
On Jogen Chowdhury Birla Academy Exhibition, 1981

Pryag Sukla

The *figure* in these paintings—be it of man, woman or of a God—is an affirmative presence. It is never meant too self-absorbed or aggressive. It imaginatively and wittingly holds its ground and will not give up easily. It has roots. Roots like vegetation. Dried up or seized—it will remain there, it wants to remain there not as a silent spectator, but as a true participant—the 'participant' which can not be termed easily 'active' or 'passive' has its own perception of things.

There are no chance or bookish formulations in Jogen's paintings. The experience is lived and transformed through a very physical, sensory, 'process', accentuating the pictorial devices which again are no easy solutions, but, as it were, the very part of the experience.

The superficial, surfacial changes in the mode of living of the middle classes has led a many to believe that it is *the* changing reality. And to depict it otherwise may not be contemporary or 'modern'. The figurative whole in Jogen's painting is not given to such an idea. Most of the time it is wrapped up in Bengali middle class clothing and ornamentation. But has discarded its dreamy looks and is now amazed, awakened, disturbed on the happenings around, of which there is an ample evidence in some of these paintings 'portraying' political and social hypocrisy. These figures tend to cling to the essence of life, come what may. The village teacher, the housewife, the girl—are not just the replica of a near or distant past, it is in the present that they weigh the past and future anxiously. And here lies the significance of their affirmation. Affirmation of a kindred, gentle, sensitive soul and body, which has been akin to the nature. And the nature in turn has moulded its 'nature'.

Jogen's work is related to a certain nostalgia, not bereft of substance. Its relation to the past and tradition in terms of life and Art is also deep and meaningful. These paintings have apparently two hands and feet, yet they seem to have many more. Here the different parts of the figure have been elaborated in various postures and the elaboration may subtly remind one of the traditional Indian sculptures of multiple, multi-dimensional forms. one would not miss a certain touch of good humour,

even sarcasm, in Jogen's Paintings, but it is never cruel. And has always its redemption in Jogen's faith and delight in the *living* itself

Jogen is a truly innovative painter. And without being fastidious his art is indigenous to the core. He uses ink and oil pastels on paper, applies lacquer to bind and integrate the space as well as image. His colours are 'indigenous' too and are truly reflective of the earthiness of his paintings— an earthiness which is inexhaustive in terms of 'meanings' as well as the constant 'growth' of the 'image'.

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