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Expressions Of Resistance:

A Comparative Study Of Political Expression In The Works Of Abanindranath Tagore And Nandalal Bose During British India

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Abstract: The development of the modern Indian art under the British colonial rule was closely connected with the process of the political awakening and identity search in the country. This paper will attempt the comparative study of two of the leaders of the Bengal School of Art Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose, who made artistic expression a subtle, but power tool of anti-colonialism. Both artists dismissed realism in the West and had to restore native aesthetics which could reflect the spiritual and political spirit of India. The painting by Abanidranath like Bharat Mata and The Passing of Shah Jahan was a symbol of awakening national consciousness by allegorical and emotional means and made art comparable to the Swadeshi Movement and early nationalist ideology. Nandalal Bose, however, gave his work the Gandhian simplicity and cultural vanity, in the Haripura Posters and at Santiniketan, his murals; a visual language of political unity and cultural rebirth. This paper presents a comparison of the thematic issues of the two artists, their stylistic advancements as well as their ideological leanings by using art as a cultural opposition and as a political expression. It also examines the relationship that existed between them, between mentor and disciple, and how the idealism of Abanindranath led to a socially concerned aesthetic practise of Nandalal. In conclusion, the paper insists that the total effect of their art was a redefinition of Indian modernism through the interconnection of visual creativity at the level of political enlightenment i.e. turning their canvas into the arena of resistance and national self-discovery.

Keywords: Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Bengal School of Art, Political Expression, Swadeshi Movement, Nationalism, Colonial India, Artistic Resistance

1.INTRODUCTION

1.1 Locating Art in the Politics of Colonial India

The British colonial rule in India was characterised by a political and material subordination as well as a whole culture and aesthetic monopoly. The colonial state tried to force the Western traditions of academic art which praised realism, perspective and imperial values and overtook the native forms of visual expression. The juxtaposition of both the art and politics during the rule of the British in India laid a rich background of cultural resistance where visual imagery would become a very strong tool that would be used in fighting against national identity and freedom. In the early twentieth century, Bengal was going through an incredible artistic revival in which art painters switched their canvases into platforms of political declaration and nationalist assertion. The key figure, the mother of Indian art during 1907 was Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), who was the main author and principal artist of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, which opened in 1907 and formed the backbone of Bengal School of Art that resulted in the establishment of modern Indian painting. The most successful of his students was Nandalal Bose (1882-1966), who succeeded in becoming one of the founding figures of modern Indian art and an important figure of Contextual Modernism with his Indian style of painting. The two artists together redefined the links

between aesthetics and activism and produced works that brought indigenous traditions of art back to life, as well as confronted the colonial culture hegemony. This comparative analysis will analyse how Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal bose used their artistic activity as the means of opposition to the British rule as imperialist and each of them formed distinct, but differentiated forms of expression to the political manifestation. The Bengal School was in response to not only Western scholastic naturalism, but also to the commercialised paintings of the Company School which were commercially oriented to meet the demands of the British market, and to revive the traditional artistic traditions of India itself, as well as give the Indians an artistic language of expression that was aesthetically emerging out of its own soil, and able to express contemporary nationalistic sentiments. At the same time as a saffron-clad divine woman, Bharat Mata (1905) by Abanindranath was one of the first visualisations of Mother India during the swadeshi movement, in a nonviolent movement, the walk of Gandhi with a staff was the iconic image of the movement art, as drawn by Nandalal Bose in 1930. These watershed moments in Indian art history reveal how the two artists have turned visual culture into a nationalistic mobilising tool.

1.2 Objectives:

The following objectives are followed in the research paper:

- The therapeutic strategies that Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose used to express nationalist consciousness in visual art in British colonial rule.
- The second aspect that would be investigated to investigate the aspects of art and political resistance in colonial India is to analyse how the visual culture operated as the means of anti-colonialism and decolonization.
- To draw parallels and contrasts between the philosophical strategies of the two artists, their artistic approaches and the aspect of political involvement, to find out the points of similarity and dissimilarity in the nationalist aesthetics of both artists.
- In order to place Bengal School into the larger contexts of global modernism, postcolonial theory, and anti-colonial critique, it is necessary to show how Indian artists were able to demonstrate the Euro-American monopolies on modernity.
- In order to measure the impact of Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose on the development of contemporary Indian visual culture and national identity, it will be important to determine their present effect on the work created by the modern artist.

1.3 Scope:

In particular, the present paper will concentrate on the years between 1905 and 1947, which is the range of the Swadeshi movement, including Indian independence, during which both artists created the most politically relevant pieces. The study looks at participatory critical works such as Bharat Mata (1905), The Passing of Shah Jahan (1902) and the series of Arabian Nights of Abanindranath Tagore in addition to The pedagogical works of Nandalal Bose in Kala Bhavana of Santiniketan such as Nandalal Bose and Gandhi linocut (1930), posters of The haripura Congress, (1938). Although the article notes the greater Bengal School movement and its many practitioners, the two artists simply require this comparative analysis because they are both fundamental in the formation of nationalist aesthetics and because their methods of political expression by use of art are quite similar though not exactly alike. The geographical area focal is Bengal and Calcutta and Santiniketan as the main areas of artistic creation and nationalist cultural influence. Though, the pan-Indian circulation and reception of these works is also regarded by the study and how nationally significant was the art, produced by regions. Theoretically, the study liaises with the works of postcolonial criticism, cultural nationalism research as well as art historical scholarship by specifically referring to the works of Partha Mitter, Homi Bhabha as well as other theorists who have conceptualised aesthetics and politics in a colonial setting.

1.4 **Methodology:**

This research paper employs a comparative historical-analytical design that combines art-historical research and postcolonial theory. The analysis is done through visual analysis of composition, colour, style and symbolism that demonstrate how aesthetic decisions reflected political content. Contextual historical analysis situates artworks within nationalist movements, Gandhian politics, Swadeshi ideology, and colonial cultural institutions. Relative analysis shows similarities and differences between Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose in the art philosophy, technique, and political inclination. Theoretical background to the interpretation of negotiation between tradition and modernity is a theoretical approach motivated by Homi Bhabha and the work of Partha Mitter on hybridity and art and nationalism respectively. The secondary and archival materials such as art writings, exhibition catalogues, and reviews of the critics and institutional archives promote the holistic approach of looking at art functioning within the nationalist discourse.

2. Literature Review

Partha Mitter in his groundbreaking book Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations (1994) has largely influenced the academic discussion of the Bengal School and the way the institution of art interred with the anti-colonial movements. Mitre analysis shows that the Bengal School was the earliest nationalist art movement in India, that occurred in the Swadeshi movement of 1905 and the school disapproved of the academic traditions of the West but revived the indigenous art forms. His subsequent book, The Triumph of Modernism (2007) pushes the analysis into the interwar; it investigates the way of how Indian artists avoided clashing between traditionalism and modernist instincts.

The Making of a New Indian Art (1992) by Tapati Guha-Thakurta is highly articulate to the institutional orders and patrons patterns that allowed Bengal School to occur and criticized how colonial art education allowed nationalist aesthetic resistance in a paradoxical manner. Her writing adds to that of Mitter by highlighting the many negotiations between the artists, the colonial rulers such as E.B Havell as well as nationalist intellectuals in the creation of what was regarded as the true and original Indian art.

Theoretical paradigms of postcolonial aesthetics are heavily based on Orientalism by Edward Said (1978), which re-defined the term as referring to the widespread Western constructions of prejudiced views of the eastern world due to European imperialism and the concept of third space of enunciation developed by Homi Bhabha that claims of hierarchy of cultures are unsustainable. These put forward theoretical interventions offer critical resources in understanding the way in which Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose worked in the hybrid cultural areas not necessarily as the traditional renouncers but as those who internalise unaltered Western modernism.

Binodebehari Mukhopadhyay (1950) and Asit Kumar Sen (1997) have put forth biographical studies on Abanindranath and Nandalal Bose respectively, including useful primary insights into the nature of the two artists, but prone to hagiographic treatment. Later work of Geeta Kapur and R.M. Brown has placed the Bengal School in larger contexts of global modernism and postcolonial visual culture and has challenged previous nationalist histories but considers the historical importance of the movement. Nevertheless, the idea of thorough comparative examination of the unique politics of Abanindranath and Nandalal is not well-developed and it is a major gap of which this study fills.

2. The Palette of Protest: Framing the Idea of Art and Politics in Colonial India

The conceptualization of art as a political text requires understanding visual culture not merely as aesthetic production but as a complex system of meaning-making embedded within power relations. The manufacture, exchange, and experience of the images under the colonial rule were spaces of ideological struggle, on which rival forms of an understanding of modernity, civilization, and cultural identity were being brokered. The demonstration of colonial power necessitated the visibility of power using symbolic apparatus that could be revered and the visual art had a versatile role to fulfil the diverse socio-political and cultural demands of colonial encounter. Nevertheless, the same visual landscape was subjugated territory in which indigenous artists could contest colonial epistemologies and can impose other accounts of nationhood turning canvases into battlegrounds on which the fight over cultural sovereignty would occur through brushstrokes instead of

bullets. The art as ideology theoretical framework is based on the interpretation of how the aesthetic decisions convey and pass the political values, social hierarchy, and cultural assumptions. Visual has the functioning of what Stuart Hall would call representational systems, systems of images, symbols and conventions that define the way societies perceive themselves and the way societies relate to power. In colonial India, the introduction of Western academic naturalism by government art schools was not only a choice of taste but also an epistemological conquest by creating European ways of seeing and depicting as a norm to be compared to indigenous tradition as insufficient. The postcolonial art and literature was created as a response to the ideas that the cross-cultural relations were viewed by Homi Bhabha as the third transnational space where it was possible to nurture a separate individualistic and autonomous being of the cultural meaning of the so-called hybrid and thereby making it defy the essentialist essence of the cultural identity that was forced by the colonialist rule. This theoretical perspective sheds light on how such artists as Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose could tactfully use visual semiotics, itself the use of signs and symbols in communication, to create counter-hegemonic discourse which, at the same time, would acknowledge indigenous aesthetic traditions whilst participating in the current political movements. The Bengal School of Art was the most advanced expression of visual opposition to the hegemony of cultures of the colonialists in the form of art, which can be theorised as postcolonial aesthetics-artistic activities that re-colonise the gaze, reclaiming native ways of knowing the world. The Bengal School propagated a uniquely Indian modernism that chimerically combined folk art, Indian painting, Hindu themes, domestic materials and representations of modern country life, hailing humanism and introduction of vital voice to Indian image, freedom, and liberation. This movement was the direct result of the Swadeshi movement that demanded social, cultural, political, and economic reforms that would liberate India on the shackles of British rule using the tenets of self-reliance. The apparent revival of the pre-colonial aesthetics of the vocabularies of Mughal miniature and Ajanta frescoes, Rajput painting, was what Frantz Fanon would come to describe as the stage of combat of cultural decolonization, when colonised nations used their own histories and traditions as weapons against colonial histories of civilizational superiority. Visual semiotics allows employing the much needed analytical resources to comprehend how the Bengal School artworks served as a political communication. All the elements in a painting are signifiers with the ideological meaning in the colour selections, organisational patterns, religious motifs, stylistic effects and techniques. As Abanindranath made choices toward tempera, wash, instead of oil painting, as he portrayed Hindu goddesses, instead of European historical figures, as he used flat pictorial space instead of Renaissance perspective, these were not the aesthetic choices, but semiotic choices, making encoded political statements of cultural authenticity, spiritual values, and anti-colonial opposition. In the opinion of Professor Partha Mitter, the Bengal School marked the earliest nationalist art campaign in India, and was formed as part of the Swadeshi movement of 1905, introducing the rejection of Western academic influences in the art educational establishments in India and restoring native and traditional forms of Indian art, to include the Mughal miniature painting tradition. Any stylistic choice was itself a sort of myth, as it was called by Roland Barthes--a second-level semiology that brought ideological stances to a natural state where nationalistic claims would no longer be seen as political choices, but unconscious expressions of Indian cultural being. The visual culture and resistance relationship worked on several registers in the same breath involving the overt political message as well as the insidious defiance of colonial values and standards through aesthetics. The very art itself was influenced by the colonial rule as patronage of the Mughal courts declined due to the British Raj and the temple art was prominent in measuring against the British restraint of the mass movements, festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi were returning to life on the basis of British oppression of the mass movements. This two-sided process both the destruction of the conventional patronage frameworks and a creative re-use of religious and cultural iconography on the nationalist agenda show how resistance can work not only by means of overt resistance but through a tactical use of the forms of culture and its re-formation. The notion of the cultural hegemony, as developed by Antonio Gramsci, sheds light on the fact that the colonialism stipulated its consent, which had to be created in terms of cultural domination, and vice versa, anti-colonial movements necessitated the use of counter-hegemonic cultures so as to project other possible futures outside the colonial orders. The nationalist reaction to colonial eradication of India art and aesthetic has been identified as the vehement resistance which aimed at preserving and forming a uniquely Indian identity by means of art but scholarly debate is still on whether the resistance was really opposite or continued to be submissive. An important conceptual problem underlying this academic confrontation is: what is and what are the boundaries to aesthetics resistance: can paintings made by artists educated in colonial schools, hung in colonial museums, sometimes bought by colonial officials, be truly anti-colonial weapons? What are the theoretical approaches we make to theorise the political agency of works of art that are circulated in a nationalist and a colonial network at the same time? These inquiries require advanced intelligence regarding what James Scott called weapons of the weak- we form resistance that act both indirectly, coded and ambiguously as opposed to acting directly. The comparative pattern of the study focuses on how

Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose worked out different strategies of visual resistance, despite having some common commitments of decolonization of culture. Though a certain flavour of nationalist feeling prevailed in the work of Abanindranath, and the thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore, yet there was still an element of the dislike of making any direct political attack at the very heart of these feelings, whereas, Nandalal Bose was directly engaged in nationalist political movements, and created artwork in the interest of the Indian National Congress, and became identified with the visual language of the independence movement in India. This difference spawns the core research questions that will fuel this research: How different is the conceptualised relationship between aesthetic practise and political engagement by Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose? What are the specific tactics of visual opposition created by both artists, and what does that opposition tell us about the individual attitudes of both artists to structuring colonial regimes and to nationalism? What can we hypothesise about aesthetic production turning into political communication under colonialism conditions when the political disobedience could have the most dire outcomes? This study of their work under the prism of postcolonial aesthetics, visual semiotics and cultural resistance theories aims to show how brushstrokes transformed into political choices and ideological stance, colour palette a political vow, and composition to establish epistemological alternatives to colonial modes of perception. Similar to reading art as a political text, this makes it apparent that the independence struggle was made not only in parliaments and on demonstrations of protest but also in studios and galleries, where colonised subjects pursued remembering other versions of modernity, nationhood, and cultural self-determination using the mutagenic power of visual expression.

3. Empire Gaze and Indigenous Vision: Aesthetics Re-evaluation of Colonialism

A dual system of representation that had to serve the aims of imperial gaze codification and domination based on images and the indigenous response that resisted such aesthetic impositions contributed to the making of the visual culture in colonial India. The paintings of the Colonial period in India which developed under the British Raj were greatly impacted by European styles of paintings like Realism and Impressionism, and most of this artwork was in the form of landscapes, portraits, and everyday life scenes in Western perception. The original work of Edward Said Orientalism was used to transform the name to refer to the system of Western culture in which early imperialistic approaches to the Eastern world (when Europeans view the Eastern world as an outsider) manifested through the systematic approaches to the Orientalist world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such an Orientalist scheme ruled not just the perceptions of India amongst the European viewers but also provided aesthetic standards and ranked the western forms of representation higher than the native forms of artistic behaviour, rendering it witness as quaint or exotic. The British academic realism institutional apparatus of India worked in several nodes of culture of domination. In the 1850s, the Art academies were established in Madras, Calcutta, Bombay and after that in 1875 in Lahore which brought easel paintings and oil paint to India and which became the platform upon which Indian masters of the academic school would impress. The already existing artistic styles were exposed to European realism and led the assimilation of localised and Western art forms and the patronage system that had supported the Indian artists under the royal courts and temples began to crumble following the establishment of the British rule in India which abolished the princely states. British pedagogical systems developed an orderly disregard of local aesthetics traditions in favour of European naturalism as the standard of artistic quality internationally. A benevolent government created the Government College of Art in Calcutta to expose the Indians to the excellence of European art in the second half of the nineteenth century, uncovering the explicitly civilizational mission inherent in colonial art teaching. The Orientalist presentation of India worked according to the theory of absenteeism and integration of romanticism suggested by Linda Nochlin. Edwin Weeks, and such others who painted orientalists, displayed images in a particular light and viewing angle, in these paintings the simplest aspect was not the life of the colonised subjects but the colonial gaze per se, although the western manner of painting had a dominant influence of the region. Those statements of Linda Nochlin that the whole concept of the picturesque in its nineteenth-century forms is based on the fact of destruction demonstrate how traditions and costumes of the subjugated and even national religious rites were only perceived to be picturesque just before such destruction, when they were on the verge of being modified and their cultures diluted. Squandered backyard, illness, and witchcraft were being manipulated to legitimize colonialism and the necessity of Western assistance and further stereotyped India as a backward and barbaric state. This economy of colonial representation was very useful in two aspects: first it fulfilled the European interests in exotic regions and second it offered ideological support to the authority of the imperial armies. The Indian artists who adopted the European techniques generated intricate negotiations among the colonial modernity and the cultural authenticity. When the native painter Raja Ravi Varma took the Western academic style, the British boasted of having an example of real Indian arts whereas the native mind and artists were not pleased

with this argument. Such artists as Raja Ravi Varma had started promoting Western techniques of realism and oil on canvas but some quarters within the art world had come to believe that the voice of Indian artist was being throttled and there was no longer a platform of originality and imagination. This paradox allowed accentuating the paradoxes of the policy of cultural imperialism of that time: on the one hand, native artists who mastered the techniques of the European tradition were glorified as the manifestations of the civilizational rise, and, on the other hand, they were accused of infidelity to their customs and culture, which showed the dilemma of the colonised subject that should navigate between tradition and modernity. The Bengal School developed as a conscious rejection of such colonialistic aesthetic impositions, that is, defining in a more fundamental way what it meant to be Indian, visually speaking. The Bengal School is a Modernist Indian art movement originated in the atmosphere of nationalistic fever in the part of the then-colonised India by E.B. Havell and Abanindranath Tagore in order to rebel against the aesthetic values of the European Academic painting and to substitute them with frames of reference that its representatives believed were the ones which were truly Indian. Abanindranath, through his paintings, opposed European and Academic Realism and instead espoused the ideals of Hindu spirituality and aesthetics to create an authentic Indianness and used the Japanese ink wash technique, a gloomy palette, and style influences of Mughal, Rajasthani and Pahari miniature painting. This was the strategic re-invention of pre-colonial aesthetic vocabularies not only as the product of nostalgic revivalism but a complex negotiating the issues of cultural sovereignty and visual epistemology. Paradoxically, the establishment of the Bengal School was heavily aided by the British administrators whose opinions on India were Orientalist beliefs regarding how the Indians should be spiritually. Students of the Government College of Art, Calcutta between 1896 and 1905 were encouraged by their Principal, Ernest Binfield Havell, to emulate Mughal miniature, which he thought, had a spiritual nature, as opposed to the materialism of the West, and was much encouraged in this venture by Abanindranath Tagore. British art teacher Ernest Binfield Havell tried to change the ways of teaching at the Calcutta School of Art by trying to get students to imitate Mughal miniatures, a controversial action that saw a student strike, as well as some local newspapers, including nationalists who perceived it to be a regressive action. Such a disputed partnership brings out the ideological landscape of cultural nationalism which was full of grey areas within colonial situations in which indigenous artists were forced to strike the balancing act of accepting patronage of sympathetic colonial officials without losing their authenticity and political freedom. The redefinition of Indianness attained by the Bengal School worked with several aesthetic modes existing to subvert the colonial visual hierarchies. In his imagery that incorporated Hindu mythology themes, history and the country life in India, Abanindranath attempted to isolate a pan-Indian aesthetic motif and identity. The Bengal School was the creation of the opposition to the Orientalist images: it appealed to the Mughal influences and the Rajasthani and Pahari styles which provided the pictures of the bright scenes of the certain Indian standards and the Indian life. The Bengal School aimed at rediscovering and advancing native Indian art forms and techniques, into a modern setting, and the artists strongly opposed Western expressions of naturalism which were common in the reign of the British colonialists. Incorporating the representation of various regional traditions, including Mughal miniatures, Rajput painting, Ajanta frescoes, etc into one unified national aesthetic, the artists of Bengal School created the vision of Indianness that could not only be traced back in history but also be created strategically to be used in the modern political agenda. The spirituality and use of indigenous materials were also considered to make the movement stand out among the colonial depictions. The use of Japanese ink wash technique is famously attributed to Abanindranath Tagore, who felt it and studied under the pupils of Japanese artist Okakura Kakuzo whom the Tagores hosted in Jorasanko in the year 1903 and shared the appetite of formulating a pan-Asian aesthetic, in contrast to Western Realism. This international partnership displayed the process where the anti-colonial aesthetic movements sought alliances to the outside of the European structures, forming other modernities with Asian solidarities. With the onset of the twentieth century, Abanindranath attempted to upset the contemporary art of realism in academia and introduce new aesthetics into visual language, where he tried to use accurate but delicate lines, intensity of expressive content, a blend of warm colours and a haze-like quality. The indirect opposition of the ethereal, spiritual nature of Bengal School paintings to the empirical, documentary nature of the colonialist vision was a state of denying the documentary nature of colonial representation the other with the supposedly alternative nature of emotion, spirituality and cultural memory. The visual politics of the Bengal School went beyond the style to include more basics such as on who should have the right to determine Indian culture. Longing to spiritual opposition, which led Havell to the codification of the Vedas and other Hindu scripture led to his conflation problematic both with Indian nationality and with the Hinduism and this method of veneration of ideal Indian past was seen as a criticism and condemnation of the new nationalist movement in subcontinent. This internal criticism reveals that the project of defining Indianness was controversial even to nationalists, on issues of religious exclusivism and historical romanticism, the movement in its assertions of a one-nation culture were moderated. However, with an inward self look where Western academic traditions

were not accepted in the institutions of colonial art schools and the revival of indigenous and traditional India art forms, the Bengal School re-established a linking cultural identity that had been eroded during the British rule and changed the need-assigned dynamics of artistic reception and political opposition in colonial India.

4. Abanindranath Tagore: Painting the Nation through Spirit and Symbol

The artistic practice of Abanindranath Tagore was a radical reinvention of the nature of visual culture as a means to express the consciousness of nationalism, and at the same time serve as a way of arriving at a spiritual and philosophical questioning. Tagore had faith in antique Indian skills of painting and his philosophy shunned the materialistic West-style art and returned to the Indian traditional arts with an influence of both the Mughal school of painting and Aestheticism of Whistler. Tagore thought that western art was materialistic and India had to go back to their traditions in retrieving their spiritual values. And this inherent paradox i.e. Western materialism and Indian spirituality was now the philosophical bedrock on which Abanindranath built his decolonial aesthetic language, making painting simultaneously a political as well as a metaphysical enquiry. The visual language that Abanindranath created was a synthesis of various cultures and it is what he understood as a pure Indian visual language. His paintings prevented European and Academic Realism and promoted the ideals of Hindu spirituality and aesthetics in order to deliver the image of an authentic Indianness, being inspired by the Japanese ink wash technique, restrained colour scheme, and Mughal, Rajasthani and Pahari miniature painting stylistic influences. He was interested in mining a pan-Indian visual motif and identity in his drawings which were based on Hindu mythology, history and Indian rural life. This search at a joint national imaginary, though, was based on selective and synthetic values and not organic development, and it demonstrated how nationalist aesthetics are never made organically, but through a series of articulate practises of inclusion and exclusion. The most notable example of this trend is the iconic Bharat Mata (1905) in which Abanindranath reshaped the religious iconography into the nationalistic allegory, which has become one of the most accepted symbols of Indian independence. The painting by Tagore is a gouache piece, one of the first interpretations of the concept of Bharat Mata, or Mother India, as a political symbol, which makes her look like a goddess with two halos, many arms, and a lot of flowers holding food, garments, knowledge, and faith, or building blocks and the potential of the healthy national future. The painting was originally conceived by Abanindranath Tagore as Bengal Mather or Bengal Mata in remembrance of Bengal women but it was rechristened by Sister Nivedita as Bharat Mata with all due iconography and politics of representation, which Tagore also envisioned as a possible symbol of the nationalist forces. This transformation of the regional into the national icon shows how controversial the symbolism of nationalism was in the colonial era where even the most proud images were transformed by the process of making people reimagine them. The spiritual aesthetic of the painting intentionally made it not similar to the traditional depictions of Hindu goddesses, providing a new visualised function of the national religious adoration. And unlike the popular Indian goddesses, Bharat Mata embodied by Tagore is a plain yet godlike young woman dressed in a meagre saffron saree in Bengali style and showering with great beauty with her multiple hands and the halo that engulfs her head being the only indications of her divinity about her. Her hands are grasped by a Rudraksha mala, which is a symbol of spiritual power, a white cloth, which is an indicator of clothing and probably cotton an important part of the Indian economy, heaps of paddy, which is a symbol of food, and a palm leaf manuscript, which is a symbol of knowledge in her hands. The objects had a symbolic significance of nationalist desires to become economically and culturally self-sufficient and independent: Anna as the symbol of food, Vastra as the symbol of clothing, Shiksha as the symbol of learning and knowledge, and Diksha as the symbol of spiritual knowledge. Such iconographic programmes amalgamated material and spiritual issues implying that economic self-sufficiency and cultural purity were both important to real national sovereignty. The aesthetic style used in the painting reflected the philosophy of decolonial language of Indian art by Abanindranath. The very image of the Bengal School style Bharat Mata a new kind of genuineness at a period when the image of the Indian art and its Indian nation was undergoing turbulence and turmoil, it helped Bharat Mata, and the very concept of the Indian nation, find the new place in the world of the personal and the mundane, and with this place in the world of the personal and the mundane her promise of self-sufficiency became accessible and available to the viewers, notwithstanding her divine nature. The signature technique of Tagore, the loose brushwork of centering the colour and the mood, developed as the result of the Pan-Asian interest as well as the broader speculations on Mughal manuscripts and the Japanese painting. Tagore also is credited with introducing and advocating the use of the Japanese ink wash method, of which he was taught by the pupils of Japanese artist Okakura Kakuzo (who came to Jorasanko during the visit of the Tagores in 1903) and who also aimed at creating a pan-Asian aesthetic to go with their opposition

of Western Realism. This transnational co-operation was a move whereby Indian nationalism was placed within the larger Asian anti-colonial alliances which cast alternative modernities to European models. The mobilisation integrated with the Swadeshi movement with the painting revealed the fact that aesthetic production can be directly translated into political activity. Sister Nivedita was so delighted with the picture that she wanted to get it with her when she was leaving Kashmir to Kanyakumari to make the people feel the mantra of Swadeshi as to her, the signs and most definitely the objects that the painting carries had a definite nationalist connotation of power and opposition. Within four years, only four years after Abanindranath Tagore had painted Bharat Mata, his concept was spread throughout India with Swadeshi protestors in Uttar Pradesh carrying out processions of Bharat Mata images to the slogans of Bharat Mata ki Jai and Tamil poet Subramanya Bharati and political figures like Lokmanya Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai popularising the concept in Madras, Bombay and even Punjab. This speed of spread across linguistic and geographical borders bore witness to the effectiveness of this image in picking out abstract concepts of nationhood and plunging them into a solid, emotionally evocative substance. The Passing of Shah Jahan by Abanindranath (1902) shows the way in which the artist used historical subjects to address the topics of loss, mortality, and the impermanence of imperial power themes which were highly relevant in the colonial world. Shah Jahan is shown dying on his bed with his daughter Jahanara Begum at his end of bed and his eyes directed to a little representation of the Taj Mahal in the corner of the upper part of the painting. The way the once mighty emperor lies on the bed with his eyes stuck on the Taj Mahal indicates how helpless and tired the emperor is, with his posture signifying that even in his last moments and terrible times, he only longed for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, while Jahanara weeps on the floor after losing her brothers and kingdom, with the romantic ideas of loss, separation, and longing hanging strongly throughout the painting. Through this miniature painting, Abanindranath Tagore lent a poetic flow to the theme which was never observed before. The painting's technical execution synthesized multiple aesthetic traditions to create what Abanindranath conceived as a distinctively modern Indian form. The painting is mainly inspired by the realism of Mughal miniatures and the Bhava concept of ancient Indian art forms, with Abanindranath Tagore using a fusion of three types of painting: British watercolor painting, Mughal Miniatures, and the Japanese Wash technique. Initially involved with the dominant style of European Naturalism, Tagore was most impressed.

5. Nandalal Bose: Visual Democracy and Gandhian Modernity

The artistic practise of Nandalal Bose reflected a qualitative change in the foundation of the art movement of the Bengal School, namely, the mythological and spiritual interest of the Bengal School to the democratisation of a visual language, based on the realities of everyday rural life and immediate political involvement. Bose produced a black on white linocut print of Mahatma Gandhi walking with a staff to commemorate the 1930 event of Gandhi being arrested due to his protest of the British tax on salt which was the renowned image of the non-violence movement. Linocut print was of Mahatma Gandhi leading the Dandi March and the composition was coded in smooth lines giving dramatic impression of the black and white picture leading to a good way of recording the presence of this great figure of India. This single shot had the quality of the whole Gandhian resistance simple, direct and breathtaking--it made the march pictured in photographs look like an icon, available to millions of illiterate people who could not read a word but, at least, could identify the lone figure with his walking stick. The production of this iconic image took place in a greater setting, where nationalist mobilisation took place in Santiniketan. A month after Nandalal drew a line, a linocut print with the title Bapuji was made, to which Bapuji is holding a bell in his hand and has a tiki or top-knot on his head reminiscent of Chanakya, a royal advisor, a philosopher and economist of the fourth and third century BCE that is usually credited as the author of the treatise Arthashastra. The image of Gandhi used at Nandalal Bose when Prabhatmohan published his book Mukti-Pothe (On the Path to Freedom) in 1932 used the same image of Gandhi at the Dandi March but the caption was not Bapuji in English language, but Joy-jatra (Victory March) in Bengali language and the date is 12/3/1930 which was the start of the Dandi March. This process of the transformation of line drawing to linocut to book cover illustration shows how the imagery created by Bose was passed on through various nationalistic networks and picked up various connotations, as well as brought diverse audiences on board in the fight to secure independence. His most grandiose effort towards visual nationalism was the one he did alongside Gandhi at the 1938 Haripura Congress Session which essentially transformed the manner in which political meetings can be places of cultural presentation. In 1938, Mahatma Gandhi requested Nandalal Bose to design something to be distributed during the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress at Haripura and the intention was to come up with something that had the elements of the village-specific beauty, and Bose painted posters of Musicians, Hunters, Carpenters, Smiths,

Bull Handlers, Husking women and other village scenes. Nandalal Bose spent several months in research before making the poster conceptualization, going to the Vithalnagar, a tiny facility in the vicinity of Haripura, to learn about the life of the inhabitants. This theoretical decision to make use of direct observation instead of idealised representation made the approach of Bose contrasted with that of his teacher Abanindranath, whose nationalism was more allegorical and based political awareness on the material reality of the Indian countryside. The project in Haripura was a unique amalgamation of the art, political, and civic interactions. Mahatma Gandhi had desired something that would be accessible to the masses who attended the session, and something in which touches of the language of folk arts were skillfully applied in giving form and these dramatic paintings of Janesbury folk such as the tailor, the drummer, the gardener, the woman cooking attained a brilliant place in the annals of the modern Indian art. Nandalal Bose painted between 400 posters, some of which he painted on his own, some in collaboration with his students and then fastened to the boards made of straw, and applied the colour with pigments made by combining earth and stones, painted pictures on handmade paper and these were painted on the spirit of swadeshi and political awareness generally. To Gandhi art, in fact, was equal to Nandalal and he was proud and happy to have found Nandalal Bose, who served as the artist of the Indian National Congress, and put Nandalal Bose in-charge of the provision of a unique atmosphere imbued with local art and craft. This collaboration of artist and political head of state stood as a model of how the visual culture may turn into a component of the nationalist mobilisation rather than a decoration. Aesthetic philosophy was reflected in the Haripura posters as it was based on the Gandhian philosophy of swadeshi and self-reliance which were translated into graphics. Nandalal Bose in the posters tried to depict the daily lives of the people in rural India who were in the nation-building process with their labour and the folk-art styles were used to portray the true picture of the rural life through the practise of scroll painters or patuas which used broad brushwork and cursory bold style. The Haripura Posters were done in the classical style of the kalighat pata that had very vibrant colours with bold and expressive lines, it had a simplified yet expressive look which best depicted the rural life with flowing dynamic figures which expressed movement and emotion. The characters tended to symbolise the spirit of self-dependence and Swadeshi movement, which complied with the Indian independence movement, and where the sense of the community members came to the limelight, their participation in cultural and political life of the country was glorified. This activity of popular celebration of mundane work as a nation-building effort disputed colonial elites who exalted the civic and military service and made agricultural and craft labour unrecognisable. The concrete expression of the Gandhian philosophy of swadeshi in the Haripura project was represented by the material decisions in the project as much as the subject did. The Haripura posters take a gung ho rural Indian life and culture with a rich earth colour palette and dynamic and energetic lines with a strongly graphic modernist quality, most of the images in it being lifted out of the witnessed reality which was made with the help of quick sketching done by Nandalal in his investigation of the rural parts and painted with tremendous colour made with pigments made of local earth. The conference gates and the halls as well as the welcome arches were fashioned out of the local resources of earthen pots and vessels, tassels of paddy grass suspended as rows, baskets and cane works that were made by the local craftspeople. This demand of native materials and local craftsmanship even turned the Congress session itself into the display of economic self-sufficiency, so that the political content could no longer be withdrawn from the aesthetic presentation. Bose's pedagogical philosophy at Santiniketan's Kala Bhavana further extended his vision of art as democratic practice and community engagement. His vision of art as communal practice and democracy was further applied by Bose in the pedagogical philosophy of Santiniketan in the Kala Bhavana. Even as Bose, when invited by Rabindranath Tagore, took charge of the newly-established Kala Bhavana, in Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, in 1919, he principally concentrated on the awakening of creative potential of every student combined with the emphasis laid on the unity of art and nature. Nandalal Bose was able to combine all the traditions of art, folk art, Mogul and Pahari miniatures, Ajanta murals, and East Asian sumi-e paintings using ink wash paintings, and he had a seamlessly combined eclectic sense of art, responsive to the emerging sociopolitical interests of his era and also to his pedagogic interests as an art teacher. Although Bose pushed his students to discover the normal life in the countryside around Kala Bhavan in Santiniketan where they could find a source of their imagination development, he never compelled students to imitate artistic styles of the past. This didactic style disavowed the colonialist academic dogmatism as well as the nationalist revivalist dogmatism, making room to the artistic personality in communal cultural mission. Juxtaposition: Bose also sang folk music, which made his modernism, as opposed to Western avant-garde movements, both less self-filled and not as thoroughly nostalgic as the nostalgic revivalism of the early Bengal School. Also like his contemporary Jamini Roy (also a student of Abanindranath Tagore), Nandalal abandoned an imitation of the past, attempting to discover Indian identity within the contemporary folk art, and the picture of village life in the Haripura panels reminds one of Jean-Francois Millet who broke out of the historical subjects of Parisian academic art and painted his own rural culture. Democratisation of art, as informed by the realities of the

people who live in the immediate contact with the ebb and flow of nature, is a contemporary attitude towards folk culture, and such art, being less insulated, has the speed of vision that is concerned with certain social phenomena and is politically oriented. It is in this way that one can be moved in looking at the art of Nandalal Bose, what Ananda Coomaraswamy had called a true Swadeshi, in contrast to what the latter has called a false Swadeshi, which makes use of an imagined past. Such differences between the experience of living traditions and the romantic re-creation of the dead forms became the focus of the discussion about the character and the course of Indian modernism. The practice of Bose also had theoretical implications that were not confined to the aesthetic decisions, but covered such social issues concerning the social role of art. Although Tagore was interested in the cultural renaissance of India, the main interest of Gandhi was the political and economic liberation of the state, and, ultimately, inspired by both these images, as well as persistently convinced by his personal experience and prolonged work in the field, Nandalal was turning to the whole range of Indian art life as without exclusion either alive or dead, with a significant emphasis on the craft traditions of rural life. Bose thought that art was needed to serve a higher cause of relating the people to their culture and a notion of national identity, Bose rebuffed the dominance of the Western scholastic styles and instead found a way to integrate the old Indian styles with the new themes and creating a visual language that spoke to the soul of his generation. This conception of art as a conservation of tradition and in response to political urges of the day solved the seeming opposition of cultural nationalism to modern development. The populist national visual identity created by Bose did not act on the principle of elite exclusivity but accessibility. The effect the Haripura posters had was far beyond the artistic success, since it also helped in tying the political elite and rural population, as the villagers could feel a part of the wider society and that their lives and efforts were not going unknown at the national level. Timely harmony of convention and observation is achieved in the Haripura panels, according to Binodebehari Mukhopadhyaya, each poster existing as a unit in itself in its form and colour though throughout the whole under the same, there is an emotional unity that inertia that and glue which binds a family together, since the artist was not oriented towards ideals, old or new, but gazing at the contemporary situation has discovered his own end. This merger of perception, tradition, and relevance of the time gave rise to an oral lexicon that could be both contemporary and still indigenous, a lexicon engaged by politics and refined both in its visual and aesthetic terms, making Bose creator of what would become a truly democratic art of the up-and-comings of the Indian nation.

6. Between Guru and Disciple: Art, Nation and Resistance Talks

Such a mentor-student relationship as the association of Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose has been one of the most fruitful in the history of modern Indian art, and is also evident as an extreme convergence mismatch of their views on nationalism and modernity, as well as the political role of the art form. Nandalal Bose was very impressed in the works of Abanindranath Tagore and desired to learn the art of painting under him, but he could not dare go and meet the renowned painter and one day he asked his friend Satyen to come and meet him and he carried with him a few paintings he had thus far produced, and both Abanindranath and E.B. Havell were amazed by his faculties in imitating some of the European paintings. The close students of Abanindranath Tagore were Nandalal Bose, Samarendranath Gupta, Khitindranath Majumdar, Surendranath Ganguly, Asit Kumar Haldar, Sarada Ukil, Kalipada Ghoshal, Manishi Dey, Mukul Dey, K Venkatappa and Ranada Ukil. This apprenticeship, which started in 1905, followed the emergence of the Swadeshi movement, which placed both the artists in the crucible of the nationalist movement that was to ultimately shape their two artistic paths, albeit in radically different ways. The revivalism under Tagore was not simply formal, but more methodological where the artist taught his students to practise his art under him as he continued doing his art so that the students could learn through observation. Abanindrana had educated some students who were also urged to study under the guidance of Iswari Prasad Verma who was a master of Patna Kalam but all of them had an advantage of having a scholar within the campus who would relate stories concerning the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in such a way that all were conversant with the stories in these epics. Asit Kumar Haldar, Nandalal Bose, and, apparently, Krishnappa Venkatappa were also among the privileged recipients of Lady Christiana Herringham, on her visits to the Ajanta caves, where the young artists were also among those engaged in copying the paintings. The structure in which Nandalal would study consisted of a combination of oriental flights with a guru-shishya approach combined with a direct address to the artistic heritage of India, the combination gave him both technical perfection as well as ideological orientation but it also defined limitations he would later go beyond. As with the commitment they both showed to the rejection of Western academic naturalism and the recovery of native aesthetic vocabularies, the continuity between guru and disciple occurred most evidently. In the art school, Bose also received a strict indoctrination in

Western artistic styles, such as oil painting and academic realism, which were established in Indian artistic practise in the influence of the British colonialists, but, through his teacher, Abanindranath Tagore, Bose became increasingly dissatisfied with the Eurocentrism of his training, and in an effort to break through to the diversity of indigenous artistic practise, started to experiment with indigenous techniques and indigenous themes. Nandalal loved to paint and sculpt since his boyhood and after being sent to a school of art in Kolkata he became a devoted disciple of Abanindranath Tagore, the leader of the revivalist movement in Indian art and with the currently movement, which would be named Bengal School, was connected with nationalistic passion of the family and Nandalal quickly became the most favourite disciple of Abanindranath. Nandalal Bose was strongly influenced by his teacher Abanindranath Tagore on studying the Ajanta frescoes, which embodied elements of daily life performed in the second century before our present century, and which influenced the imaginations of many artists over the course of thousands of years. The common belief in the pre-colonial Indian art provided the aesthetic ground on which the nationalist projects of the two artists were based. Nevertheless, a set of underlying contradictions began to appear concerning the way each artist theorised the connection between aesthetic activity and politics. Abanindranath Tagore thought that Indian traditions could be transformed to declare new ideals, the best way through which he accomplished the task, was through the Arabian Nights series painted in 1930, where he takes old Arabian Nights narratives as the vehicle of exploring the Calcuttan colonial situation and imagining its new cosmopolitanism. As Tagore achieved the success of his ideas, he has also met other Asian cultural representatives, including Japanese art historian Okakura Kakuzo and the Japanese artist Yokoyama Taikan, whose works were similar to his own, and his later work would bring elements of the Chinese and Japanese calligraphic traditions to his artistic work as he attempted to build a model of a modern pan-Asian artistic tradition which would combine the commonalities of Eastern spiritual and artistic cultures. Abanindranath nationalism therefore worked mainly on cultural and spiritual fronts, it created an aesthetic world where the Indian identity could be reinstated without necessarily clashing with the post-colonial political systems. The Tagores' more general philosophical disposition to nationalism predisposed the political accommodations of Abanindranath in a manner that set the latter vis-a-vis other nationalists who were much more militant. Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore was a strong advocacy critic of nationalism, criticising it in most of his writings; it is widely believed that Tagore held strongly against nationalism in its Western sense and instead preferred an open world vision, that is, cosmopolitan one. In a letter to Aurobindo Mohan Bose of 19 November 1908, Rabindranath said that he made a few strides along the road of nationalism, and halted, saying that when he could no longer believe in universal man above and beyond his country, when his memories of patriotism shadowed his God, he felt starved inwardly. Rabindranath felt the harmonising and co-existing nature of the opposing spirits of the spirit of attachment and the spirit of detachment, writing that in their reconciliation lies the ideal of perfection, which clarifies the situation of patriotism that although one is supposed to love his country, then he must still be spiritually disconnected with it. Such a philosophical attitude to nationalism (patriotic but cosmopolitan at the same time, committed but not too committed) had a powerful impact on the artistic practise of Abanindranath, which is evident in such works as an ode to Indian cultural identity, without being too involved in political activism. By contrast, an evolution of Nandalal Bose led him to closer and closer participation in politics and populist mobilization. Rabindranath Tagore began Visva- Bharati University in Santiniketan to create an academic institution that would represent his own notions and ideas as he was not a fanatical nationalist and wanted a less extreme interplay between the occident and the orient environment where he had a taste of two completely different worlds and hoped to blend the two together. Through the encouragement of Rabindranath, Nandalal started to paint contemporary themes surrounding him and encouraged his students to study and reflect the life around them and also took interest in the mural paintings as some of the best examples of Indian greatest artistic achievements were painted in this technique and the revival of mural paintings in modern India took place. This change in the subjects of the artworks, which ceased to be mythological and historical and steers towards the modern countryside, was a significant break with the direction of his teacher, the democratisation of the themes of national art but at the same time, keeping the technical level high. The relations between the mentor and the student were complicated by the difference in relations to mass politics and the Gandhi nationalist movement. Abanindranath Tagore realised an idea of a united India when he created his iconic painting that of Bharat Mata in 1905 when he had the image of a saffron-clad woman holding a manuscript, sheaves of paddy, a piece of cloth and a garland visualising India as a nation as one, bound together through industry, spirituality, knowledge, wisdom and ecology. But, it was, I believe, the refusal to admit the multiplicity of the detail, to emphasise and also to shorten, to personalise, the academic realism, that, in the role of denying the colonial rule, Abanindranath was adopting, in his naming of the art of Ajanta to real art. Nationalism as manifested by Abanidranath was therefore mainly aesthetic and symbolic, it achieved its objective by the assertion of culture and not by actual political involvement. The artistic practise of Nandalal Bose over time altered the classical values of the Bengal School as his art work

gained a more orientation towards the organisational structure of the independence movement. His Gandhi linocuts and Haripura posters were a break where artistic creativity was not only integrated with nationalism but maintained at the cultural field. Even though beginning his training under Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal soon understood that his interests were different: when other people used ancient cultural forms as inspiration, he turned to the living folk culture and the present-day rural world. His approach to ancient art was the rejection of imitation though he admired the significance of Ajanta. Similar to Jamini Roy, he wanted to have an Indian identity that was based on folk culture. His Haripura series of panel paintings were reminiscent of the excursion of Jean-Francois Millet out of academic painting to observe rural life. This transition between the courtly culture to the living folk culture marked the transition to populist democracy. To such intellectuals as Ananda Coomaraswamy, the work of Nandalal was "nothing less than Swadeshi, the work of the Bengal School seemed to be a narrow nostalgia with a pre-industrial past. This difference indicates the greater ideological difference between the spiritualised nationalism of Abanindranath and the materialist populism of Nandalal. As the teacher sought to revive polished courtly and mythological voices, the student sought the hardships and work of ordinary folks remaking the aesthetics of Bengal School to help a greater India access visual language. Their divergent pedagogical trajectories tend to show divergent social views of art as well. Abanindranath was centred on Kolkata but his pupils joined big institutions all over the country. Nandalal, mentored by both Abanindranath and Rabindranath Tagore created a teaching philosophy at Santiniketan which exists as a direct recording of village life and modern realities, taking the project of nationalism into a more democratic and politically based solution. These artistic changes were in accord with broader changes in Indian nationalism, between elite Swadeshi cultural revivalism and Gandhian mass mobilisation. Spiritual nationalism was practiced in Abanindranath in his Bharat Mata (1905) but needed an image that would be bold and reproducible and in the 1930s by mass politics. As a response to this Nandalal created linocuts and pictures of artisans, farmers, and weavers -to put the labouring classes at the centre of the nationalist image repertoire. This connection between Abanindranath and Nandalal, in turn, is a capsule summary of some of the main tensions in the Bengal School: spiritual and material, elite and popular, past and present. Their multi-generational conversation shows how artistic movements change when the students revisualize and build on the visions of their teachers in order to address the needs of their generation.

7. The Politics of Aesthetics: Reclaiming Modernism in the Indian Frame

The work of Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose should be placed in a wider context of the question of global modernism, which included the aesthetic intervention in the work of these authors, the challenge to the monopoly of the Euro-American to the modernity itself. Assuming that even the loveliest two-dimensional Indian miniature paintings had nothing over which to be proud under the standards of high humanist ideals of illusionism, colonial art historians turned the usually beautiful miniatures of Indian tradition against the prevailing academic orthodoxy, to act as a banner of cultural independence on the side of Indian nationalist historians. The notion of central to periphery is not either of geography but of power and authority with the original discourse of western avant-garde regarding modernism progress to have been produced by metropolitan centres and other modernisms were rejected as peripheral. This hierarchical geography of modernism was one of the key issues that the aesthetic project of the Bengal School challenged since the cultural production of the colonialized regions could create its own authentic modernities even without being authenticated by the European centres. The cultural politics of the Bengal School can be analysed with the help of the theoretical framework of postcolonial criticism specifically, the concept of hybridity and the so-called third space proposed by Homi Bhabha. Bhabha argues that any cultural statement and system is produced in a discontinuation he has named the Third Space of enunciation and the cultural identity is always represented in this ambivalent and contradictory space and therefore claims to the hierarchical purity of cultures cannot stand. A space of mode of articulation; a productive and not simply reflective space which leads to a new possibility, is the third space which is an interruptive, interrogative, enunciative space of new forms of culture meaning and production, that crosses into the bounds of incumbent boundaries and challenges established categorisations of culture and identity. The Bengal School existed right in such a third space between the direct revival of pre-colonial traditions and wholesale adoption of Western modernism, and the creation of such hybrid forms, which bargained between several cultural traditions. The fusion of various aesthetics traditions in the Bengal School is a good example of the fruitful indeterminacy of the third space of Bhabha. This effects of mixing together an elements of Indian themes the bricolage effect which can be seen in works such as the Krishna lila series of Abanindranath, which places into form the storeys of the mediaeval Vaishnava literature in styles reminiscent of Mughal miniatures, is evidence of this intertwining of an Indian subject-matter growing out of the cultural cross-connexions generated by this eclectic puzzle and bringing about the figures of a new heterogeneity, a new space of culture. This tacticalized hybridity was not

the cultural watering down, but a careful creation of forms of aesthetics that would allow both pay tribute to indigenous traditions as well as respond to the contemporary political reality. Integration of Japanese wash styles, Mughal composition forms and the Ajanta idea of spiritual forms produced a visual lexis that challenged the colonial classification to the extent of defining what a modern art was. Partha Mitter, an art historian, states that the students of the first generation of the Indian Society of Oriental Art included Abanindranath, the key artist and creator of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, which was the primary source of Indian art and provided the foundation of the modern Indian painting movement. The work of Mitter has played a leading role in developing the Bengal School as a part of the greater art and nationalism discourses. The book Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations by Partha Mitter was an early exploration of the history of modern art in the Indian subcontinent that narrates the history of the Indian art during the Raj with the context of the colonialism alcoholism and nationalism. In this analysis, Mitter shows how the Bengal School had to negotiate among complicated tensions between the need of accepting the support of sympathetic British administrators such as E.B. Havell and staying culturally autonomous and keeping their nationalist obligations. The critical issue of the building's aesthetic in the Bengal School was developed at various levels. It is the first nationalist art movement in India according to Partha Mitter, which appeared with the Swadeshi movement of 1905. The rejection of Western academic training and the re-establishment of major European traditions, Mughal and other native ones artists such as Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose developed a very Indian aesthetic in line with anti-colonial opposition. However, even the female ideas of what Indian was or what indigenous was were influenced by the imperialist discourse, creating inconsistencies within the movement. This nationalist modernism had developed in colonial cities such as Calcutta and Bombay where European ideals in Western literature were absorbed through the input of intellectuals who did not have physical contact with Europeans. Mitter describes this imagined intellectual realm as the so-called virtual cosmopolis, a mental mediation space in which Indian artists could still be involved in global modernism without losing the local presence. The anti-colonial rhetoric of the Bengal School was symbolic as can be seen through the selling of Western oil paintings by Abanindranath in 1905. However this opposition came in the colonial institutions where these artists were trained, funded and showcased according to the concept of mimicry by Bhabha in which critique and dependence exists together. When the Europeans brought modernism to the Bauhaus exhibition in Calcutta, in 1922, it brought a change of oriental revivalism to folk-based artistic primitivism. The focus that Gandhi had on the peasant also prompted many artists such as Nandalal Bose to idealise rural India as witnessed by his Haripura posters. This appeal to folk traditions had become a new stage of modernism to discard elite historicism in favour of populist nationalism that is sensitive to shifting political demands. The critical reaction to the Bengal School shows that there are still debates on the issue of authenticity and the equilibrium between tradition and modernity. Although this move is dismissed as escapism, the school is also hailed as having revived the Indian identity and criticising Western naturalism. Finally, Bengal School brought value to the international context in the context of multiple modernisms. The movement did a kind of aesthetic decolonization by claiming indigenous traditions as having an equivalent ability to source modern art in a bid to reclaim the power to create aesthetic values, meaning, and cultural worth. Their canvases were performative spaces in which alternative modernities and cultural sovereignty were projected and expressed.

8. Conclusion: When Color Becomes a Nation's Voice

This comparative analysis of Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose is how visual culture emerged to be an effective instrument of opposition to British colonial rule. In the aesthetic practice, art became a tool of nationalist protest. The Bengal School of Art advocated an Indian modernism that came on the basis of folk ethos, Hindu iconography, local substances and rural life-developing a humanistic idea of identity, liberty, and cultural autonomy. Although the artists moved in opposite directions, the way they did it was to establish aesthetic innovation in order to restore cultural independence as well as fulfil political desire in terms of visual expression. The biggest contribution of Abanindranath Tagore was the creation of the philosophical and aesthetic basis of cultural nationalism. His legendary Bharat Mata (1905) condensed the process of nationalist feeling into a propagandistically expressive allegory, and it became the symbol of the independence movement. He rejected European Academic Realism and adhered to Hindu spirituality, Mughal and Pahari miniatures, and the art of wash to create pan-Asian modernism, which confronted the Western domination in art and offered other ways of creating modernity through Eastern traditions. His cultural nationalism was translated by his teacher, Nandalal Bose into mass politics and direct action, into a populist visual communications derived out of elite revivalism. His 1930 linocut of Gandhi turned out to be a reproduced symbol of non-violent protests. It was in the Haripura posters (1938) that common villagers like the tailor,

drummer, gardener, woman cooking and so on were glorified as proponents of national culture and economic self-reliance. Through these works nationalist art had extended its activities and enforced swadeshi awareness even in rural India. Their relationship was the meeting of these contradictions of Indian nationalism: spiritual and material, elite and mass, classical and folk. Whereas Abanindranath provided sophisticated aesthetic models, Nandalal made domestic models available to masses. Both thought that aesthetic decisions were ideologically-charged and that art had a decisive part in determining the Indian identity. Their influences transcend their life years. They transformed the modern Indigenous Indian visual culture by restoring indigenous traditions that were ruthlessly shut down by colonial education systems. Their graphic vocabulary is still reflected in the design of currencies, in government publications, political billboards and exhibition stands. Their effort eventually showed that a greater decolonization effort was needed, which did not just take place in terms of political freedom but also of cultural and epistemological freedom though the medium of art as a way of envisaging other futures and questioning hegemonic authority.

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