italian functioned in a rigorously scientific style, unbothered by 'isms' or art fads. The greatest art scorns commentary ; you really need a theory of art to bolster up weak achievement. Boiess was a master of the human form, studied and perfected in every limb and line ; he was a profound technician. He gave of his best to Chowdhury, unsparingly. Deviprasad stayed three years with him—three grateful years recalled with sincere devotion.

Meanwhile, the annual exhibitions of the Oriental Art Society, patronised by authority, had compelled an ever-widening public to evaluate the new movement ; even the clumsiest colour prints bespoke an intrinsic artistic quality. It was as if a timid moon, rising in strength, had bathed dark hidden places in a silvery effulgence ; the art caverns were new-lit with an unaccustomed light. Roychowdhury sensed the profound import of the new light. The Bengal art revival, viewed through the lenses of his scientific training, took on a new aspect. He longed to be back, to return to Abanindranath and share in his glorious adventure.

But Abanindranath would not have him. For days he turned out the beseeching Ekalavya. Then something happened : the Acharya scrutinised Chowdhury's paintings and changed his mind. But the prodigal had to be humoured ; he was directed to paint just as he wished, after his heart's

desire. From the marriage of Oriental motif and western technique was born the unique child of Chowdhury's art ; the precocious offspring as dearly fondled. Soon Chowdhury became Abanindranath's pet pupil ; the cloud was lifted and the elder man forgave the juvenile excursion. Yet, the re-claimed runaway clung with persistent faith to western technique ; Chowdhury openly proclaimed it superior to the contemporary art teaching at Samavaya Mansions. He annoyed Abanindranath by this blasphemy and again lost favour. But the great man paid Chowdhury back in his own coin—with an appropriate retributive vengeance—Deviprasad was appointed to teach Western art at the Society's school.

VI

Now Chowdhury was seized with a burning desire, common to Indian young men, to cross the seas for 'superior' training at the Royal Academy. His aristocratic kinsmen were scandalised at Chowdhury's turning professional artist. Born female, he might with equal effect and propriety have elected to turn professional dancer, so far as they were concerned. Had he wished to qualify for the learned profession of the law, they were of course willing to finance the calling of dignified nothing-doing. But art was the gipsy of the professions ; you liked the colourful beggar maid, attired in quaint finery and then you flung across the meagre coin of cultured patronage. But the gipsy starved, under-fed and under-clothed—Chowdhury smarted. Then began for him a life of struggle and want, of hunger and poverty. Proudly, he threw away a handsome allowance in self-elected privation.

Unfriended, looked down upon, he paced the streets of Calcutta, that asylum of wasted talent, on the soul-destroying mission of job-finding. His proud, unrelenting will flourished in adversity. There comes a time in the life of many a young man when notwithstanding the encumbrance of influential connections, he desperately prefers to go through life's battle

alone, braving its buffetings. He draws sustenance from some unsuspected strength within his inmost being. Life then becomes a glorious, reckless adventure and each adverse phase is saluted with a sweet relish. Then any job will do, anything to carry the physical man onward, to keep him in good repair, lest the soul, weighed down by suffering, should be arrested in its flight.

Chowdhury cheerfully accepted the unromantic position of a scene painter's understudy at the Corinthian Theatre, Calcutta. He ground colours for his chief. That brusque digitary, however, was innocent of the refinements of art ; he functioned in a bold, broad, blundering way. Chowdhury's artist fingers itched to draw and paint. Sometimes the unfinished scene would betray some jarring defect, some discordant composition, and young Chowdhury would, stealthily, without the chief's knowing it, rectify the drawing and put it into shape. His talents were too urgent to be hidden ; soon the studio was talking of the uncanny accomplishments of the strange colour-grinder. Some of the highly-paid elder artists came to learn of the young Raphael, recompensing him for his pains. Art, like murder, will out, and presently the chief caught his unpretentious understudy finishing a gorgeous scene from the Ramayana with a facility that is only Chowdhury's. In the first flush of appreciative surprise, the chief gave Chowdhury quite a lift—as much as Rs. 90 : but his defensive instinct of self-preservation naturally supervened and Chowdhury was asked to get out.

So, back again in that cruel human condition—joblessness. So imperative is the urge of the physical man that the greatest among us is miserably helpless ; you cannot, standing on prestige or ideals, lay down your own conditions or bargain ; you just, while the stomach pinches, accept any odd short-term makeshift job and call it a day. Such is the vicious circle of talent ; the poor grovel in the slough of want, lacking the means to get out, almost it seems eternally. The struggle

does not avail itself ; sometimes the eternity of want and poverty is broken by a short luminous spell of a pittance and then again darkness and despair and miserable want.

Chowdhury's life then was such. Once his job lay in colouring monochrome steel-engravings, sold in any picture shop, and his daily wages never exceeded eight annas. That was not all ; Chowdhury had to carry the framed pictures tied down his back and hawk them in the public streets, past the imposing porticos of his noble kinsmen where the amazed sepoys 'salaamed' obeisance to the toiling youth who passed unheeding by, a lone traveller on life's rough highway, sometimes foodless and scantily attired.

One miserable day, arrived at the tether of his resources, Chowdhury went desperately to that noble son of Bengal, Sir Asutosh Mukherjee. Simply and frankly, Chowdhury begged for a job, not revealing his connections, because the Zamindars of Bhowanipore were well-known throughout Bengal. Strangely, Chowdhury did not offer to teach art, that Cinderella of professions ; he told Sir Asutosh : "I can teach drill and physical exercises scientifically." Mukherjee smiled and asked if Chowdhury was any relation of his famed grandfather and added good-naturedly ; "Have you had a quarrel both ?" The next time he called at Sir Asutosh's—a post was created and kept waiting for him—a drawing master's job at Mitra Institution at Bhowanipore on an enviable salary of Rs. 40 per mensem, with the excellent prospect of a eight-rupees increment at the end of five years : Chowdhury's connection with the greater Bengali has an artistic sequel , years later he was to sculpture Sir Asutosh in heroic mould—a thanksgiving in bronze, a unique public monument of personal devotion.

During all these years of travail, one kind friend supported Chowdhury's drooping spirits—Bhawani Prasanna Chatterjee who predicted eventual fulfilment for the indigent artist. "Success only comes to those who dare and act" ; it did to Chowdhury eventually, inevitably.

There is a picture of Chowdhury as a teaceer in the Oriental Art Society—a romantic young fellow, fastidiously dressed in customary Bengali apparel, like some youthful sculpture of Michael Angelo turned to life, with glitter in his lascivious eyes. The Calcutta Press hailed him as Bengal's most promising artist and success followed swift—rather too swift. Indeed, nothing succeeds like success. Some of the most discerning art critics—Dr. Stella Kramrisch, Dr. Kalidas Nag, Mr. Percy Brown and Mr. O. C. Gangoly—lavished unstinted praise on the new arrival. A new comet had swum into the artistic ken of modern Bengal and there was an uproarious welcome. Superlatives were hurled at young, proud, self-conscious Chowdhury. He held aloft the sacred torch of art and was trusted to carry it forward. Art enkindles art. Mere academic recognition was plentiful, Chowdhury carried off every coveted prize at all exhibitions, unspoilt. He was already established as a powerful exponent of a sober and intimately modern portraiture. A galaxy of notabilities sat for him—Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, Mr. W. I. Keir, Mr. A. N. Chowdhury, Rabindranath Tagore, Mrs. Percy Brown and Sir J. C. Bose. His studio was at once the rendezvous of tourists, dilettantes and celebrities. There he fashioned his immortal sculptures with all the unsettling fervour of nascent genius.

The then Director of Public Instruction in Bengal was a frequent visitor at Chowdhury's studio; so taken up was he with a bust of Sir J. C. Bose which the artist was making that he loved to acquire it. Now, it fell among his duties as Director to inspect Mitra Institution where Chowdhury was part-time instructor. There the teaching staff was drawn up in descending order according to status; Chowdhury stood last, waiting to be inspected. The Director, surprised, came up to Chowdhury and asked: "Why are you here?" "Because", replied the chafing artist with bitter pride, "you do not appreciate art". The words cut deep: they stirred up authority and it was not long afterwards that the junior master

at Mitra's was appointed to direct, indeed, revolutionise one of the foremost art schools in the country at Madras.

VII

Chowdhury is proud of this struggle, this war against adversity. There is no period of his life that he loves to contemplate more than these hard, bitter years of striving, penury and despair. The crowning fulfilment of his life is painfully, yet solidly, founded on these bleak years. There are those who in the plenitude of success and achievement forget too facily the not-so-very-successful past. The newly prosperous have an inveterate habit of enlarging on the delicious present and glossing over, too palpably, the unsavoury past. You are merely conducted across the dazzling footlights on the stage of their life; the curtain is hung heavily on the past. Not so Chowdhury. While I wrote this part of his life he has been anxious that I set down each ugly, indelicate detail without fear or mitigation. Perhaps, my not-so-meticulous pen has touched up, quite unconsciously, a detail here or there. Chowdhury, had he written up this part, as he threatened to do if I did not do justice, might have given a more threadbare, transparent account. Perhaps; but there is the danger that an autobiography, re-living the receding past intensely and vividly, is apt to be too subjective and throw the contents a little out of focus, out of proportion. I, at least, may have avoided that. Yet, I have not forgotten that the rose, blossoming ever so beautifully and sweetly, is sprung from soil that it must not be ashamed to acknowledge.

VIII

Two wholly unrelated circumstances brought Chowdhury to Madras in his present official capacity as Principal of the School of Arts. The Madras Government under Viscount Goschen—the Viscountess was skilful with the brush—had decided to re-introduce Fine Arts in the School which was

too pronouncedly one of crafts. This laudable reform naturally called for a reputed artist to direct the revived section, and who else more eligible than Roychowdhury whose unique pictures at the Madras Exhibition created such an unwonted stir ? "His outstanding merit was obvious even to the lay observer." But objections were raised that he belonged to another province by those who had a bigger pull in the quarters that count. But a sober Press supported Chowdhury. Art, like music, it was pointed out, knows no bound of time or place ; besides, Roychowdhury had shown himself capable and willing to experiment in many styles and would certainly not be indifferent to the atmosphere of South India. The choice was, therefore, straight and inevitable, it was urged if the education of the future artists of the province was not to be entrusted to some dabbler in the arts, some pretentious mediocrity or some imitative bookworm.

But quite another factor, more imperative and personal, wafted Chowdhury to Madras ; he was in love and he wanted a fixed, unprecarious income. The fortunate lady of his attentions came of a distinguished Bengali family. Miss Charulata Banerjee, Mrs. Chowdhury that is today, has been the making of Deviprasad in many ways. She is Chowdhury's third wife, two earlier having successively predeceased her. The first Mrs. Chowdhury, Rushila Burman, daughter of a Zamindar of Khulna, lived but two years ; the second Mrs. Chowdhury, Chapala Chowdhury, daughter of the Zamindar of Lakhimpore, survived her marriage just eighteen months. The present Mrs. Chowdhury fills her difficult position admirably. She knows she is wedded to genius and knows her obligations and rewards. Chowdhury makes a difficult husband ; he certainly is not the ordinary sort who goes by their wife's aprons and are so handy and delightful to manage. A highpressure genius, absorbed in his own occupations of art and literature, he is lost to the domestic routine in a cultural *tapasya*. He must not be disturbed. Theyoke of

the family falls, therefore, unevenly, almost entirely, on the weaker partner and it is astounding how frail, delicate Mrs. Chowdhury bears the brunt of it all to meticulous perfection. A lady of culture herself, she is the spur and incentive to Chowdhury's efforts ; many a canvas and story flung away in severe introspective dejection have been taken up, at her persuasive bidding, and fashioned by Chowdhury into now-famous masterpieces. She suffers his silences as patiently as his high-tension monologues. Withal, she is simply imperative and holds her fearless husband in wholesome awe. She is the central and pivotal force in Chowdhury's life, as it should be, albeit functioning, in the manner of Indian wives, stealthily, unobtrusively. The life of Chowdhury is, in a very real sense, the life of his partner behind the scenes, uplifting the greater career of her unique husband.

Life with an Artist

—Charulata Roychowdhury

I

It was a gloomy day. The sky was overcast with clouds which hung over our head like a thick canopy. I came home from my work to spend the weekend with my people. I found my mother busy making sweets to entertain some guests and I lent a hand to help her. Towards the afternoon rain began to fall in torrents and within a short time the road in front of our house was flooded with water. It was a sight to watch people struggling in the stream with bare feet, trying to keep their balance with the umbrella in one hand, their garments raised upto their knees in the other. None ventured to come out of their hearth and home in such foul weather unless necessity compelled them to do so. We gave up all hope about our guests and were getting impatient to consume the delicious sweets prepared by my mother, but had to wait till the scheduled time had passed. To our surprise punctually at 5 o'clock we heard the splashing noise of the water made by a heavy vehicle and then came the sound of a horn. A taxi was at our gate. The rain had stopped by that time, though the water did not subside. Out came three gentlemen with their sandals in their hands to protect them from the water. They seemed to be in right good spirit in spite of the weather and greeted us with broad smiles. "We knew you would expect us", said one, and added "We did not want to disappoint you".

Those were all new faces to me and I began to scrutinize them assiduously. I was told two of them were artists. I could believe that of one, but as for the other—no, he looked far from an artist except for his immaculate dress which he wore very artistically. His broad, unusually well built frame for an Indian, with strong massive muscles, gave one the impression

of a pugilist far more than that of an artist. Later, I came to know he learnt wrestling systematically from a professional wrestler. His head was crowned with soft silky hair. His eyes were small and piercing and when he looked at you they seemed to penetrate and read your innermost thoughts. He had a frank, winning smile which gave relief to his otherwise hard structure. This man, I was told, was Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury, the wellknown young painter and sculptor.

I was always fond of art but artists never interested me. My idea of an artist was that he was a lean, clumsy person with a vague imaginative expression. But this particular one did not correspond to my hitherto established opinion. Naturally my curiosity was roused and I wanted to know him more intimately. This was not difficult to achieve, since the person in question seemed to have taken a fancy to our family and visited our home more often than was expected. I did not suspect any motive behind this and, therefore, mixed with him quite unreservedly. This encouraged him to such an extent that one evening he was sufficiently brave to propose to me to be his life's companion, in other words, his wife. Though his way of approaching the subject was rather primitive, if I may be allowed to say so with due deference to my husband, I did accede to his request after discussing certain points which concerned two of us alone and, therefore, need not form a part of this narration.

After our engagement was no more a secret, congratulatory messages began to pour in on the artist. But towards me people looked with a sort of pity as if I was a victim to be sacrificed at the altar of some supernatural being. This attitude on their part puzzled me not a little. I never had occasion to mix with people possessing an artistic temperament as it is called, and, therefore, I could not imagine that artists could be different from other individuals. This truth was to be revealed to me after it was too late to beat a retreat.

Upto a certain time after our marriage Sri Deviprasad

managed to keep up the show. But the moment he realized that the gordian knot was well secured, not by force of law, but by the tie of affection, he came out in his true colours. His artistic dress vanished from the field—it was not convenient for his work, and a loose *paijama*, which one of his friends named “safety lungi” and an equally loose upper garment took its place. The result was that when people came to visit Mr. D. P. Roychowdhury, the celebrated artist of the Madras School of Arts and Crafts, and found this awkwardly dressed man, anointed with mud and plaster, declaring himself to be the wanted person, they threatened to report against him to the Principal for false impersonation ! I admit he is in harness the greater part of the day either painting, modelling or writing, but even when he is free from work there is seldom any change in his attire. He was a teetotalter when we married and now he “drinks to be sober” to quote the artist’s own words. It is not a luxury for him but a necessity to keep him in good spirits and give him the impetus to produce more works of art. Besides, his doctors are of the opinion that if he abstains from drinks altogether his health will be irreparably damaged.

His attitude towards life is like that of a spoilt child. What he wants he must have, no matter how much or in what way he has to pay for it.

At one time he is at the highest heaven of happiness, the next moment he is sad and depressed. He flares up when anything is done against his will but cools down if left alone.

In spite of his many peculiarities he has been able to make some very good friends. Usually the friendship started with a misunderstanding and if his opponents could withstand the strain of his idiosyncrasies and found out his soft corners, the man was in their clutches.

As a child he was most unruly and was the cause of an immense lot of anxiety to his parents. This I learnt from the artist’s good father. Any kind of novelty or adventure had a

great charm for this fearless son of his. He joined some circus company to show cycle tricks, risked his life to save people from drowning, rode on uncontrollable horses to prove his ability as an equestrian where others failed, and to crown all, sat under the shade of a tree with a towel spread in front of him and played on the flute to collect money for his cigarettes. All these were done without the knowledge of the parents. His father, therefore, enjoyed no peace of mind till his son returned from his daily excursions. There are many such episodes connected with my husband. If I start narrating them all I may tax the patience of my readers. The few incidents I have mentioned are just to show of what mettle the man is made of.

Next to art, my husband loves music and shikar, two most unallied subjects. The moment he gets an opportunity he runs to the jungle. Apart from the excitement of a shooting expedition the forest itself has a great attraction for him.

He is a fighter in the field of words and the topics which take the most important place in his conversation are art and sex psychology. I have noticed he becomes more argumentative and philosophical when under the influence of spirits. He is very assertive and cannot stand contradictions to his convictions from any quarter, be it his wife, son or an absolute stranger.

Though he is a great admirer of Hindu philosophy, he is not a "religionist" as such. He detests fanaticism or puritanism of any kind.

Sri Deviprasad is a jealous husband though he does not carry this quality to the extreme. He has a soft heart and an affectionate nature but he is awfully sensitive. If you leave him alone he will not interfere in your affairs but if you prick he will pounce on you like an unleashed lion. In short, his is a most dominating personality.

These I write from my own experience of life with an artist for more than two decades. In the meanwhile, another off-

shoot of the same stock has sprouted in the family. It is my son who has chosen dancing as his career.

You may envy me for my good fortune or pity me for my ill luck. My attempt here has been to depict the man Deviprasad as I know him.

II

One who has not lived with an artist for a considerable period of time will not be able to realise the difference between the life of an average man's wife and that of the wife of an artist. She is left alone and yet she has hardly any time to call her own. She has not only to play the part of the mistress of the house but of the master as well. The artist who is the creator lives in his own world of thoughts and imagination, has no time to devote to worldly trifles. He is the father of his children—yes, he loves them and earns bread for them and there ends his duty. To check them, to bring them up as men and women of the world is the duty of the mother.

The artist is forgetful by nature, you cannot blame him for that. His brain is ever-struggling for new creations to give something to the world which will live even when he ceases to exist. How can anybody expect him to remember insignificant details of every day life? He invites guests in the house and forgets all about it and when the guests arrive? Ah! well, the hostess must provide for them as best as she can! He has an appointment somewhere, he does not know when. It is the wife's duty to keep the list of his engagements and to remind him in due time. But if he is inspired he must not be disturbed!

The artist's dress is besmeared with different shades of colour. He looks like a circus clown. Well, whose fault is it? Why did not somebody remind him that he had to change?

He is hungry, he does not know it is time for his meals. He feels uneasy and grumbles but is unaware of the cause. When food is served and his hunger is satisfied, he smiles and

says, "I see, I was hungry".

The artist is in immediate need of a piece of silk for his picture, but he has none at hand. Could the wife spare an old piece or a new ?

The wife is ready for a party draped in a sari brought by the husband. The colour does not suit her. She must change it at once. What happens to the costly sari—ah ! it can be turned into a curtain.

The artist's room has the appearance of a workshop. Papers, paints, palettes and brushess are scattered everywhere. One has to step with caution for fear of treading on something important. The wife offers to clean the place and his thanks are profuse. But when the room is put in order several things are missing. Did anybody meddle with them ? He does not understand. And the missing articles ? They were just in front of his nose, only his eyes were not trained to such orderliness.

The visitors come to meet the distinguished person. He is busy putting the finishing touches to his work of art and it is impossible for him to receive them. Would the wife do him the favour of entertaining his guests till he was able to come ? The wife is busy too, but that does not matter. Her work can wait, it is not important. But if things in the house are not as they should be due to her absence, she is an unworthy housewife.

Such and many such others are the problems that an artist's wife has to tackle within her daily life. To solve them is in no way less puzzling than the solution of a high standard mathematical equation. The difference between the two is in the treatment that the simplifier of the solution receives. When a scientist unravels the problem of his subject, he is recognized and appreciated whereas the poor woman is allowed to die on her elevated pedestal unheard of and unsung in spite of her abnormal capacity to manage the problems of an artist's household.



Devi Prasad Roy Chowdhury with his wife
Mrs Charulata Roy Chowdhury & son Bhaskar
Roy Chowdhury

Virile Stylist

—G. Venkatachalam

It was Dr. Stella Kramrisch who first introduced me to the art of Deviprasad Roychowdhury. Dr. Stella herself was new to the country then, having arrived in India only about a year back, and was staying at Adyar as the guest of the late Dr Besant. That was her very first visit to the South and she was full of enthusiasm for the ancient culture and virile art of the Tamils. South Indian sculpture, especially of the Pallava period, was her special subject of study and chief attraction.

It happened that I too was living at Adyar then and was a student of Pallava history, and this common interest not only brought us together but took us frequently to the centres of Pallava art like Conjeevaram and the Seven Pagodas. And it was during one of these visits to Mahabalipuram that she spoke to me enthusiastically about Roychowdhury's paintings and sculptures. She thought him to be a remarkably gifted artist with a great future.

Though I was familiar then with the works of Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Venkatappa and others, Roychowdhury's art had, somehow, escaped my attention. And, as often, the unexpected happened. I met the artist, not long after and even before I saw any of his works in the original, we soon became friends. I do not exactly remember now the circumstances which brought him to Madras, but when I met him at Ooty that year (it was the summer in 1925, I think) he was staying as the guest of the late Mr. S. V. Ramaswamy Mudaliar, who was then his only patron and admirer in this part of India, and was in quest of fresh fields for his artistic adventures, and incidentally in search for a job.

I saw a lot of him those few weeks he was there and went out frequently for drives and walks together and thus came to know a little of his qualities as man and artist. I found him

a strikingly handsome young man with a fine physique and chiselled features, almost a Greek in appearance (I have still with me an autographed photo of his of those days) ; always dressed immaculately in the graceful Bengali kit of a loose flowing choga over a kurta and dhotie : often amusing himself with playing on his flute when he was not sketching or hunting for models (the gypsies and beggars in the streets ever fascinated him) ; very reticent and retiring and a man of few words. He has changed, of course, and has changed very much since those days, and few indeed can recognise in the proud Roychowdhury of today the silent, strong, sensitive youth of those days. That was, at any rate, my first impression of him.

He was, of course, proud even then : proud of his aristocratic birth and the extravagant ways of living of his people : proud of his trained muscles and physical strength which were ever ready for games or wrestling ; proud of his skill as a shikari or a painter. He was very individualistic even then I found ; he never felt himself inferior to anybody and in any capacity ; he refused to take the second place in anything and thought himself to be as good as the best either as man or artist. He never believed in humility or cared for modesty.

I found he was of a family of the Zamindars in Bengal which, owing to its 'false' notions of prestige and expensive habits of living, was on its decline ; that he had a rich and romantic life as an artist till then, and that his immediate ambition was not so much to become a world-famous artist as to work and earn. That was a noble dream indeed for one who was so young and so gifted as he was. His friend, Mr. S. V. Ramaswamy Mudaliar, promised to do his best ; and, as luck would have it, the chance came sooner than expected in the prospective retirement of the then head of the Government School of Arts in Madras, and it struck some of us that the chance was too good to be missed and that Roychowdhury should step into the place of Mr. Haddaway, the retiring English head of the school. In spite of vested interests and

local opposition, and thanks to the efforts of the late Mr. S. V. Ramaswamy Mudaliar and Shrimati Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Roychowdhury became the Principal not long after.

My own acquaintance with his art began first with the now well-known "Lepcha maid", the only painting of his then owned by his friend, the Mudaliar. Its rich colouring and superb technique gripped me. A certain geniality and warmth was visible in that picture. It was full of human qualities : passion, flesh and sex. It had not the "other-worldly" aspects of the art of his other fellow painters of Bengal. No mysticism, no exuberance of emotionalism, no "artistic anatomy", no wishy-washy weak caricaturism of human form or face. It was a matter-of-fact art, a direct realistic study with just a touch of decorativeness, albeit, a fine imaginative work, almost a synthetic portrait.

Having been familiar with the Himalayan hill tribes and having only recently met the artist himself and been impressed by his personality, I was greatly intrigued by this straight forward colour study of his. I loaned it from the owner for an exhibition, the first of Chowdhury's to be exhibited in South India, and later tried to get his other works for exhibitions in other parts of India. Thus came I to know his art at first-hand and to appreciate in an ever-growing measure his unique genius, his great skill and his unquestionable place among the front-rank artists of the world.

In a monograph on Modern Indian Painters I wrote at that time (and which is now out of print), I recorded my reactions to his art thus : "In his paintings Roychowdhury combines harmoniously and very ably the technical features of both Eastern and Western art, and produces a type very aesthetical and full of sensitive feeling. He is still very much influenced by his master Abanindranath Tagore in his technique : in fact it is at times difficult to choose between his pictures and those of Tagore. Yet, behind the apparent similarity lies the individuality of his work. In his figure studies, some of which are

from models, he holds the qualities of Oriental and Occidental Art in a subtle and accurate balance,

“While few painters have succeeded in portraying the almost elusive charm of the daughters of the Himalayas—the Lepcha maid, the Nepali girl, the Bhutia woman and the Tibetan lass—Roychowdhury has marvellously succeeded in capturing the fleeting beauty of these women in his paintings, and thus immortalised them and himself as well. His “Lephcha Maid” (in the collection of Mr. S. V. Ramaswamy Mudaliar) is full of the warmth and glow of full-blooded young life, and the small squinted eyes are full of wild passionate feeling. His “Bhutia Maid”, selected last year for the Imperial Gallery in London, has the same virile qualities. “Lotus Pond” (in Treasuryvala’s collection) represents him at one of his best. This was exhibited at Wembley and was much admired by the public there. The languorous pose of the love-sick maiden is very vividly drawn; her thoughtful look, tinged with sad disappointment, gazes vacantly at the budding lotus flowers. They agonise her all the more; she is even careless of her dress and draperies. The whole picture is done in subdued sombre colour of light-green, light-blue and light-yellow, suggestive of the mood of the moment.

“Roychowdhury’s portrait studies are very different from those of other artists. Though done in water colour they have the depth and solidity of oils. He uses a secret fixative which gives that effect, but it is not tempera technique. His portrait of Rabindranath Tagore (with Treasuryvala) is very refined in colouring and richly decorative; his other portraits of Mrs. Percy Brown, O. C. Gangoly, A. N. Tagore, Miss Buckland and others are in the same excellent manner. There is a delicate perception of the character of the individual through the mask of the personality painted by the artist. He is also a great landscape painter, very clever in painting misty mornings on mountain-tops”.

Since the above was written, some eighteen years ago, Roy

Chowdhury has experimented in many other interesting techniques and has richly contributed to Indian art. His virile style has even been a sort of corrective to the weak effeminate character that was slowly creeping into modern Indian painting in the name of idealised form and subjective art. His own tendencies, in later years, were for a more realistic and true-to-life form of art, in the accepted academy way, and this resulted in his painting a series of magnificent landscapes and nature studies. But he is still the supreme artist in delightful decorative studies of Indian women after the Oriental manner, as witness one of his latest, "A Study in Green", painted a couple of years ago, which for mere technical skill and aesthetical excellence is as good as any painted by Rembrandt, or Titian. The technique of it is interestingly intriguing and uniquely his own ; a perfect example of his pictorial art.

No less great and gifted is he in the art of sculpture ; in fact, he is more widely known these days as the greatest sculptor of modern India. Ever since he came to Madras he has been prolific in this kind of art ; and a series of "busts" in plaster and bronze have made their appearance from his studio and have now adorned public institutions and private houses. And what a galaxy of heads. Annie Besant, Bishop Leadbeater, Sir C.V. Kumaraswami Sastri. Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Sir C. R. Reddi, Sir R. K. Shanmukham Chetty, the ex-Principal of the Madras Women's Christian College, Governors and Judges. Even before he came South he was Bengal's foremost sculptor, though another Roychowdhury was his master in the art, and his portraits of his father, Principal Percy Brown, architect Keir, artist Chanchal Banerjee and others were hailed by critics as very fine examples of modern sculpture by an Indian artist. And when Roychowdhury made that ambitious attempt, a large-scale statue of the late Sir Asutosh Mookerjee for the Calcutta University, and succeeded in making it so well, he was acclaimed as India's Sculptor No. 1. His later attempts of similar-sized statues of the rulers of Cochin and Travancore

added considerably to his reputation. For originality, individuality, strength and expressiveness, his sculptural works are easily the best in this country. Even his Rodinesque touch, which characterised his earlier studies, especially those of his father and Chanchal Banerjee, was only superficial, Roy-Chowdhury's art is definitely and distinctly his own.

It will, of course, be interesting to compare his art with that of his other two great contemporaries, Nandalal Bose and K. Venkatappa. But it will be neither advisable nor desirable ; for one thing, it is a delicate and difficult task, as all these three are pupils of the same master and belong to the same school ; and for another, I know what Chowdhury himself would think of such an attempt. "Ignorant impudence", he would call it, and he is not the one to mince words !



MY FATHER (Sculpture)

A Many Splendoured Personality

—Ajit Kumar Dutta

Never did I meet him till he reached about sixty. His photographs gave the impression that he was very handsome and vibrant with life in his youth. When I saw him he was comparatively quiet, but was still left with enough verve and vigour, rather indicative of a restlessness. Perhaps that was typical of a creative mind like his. No wonder in a letter he wrote: "At seventy I am still trying to retain my youth".

Indeed Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury was made of an epic mould rather than bearing any semblance to lyrical qualities. A man of unusual grit and tenacity, he tried to achieve perfection in whatever he attempted. And for that matter his interest covered a wide range and often the fields were far-fetched. To him cycling and flute playing, wrestling and interest in Japanese Bonsai technique of growing dwarf trees and even hunting and literature, or more correctly writing, went together. All these received the same degree of serious attention over years. Yet in a way, these rather supplementary activities, as primarily he was an artist, mostly keeping himself preoccupied with administration, teaching as well as executing works of art. If he attained eminence in his profession, he succeeded no less in leaving a similarly impressive mark in other fields referred to above. The very fact that one could attend to so many things at a time testifies to his boundless energy, if not anything else. No doubt, he was something of an epic type—a titan among men.

It was a cold winter morning. The green carpeted lawn, with multi-colour flower beds spread in between in the compound of the Jaipur House in Delhi, no doubt had its charm. Understandably enough, Deviprasad the artist liked the spot. But just basking in the sun or idling away the time badly suited his temperament. A man entered cycling.

He took the cycle and said that other ways of riding it were known to him. In fact, he gave a demonstration and made all present virtually spell-bound. He divulged the fact that once he used to earn his livelihood by showing cycle tricks in a circus. On yet another morning, I remember his suddenly asking for brush, colour and other arrangements, as he felt like doing some paintings. In fact, it was a rare mood for him and after a long gap the artist did do a few water colour items that day. Mention may be made here of an incident, although of a somewhat different kind, which too demonstrated his impulsive approach and behaviour. Principal Roy Chowdhury, apart from his art classes, also used to impart a different kind of training to a handful of his students. He used to invite them to his private 'akhara' or gymnasium and encourage their participation in bouts. One day he heard about the challenge thrown by a professional wrestler, who came to Madras from some distant place. So, one day the Guruji took out a few of his 'chelas' in the car and succeeded not only in spotting but having a round with that wrestler. As can well be expected, Roy Chowdhury won the bout and made the man apologise for unnecessarily bragging about without caring to know about local talents. It was indeed typical of him.

As an artist, I was fairly acquainted with the reproductions of a number of his works. Excepting the incident referred to above, I hardly saw him paint (of course, later I had the opportunity of visiting his studio on a number of occasions). Actually, even though he had his training from no less a master than Acharya Abanindranath Tagore, he did mostly sculpture. In Calcutta, public statues by him of Rashtraguru Surendranath Banerjea and of the 'Royal Bengal Tiger' Shri Asutosh Mookerjee were already well known, to which later was added that of Mahatma Gandhi. But his group compositions reveal his mastery yet in a different way. "The Martyrs' Memorial" erected at Patna brought new laurels

to him. A similar type of work, "The Triumph of Labour", later came to be installed in Delhi. One remembers seeing him climbing the scaffolding and work in the sun for days on this piece at the time of its installation in front of the Jaipur House. He was indeed during the period a transformed personality.

Again, in his letters he is an altogether different man. Besides the style, these reflected a kind of intimacy and feeling. So he can write unhesitatingly about his own artistic feeling : "I console myself that one which has the vitality will survive in its own way. If it lacks that, it makes no sense for any one to try and give it all protection and care". About his retired life in Calcutta, he states satirically : "Gradually I am getting accustomed to new surroundings. But the speech making engagements are on increase and I now return home with increasing number of dried up garlands".

But the furore over the art situation, which, to use his expression "the culture of botanical growth", definitely made him feel sick. So he was careful enough to be as far away from all these as possible. In one of his long letters he expressed quite clearly the philosophy behind his art. He writes : "My conviction is based on a continuous search for truth. I found my way even at the risk of often following wrong tracks. The march of the artists of the past inspired me in keeping up my patience and the determination not to give up. Hence I still bow down to any high and great ideal. Perhaps the correct identity of truth and beauty is yet to be established" and he expresses doubt that the followers of the new movement mistake their effort as the ultimate success, leading only to accumulation of trash. Some of these statements, no doubt, are to an extent debatable. But all the same these are born of firm conviction and to the point. To come forward and make such statements is by itself something rare today. A personality like him, who can be friendly and soft and at the same time firm and outspoken when called for, is a great need

of the hour, specially in a confusing situation like today's.

It is only natural that a sensitive and articulate person like Deviprasad also did wield the pen and proved a popular writer. Stories of game hunting were at one stage his speciality. His wide experience and keen observation helped him also to try short stories. Be it an uncanny narration of "Ballabhpurer Math" (Across the fields of Ballabhpur bordering a burning ghat) or "Matal"—a satirical sketch of a drunkard or words woven around a wayside "Dustbin", as a writer, he greatly succeeded in bringing forth certain unique qualities. It is a pity that he could devote only a limited time to literary pursuits.

While the artist or even the litterateur Deviprasad Roychowdhury will be and is already being discussed, his versatility and the glittering personality that he was, deserves a fresh and detailed study. Certainly, not many are, or will be, like him.

A Teacher's Tribute

—Hiranmoy Roychoudhury

Our knowledge of the material world is three-dimensional. In plastic art this knowledge seeks creative self-expression in concrete forms that represent our mental vision of beauty.

It is now close on a quarter of a century that a living statue of Apollo appeared before me in the person of Devi Prasad, a young sculptor who moulded himself in the great gymnasium of Nature. His clay-modelling started with his own body on the wrestling ground, for he was then a keen wrestler as he told me smiling, in reply to my admiring questionings regarding his splendid physique. He was at that time engaged in working on a statue of the great artist Abanindranath Tagore, at whose suggestion he came to me for such guidance and help as my technical knowledge might render. Thus commenced our relation of pupil and teacher which continued for some time in my private studio at Calcutta.

Like Rabindranath and Abanindranath, Devi Prasad was a truant from school. He educated himself by following the guidance of the urge that comes from within, working with indefatigable energy and gathering the full harvest of his labours in powerful hands.

Deviprasad's genius is versatile. His self-expression was not confined to sculpturing only. He was an athlete, musician, painter and sculptor. Later on, he extended his excursions into the field of literature.

In accordance with the old custom of India, the young sculptor, at the end of his period of pupilage, gave me *gurudakshina* in the shape of two exquisite water-colour paintings, one of which was awarded the Governor's prize. They were the first contributions to a rich endowment that was in store for me. The fulfilment of my dreams of his future success and our lifelong friendship and love comprise a peren-

nial *gurudakshina* for the preceptor of his early days, who went but a few steps with him as a guide at the outset of his career of triumphal march on the fields of art.

The young sculptor is now a veteran all-round artist. The Madras Government was not behind-hand in appreciating his worth. He was offered the Principalship of the Government School of Arts, a distinguished position for which both the institution and its administrative head are to be congratulated. The Madras Presidency is a repository of monumental works of classical Indian art. Its magnificent temples and statuary and the beauties of land and sea combine to make it an artist's paradise. These happy surroundings must have formed a stimulating environment and source of inspiration for his vital and responsive mind.

Modern Indian art has found a true and vigorous exponent in Roychowdhury. I would like to point out here that his works bear the genuine stamp of originality. No signs of lame imitation are discernible in them. They represent the self-expression of a creative mind which combines heritage of the past with modern influences in a harmonious blending. Among modern Indian artists Deviprasad stands unsurpassed in strength and force of expression which accentuate his consummate technical skill.

It is needless for me here to give an inventory of his outstanding contributions to sculpture and painting. But I must record my appreciation of the magnificent bust of his father, which was one of Deviprasad's earliest handiwork. The heroic-sized statues of Sir Surendranath Banerjea and Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee in the Curzon Park and Esplanade of Calcutta proclaim the vigour and fine execution of the artist. My great joy in his successful career and attainments, in the plastic art in particular, could only be expressed by that ancient verse :

The teacher's or the father's victory lies in seeking defeat at the hands of his pupil or son.

I conclude with the prayer that the contributions of his mature manhood may reveal still higher possibilities or creative excellence as he forges ahead with flying colours and the vigorous steps of a conquering hero in the realms of art.



SKETCH

No. 1 as long as he lived

—Ahi Bhusan Malik

“It is classical work, a very difficult one”, remarked Ramkinkar on seeing the equestrian Outram in the gardens of the Victoria Memorial. Classical work is difficult indeed. Outram originally stood at the Chowringhee and Park Street junction, where now stands, on a high pedestal surrounded by a little garden, Gandhiji, another classical work, this one executed by Deviprasad Roychowdhury. When Gandhiji replaced Outram there was some bitter criticism. Deviprasad was disappointed at the poor knowledge of his critics. He believed that it was his best work and knowing well that it was going to replace one of the best pieces of British sculpture he had applied everything that he knew of the art of sculpture while modelling Gandhiji.

Basically there are two opposite conceptions of sculptural forms. The first is Glyptic, which means ‘curved’ and consists essentially of removing waste materials until the form is freed from the matter it was imprisoned in. The other is its opposite, in which form created from nothing by building in some plastic materials. Deviprasad was a master in the latter technique. Most of his works were created first in clay and were later cast into statues and busts in bronze. He did hundreds of busts and statues and excelled in composing human figures; ‘Martyrs’ Memorial’ and the ‘Triumph of Labour’ are two outstanding examples of his composition with so many figures displaying anatomy, volume, balance and movement.

Deviprasad started his artistic training under the guidance of Abanindranath Tagore. He was first refused by Abanindranath Tagore because the guru saw no talent in the pupil. But on the request of Deviprasad’s father, Abanindranath later allowed him to sit in his class. When asked about

the teaching methods of Abanindranath, Deviprasad said "Abanindranath never taught anything to anyone as such; he could say which was a good painting and which was bad. He worked along with us in the class and at the end remarked upon our works as just 'good' or 'bad'.

Even though he started under Abanindranath one finds no trace of the influence of the Bengal School in the later work of Deviprasad. A contemporary of Atul Bose, Deviprasad was influenced by Jamini Roy but it was a temporary phase in the artist's experimentations. He was primarily fascinated by the works of the great masters of the West and ever remained so.

He was a great painter but we come across his real talent when we confront his structural executions. Deviprasad never ceased to draw or paint. He knew well that drawing was the best way to achieve authority of eye and hand. He never moved to clay or paint until he had put a solid ground of draughtsmanship beneath him. Hundreds of drawings went into his exploration of line form, structure, tension, the meaning of every phase of a sculpture. In his painting, Deviprasad combined harmoniously, and very ably, the technical features of both Eastern and Western art and produced a type of his own, very aesthetic and full of sensitive feeling. In his figure studies, some of which are from moderns, he holds the qualities of oriental art in subtle and accurate balance.

In his later years his tendency was for the absolute realistic and true-to-life form of art in the accepted academic way. He became a humanist in the truest sense of the term and followed the great Renaissance painters. Deviprasad's portraiture was very different from others. Though done in water colour there were some technical secrets which gave the effect of tempera. The portraits of Rabindranath, Percy Brown, O. C. Gangoli, A. N. Tagore and Mrs. Blackwell deserve special mention.

When he was principal of the Madras School of Art he concentrated more on modelling and made a series of busts.— of Annie Besant, Leadbeater, Kumarswamy Sastry, Rama-

swamy Aiyer, C. R. Reddy, R. K. Sarmukham—a galaxy of superb head studies. Deviprasad's teacher in sculpture was Hiranmoy Roychowdhury. Before he went to Madras he was acclaimed as one of the top sculptors of Bengal. The busts of Percy Brown, Chanchal Banerjee and that of the artist's father were hailed by critics as finest examples of modern sculpture by an Indian.

His Asutosh Mookerjee, a full figure standing on a tall pedestal today before Victoria House in Calcutta, made him India's sculptor No. 1. From that position he was never displaced. His last work, a composition of eleven huge figures symbolising the people and religions of India, to be installed on Janpath in Delhi, was fortunately almost finished before he breathed his last.

Chowdhury as Writer

—Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay

I had the privilege of coming into direct contact with the literary phase of the celebrated sculptor and painter, Deviprasad Roychowdhury, from the very start. The incident that brought me close to him has a story and I remember it quite distinctly. I had a glorious time with him. It was “Jalsha Ghar”, a short story written by me. It served the purpose of the ‘introduction’. Deviprasad expressed his desire to meet me, and the message was communicated to me by our common friend Sjt. Sajanikanta Das, Editor of the *Sanibarar Chithi*. We went to his hotel at the appointed hour. I have stressed upon the time just to show how unusually disciplined he is—a strange trait in a highly emotional temperament such as his. As we stepped into the room we were cordially received by him, and I found to my great surprise that he was impatiently waiting with an ecstasy of emotion to express his appreciation of my story. His outburst followed in a train of complimentary comments, without any consideration for the formalities of introduction demanded by the current code of good manners. I should have been very sorry indeed if those nice words intended for me and pitched in such superlative key missed their legitimate claimant, because he never bothered to inquire who he was speaking to ! He gave no time to disclose my name until he had quite exhausted himself.

I was greatly impressed by his frankness which was completely free from the defensive diplomacy of the accommodating conversationalist. I was charmed by his dominating personality which had all the qualities a gentleman would wish to be proud of. He seemed to me a living symbol of inexhaustible energy and unfailing vigour. He loved to assert because that was his inherent characteristic. I had of course a deep reverence for his contribution to the plastic and graphic arts long

before I came to know him personally. There was a time when I often felt inclined to pick up an acquaintance with him, but I was reluctant to take the initiative because he was then at the zenith of fame and I was just struggling to establish myself. The restraint was of course dictated by my diffidence ; his paintings and sculptures ever haunted me with their mysterious influence. The colour-scheme of his paintings had an awe-inspiring effect on me—most delicately harmonised yet vigorously executed works.

When I was thus admiring his art in the obscurity of my position I had the good fortune to meet him. In course of time our acquaintance developed into friendship which gave me facilities to know the man more intensely. I began to pay frequent visits to his studio. One day in the course of conversation he said : “I wish I could express myself through your medium. I love to explore new channels of self-expression”. I could never persuade myself to believe that he was quite serious, and that he meant what he said until I read the manuscript of his “Dust Bin.” Its merits were applauded by Sjt. Sajanikanta Das, the well-known merciless critic of Bengali literature. Then after an interval, followed “Ballavpurer Math” and “Pisach”. Then many others in quick succession. It gave me immense delight to find that he was equally at home with the pen as with his brush or lump of clay. The dominating quality of his literary achievement is again vigour and an un-failing sincerity, as pronounced in his paintings and sculptures.

There is no room for doubt that in no remote day he will establish himself as a distinguished contributor to the treasure-house of literature.

Records of Books by Deviprasad Roychowdhury

Pisach (Novel)

Mansololup (Novel)

Porobari (Novel)

Mr. Pakrasi and Sanskriti Unnayan Samiti (Novel)

Ballavpur Math (Collection of short stories)

Bubukku Manab (Collection of short stories)

Jangal (Stories on jungle life)

He drunk to be Sober (Playlate)

Natun Howa (Playlate)

Ironies & Sarkarasm (Kartoon Book)

A few Records of Sculptures by Deviprasad Roychowdhury

1.	Sir Kumar Swami Shastri	Bust	Life Size	Bronze	Madras Cosmopolitan Club
2.	Bishop Ledbeater Pre, T. Soc.	Bust	„	„	Madras Theosophical Society
3.	Sir C. R. Reddy	Bust	„	„	Andhra University
4.	Babu		„	„	
5.	The God of Destruction		„	„	Travancore Art Gallery
6.	Dr. Annie Besant, President, T. Soc.		„	Bronze & Marble	Theosophical Society, Madras
7.	My Father		Head Study	Bronze	
8.	My Wife			Plaster of Paris	
9.	His Highness Maharajah of Travancore (21 Ft.)			Bronze	Trivandrum
10.	Sir C. P. Ramaswami Ayer	Bust		Bronze	Anna Malai University
11.	Details of the Travancore : Temple Entry Proclamation		Plaque	Bronze	
12.	Nawab Abdul Hakim		Full Figure Standing	Bronze	Madras
13.	Victims of Hunger			Bronze	National Gallery, Madras

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|-----|---|---------------------|---|--|
| 14. | The Maharaja of Jaipur | | life size | standing figure
Andhra University |
| 15. | Dr. Sir C. V. Raman | Bust | Bronze | Andhra University |
| 16. | Mahatma Gandhi | Double
Life Size | Bronze | Calcutta & Madras |
| 17. | Sir J. C. Bose (from life) | | Torso-
Bronze | Bose Institute,
Calcutta |
| 18. | Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee | Double
Life Size | Bronze | Calcutta |
| 19. | Sir Asutosh Mukherjee | Double
Life Size | Bronze | Calcutta |
| 20. | Triumph of Labour
(Published as postage stamp by Govt. of India) | Life Size | 1) Original composition at National Art
Gallery, Delhi 2) Madras (Merina) | |
| 21. | When Winter Comes | | Bronze | Madras National Gallery |
| 22. | Martyrs' Memorial | | In the making, commissioned by Central Govt. Eleven
figures—all double-Life Size ; expected to be the largest
group composition of its kind in the world. | |
| 23. | Martyrs' Memorial
(published as "Quit India" postage stamp
by Govt. of India) | | Bronze | Group composition of seven figures—
Patna |

24.	Vivekananda		Double Life Size	Bronze	15Ft high, installed in the Vivekananda Vihar, Lucknow.
25.	Mr. Tample			Bronze head)	Madras
26.	Jinarasadasa—President, Theosophical Society, Madras	Bust		Bronze	Madras Theosophical Society
27.	Raja Sir Annamali Chettier		Double Life Size	Bronze	Annamali University
28.	Motilal Nehru		„	Bronze	Parliament House, New Delhi
29.	Rabindranath Tagore		Life Size	Bronze	Andhra Government
30.	Sarojini Naidu		Life Size	Bronze	Andhra Government
31.	Rhythm	Bust	Life Size	Bronze	
32.	Sir George Compbell (ICS)				Madras
33.	Chanchal Kumar Banerjee				
34.	The Wrestlers				
35.	A. N. Chowdhury	Bust			

36. Niva Bandyopadhyay
(w/o Suren Bandyopadhyay,
the Novelist)
37. Rai Bahadur S. B. Dey, Kurseong.
38. Hon'ble Mr H. G. Stokes
39. Mrs. Stokes (w/o H. G. Stokes)
40. Lord Asskin (from life)
41. Sir George Stanley (from life)
42. Sir Peg (from life)
43. Karsha Subbarao (Editor Swatantra)
44. Capt Wilbraham (from life)
45. Rajamannar Chief Justice (from life)
Madras

Bronze	Govt House, Madras
Bronze	Madras
Bronze	„
Bronze	„
Torso	
Bronze	Madras

