Reminiscences of a Dream

Geeti Sen

Drawing is a magical process of self-discovery. The artist, as he draws, discovers himself more genuinely in the fantasies that sprout forth from his imagination. The line is an instinctive form of self-revelation, whereby the artist and his viewer are drawn together in a quest that is less conscious and less contrived than the formal and finished oil painting.

In drawings by Jogen Choudhury the line remains integral to be valued for its own sake, for its economy of line, conjuring up the entire shape by its contours, of the volume of the apple or the fish or the eggplant. These organic shapes are interlinked in a most curious and endearing fashion, as though energy flows from one to the next.

In his portraits, the skillful use of a few strokes introduces a whole personality. The rear view of a politician seated and scratching his back or his head, is a posture as incisive and telling as would be the formal pose that is the conventional portrait. The study of the *Preacher* depicts the torso from the rear, with a hint of the cerebral head that surmounts this colossal mound of flesh.

The lotus is among the most explicit symbols used in this new language of form. Soon after his return to India from Paris in 1968, Jogen began a series of paintings which are entitled *Reminiscences of a Dream*. Most of these are worked in ink, wash and mixed media on paper, allowing for a pronounced fluidity of form. The first of these introduces the upper head and petals of a lotus, with a dead fish upturned and floating above the tremulous petals.Images of life and death are seen together, encapsulated in a moment.

Reminiscences of a dream 10(1969) shows a full-blown lotus with the stamens edged with tiny fish at the four corners, rather as one might find in a woven *kantha* from Faridpur, meticulously stitched to pattern the scales and fins of the fish. We marvel at the attention to detail: to the cognizable, definitive form of an image that can be immediately apprehended. Yet,because of the dark ground from which it emerges, it leaves us floating in a realm of free association of memories...

There are endless variations on the theme. *Reminiscences of a Dream* 17(1970) depicts the lotus slowly descending, posed above a china teacup, a hand and a creeper of flowers. *Reminiscences of a Dream*11(1969)presents the fish floating above a flowery creeper. In *Reminiscences of a Dream*18(1970) the fish is touched gently by the

hand, while the lotus sinks like the descending sun below the table cloth. *In Dream 19* (1070) a butterfly is introduced, hovering above an apple which in turn is poised above the lotus full blown.

About his pictures the artist comments, "The lotus has an organic feeling about it. Whether the objects are human or flower or any other form, they possess an organic feeling of growth."

With the modelling of these quisecent images in light and shadow, they come alive, and appear to move through the darkness. There is something strangely erotic about a long snake which encircles a tiny flower in *Dream 12* (1969), or hovers delicately above a full-cupped breast and nipple as in Dream9 (1969). The presence of the fish alone in one of his earliest works, Dream 5 (1969), as three slender forms, supine and floating, suffice to evoke within us a sense of nostalgia for the past, a sense of desire which is the present.

The most haunting of the *Dream* sequences was completed three or four years later :in 1973 *Reminiscences of a Dream*44 confronts us with a woman, rather like a Muse, with her black hair rippling down to her shoulders, her face mysteriously cast entirely in shadow. From her head grows a huge lotus which beckons as a magnetic force, overpowering. The odd combination of finite details such as the flowered blouse, her hair, the folds of the sari, are fused with fantasy to create an enigmatic persona.

Is the lotus then a personal symbol, a cosmic principle, or is it collective fantasy.

In Search of an identity

It is of crucial importance to our argument that the *Dream* paintings were not among the earliest paintings or drawings by the artist. They did not surface during his training at the art school in Calcutta, where, according to Jogen," the students are not prepared to develop a personal vision." At this point he did a series of drawings of refugees, influenced by Kathe Kollwitz, and some studies of the community which was familiar, as in the *Couple*. His own *Self Portrait* (1961) in pen and ink confronts us with the searing, gaunt look of a young man searching for identity.

In his treatise Jogen underscores four signs of a good work of art: a true,original, spontaneous creation; a new creation; a significant creation; a creation that contributes to world art. His perceptions, for a contemporary artist, are unusual:

I do not think that traditional so-called Indian paintings and art works have been investigated in a proper perspective. They have been glorified for their content, mood and colour-but they have not been analysed in relation to the social psychology or the mind of the artist-creator who made them and in relation to his individuality.

In the context of Jogen Chowdhury's own work,the word *moulik* is translated as 'originality'; but like all complex words, has several meaning. *Moulik* can be translated as uncommon or individualistic; it derives from the root word *mul*, meaning 'roots'. In discussing Jogen's paintings, the term *moulik* becomes apposite. The artist belives, as he states clearly, in originality of expression. He has developed an uncommon vocabulary of images to forge a personal vision that is individualistic, if not eccentric.

Several of these images from *kantha* Bengali from 18th and 19th centuries surface in paintings by Jogen Chowdhury. His choice of monochromatic and subtle colours, and the texture woven into the apple or the petals of the lotus or the fish, are curiously reminiscent of the *kantha* technique, awakening within us associations from the past. The ability to render the dream-like substance, this magical combination of the finite, the tangible and the fantastic, marks the pictures of Jogen Chowdhury. A taste for the erotic is introduced by organic shapes, full, supple, supine. Yet at the same time they are tantalisingly unreal; suspended, they float : both in memory and on the canvas.

The dintinction in these images is that they are perhaps deliberately disengaged from any context or background. The fish, delicately defined and treated in its details, lies suspended in space-compelling the viewer, in a sense, to read it as a symbolic image. These pictures have more to them than meets the eye; they have a past, and a future. When our attention is focused upon the petals of a lotus that seems to be growing, expanding, that gathers into itself both life and death, we are forced to ask : what does this image mean? What does it express?

The magnetic line and the organic shape of these forms also relates them to the popular bazaar paintings from Kalighat. Images of the fish, of the cat with a fish in its mouth, of giant red lobsters, of the snake, of the courtesan in a most beguiling pose, holding a flower or a mirror, are only too familiar to most residents of the city of Calcutta. That they bear a latent influence on Jogen's work is patently clear—not only in the images themselves, but in the fluidity of line and brush-stroke. On specific occasions, as will be seen with his dramatic painting of *Tiger in the Moonlight*, the image has been dormant for so many years that he is unable, or unwilling, to recognize its origins.

None of this, it must be emphasised,is achieved with any deliberate attempt to reproduce the familiar object. In speaking of inspiration, the artist gives priority to the world of the imagination. We are reminded at once of Paul Klee's metaphor of the

tree, with its roots, its trunk that carries the vital sap into the crown of the tree, when Jogen remarks: "One has to sow before one can reap. New seeds have to be planted for every new season. The field of the minds has to be fertilized with water, air and light before it can yield."

Jogen's images are both new and magical because they are radically transformed. There is a nerve ending here, a bite and tension to these paintings which are not felt in the bazaar paintings; and nor, for that matter, in the revival of folk imagery in the paintings of Jamini Roy. This tension, as much as the fascinating mix of the finite and the fantastic, is basic to the genre of Jogen's work. In the later portraits, an edge is brought to the pictures with satire that responds to his growing indictment of society. This tension, perhaps, becomes the distinguishing feature that defines Jogen's work as contemporary - as opposed to folk art.

Still Life and the Canvas

It is significant that the series entitled *Reminiscences of a Dream* was begun only after the artist returned to India in 1968. That is, they surfaced at a point of time when he was open once more to visual stimuli, as often happens when an artist returns to his place of origin.This also happened to be a critical juncture of Jogen's life. In 1968 he found relative security in a job at the Weavers' Service Centre in Madras. His marriage in 1970 contributed in no little sense to an essential happiness and sense of peace. In tranquillity then, nostalgia was revived.

The *Dream* series continued for some seven years, unabated from 1969 to 1976. It changed of course, so that the familiar symbols of the fish and the lotus were gradually replaced by the butterfly, the hand, a vase of flowers, or a basket of fruits. Unquestionably, a sense of fun enters into play with these elements that now become more intimate and personal.

Consider a painting from 1973 : *Reminiscences of a Dream* 43 is also entitled *Love in the Moonlit Night*. Now it is a frilly pillow that is suspended, floating against the dark night, floating above disarrayed bedsheets and flowers strewn all over. If we are at all uncertain about the message of this picture, inscribed on the pillow in Bengali is the endearing word ***bhalo-bhasha***, 'Love'. This refers us immediately to a common practice in middle-class families of linen embroidered with words. Fantasy combines, then, with a touch of satire about the society to which Jogen certainly belongs.

Over the years of the *Dream* series Jogen Chowdhury has gradually changed his vocabulary to one that derives not from traditional symbols, but from images famil-

iar from everyday life. Whether this has happened consciously or as the development of a personal symbolism is difficult to say. He is certainly aware of the change, and concerned that art should relate to life.

It is important that objects which are in use in day-to-day life should be made artistic. This is necessary for the growth of an understanding of art among the public–and people can be exposed to art through them. An object of use may have artistic form, colour, line, etc., and can give pleasure to the person who uses and looks at it. We must remember that such objects belong to every house and can thus throw open to the public the door to art ...

Reinforcing this idea, Jogen Chowdhury has titled two of his largest paintings, each about five feet square, as *Life I* (1975) and Life II *(1976)*. The difference between them is striking and pertinent to our thoughts on still life. Both have an autobiographical origin, as suggested by the artist. In the year he was transferred to Delhi, in transit, he had observed and sketched a corner of a room piled high with pillows and mattresses, which "looked alive and organic". The resulting picture, completed three years later, is almost obscene in the bloated shape of a bolster draped over flowing bedsheets.

The second picture, *Still Life II*, introduces a couple in place of objects of still life; but they are stilled into a moment of passivity. A very large woman, in the nude, sits on the edge of a vast poster bed that engulfs the entire space of the painting. The view taken is from the lower left corner, so that she appears to dominate the scene : a vast corpus of flesh that is, with reference to John Berger, naked rather than nude. Hiding behind the wooden posters of the bed is a little man, his head cocked to one side, unblinking, his hand raised perhaps to scratch his head in bewilderment.

These still lifes are startling ! Between the two have passed three years of development, but they state a continuity in the artist's viewpoint. He would give as much attention to bedlinen as to the bed as to the *Couple*, as he refers to them in an alternate title. In both pictures there seems to be the odd combination of finite, realsitic details such as the bolster or the wooden bedposts, the ripples of flesh on the woman's body, fused with a sense of the unreal. The large nude woman retains her anonymity since her back is turned to the viewer, while the man stands exposed. We are left with a story only half-told. Besides, the couple are stilled into inertia; the bedlinen in *Life I* is more beguiling in its sense of movement. The still life is as persuasive, as persistent an image, as deserving of study as are the inhabitants of society.

Mythic Content

There are many derivations for archetypal images. A rather unusual source, used by few artists in this country, is the newspaper. Yet the newspaper is one of the most popular forms of media, apart from the cinema-and one that confronts us every morning, until the images become commonplace, embeded in the subconscious.

Ironically, it was during the Emergency of the 70's when the newspaper for all practical purposes was ineffective, that Jogen Chowdhury chanced upon a small insignificant image that caught his fancy. He cut out the small advertisement for the circus, supported by the picture of a toothless paper tiger, and added it carefully to his notebooks. At a later stage he developed a drawing, and from it the masterpiece which now hangs in the National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi.

In this immense painting that is eight feet by five feet, the tiger is suspended against the dark night. Reproducing the same image with old, crabby nails outlines against the dark ground, with jaws bared, he reminds us dimly of the paper tiger. Beside him hangs a crescent moon, this as a slice of cheese, like one of the absurd stage props on an antiquated film set. And below the tiger, supine, is the hapless victim stilled perhaps into death.

Tiger in the Moonlit Night has that hallucinating quality of Jogen's earlier paintings in the *Dream* series. Yet now it also possesses mythic content, and it makes a political statement, albeit without premeditated intent. Questioned on this point, the artist declares himself to be socially aware of the current situation, but not politically motivated. Certainly, most of his paintings examined here are without any political bias or overtones; but what are we to make of this image of a tiger, unprecedented in his work? Could this be seen as pure fantasy, or personal symbolism, or as political mythology?

Oddly enough, this is the first work from these years that is horizontal in format, and narrative in content. Viewers, with their sensibilities sharpened by the open jaws, can sense that a story is being released – although it is shrouded in mystery and left incomplete. The Emergency, those years of suppressed terror, of dark nights and imponderable, undisclosed happenings, of senseless killings and demolitions, of smooth, svelte facades, is summed up by as incongruous an image as the paper tiger and the crescent moon, rising.

The tiger floats in an immense vacuum of space. In a sense it is suspended in time. The Emergency can happen again; it is always happening, as an undercurrent activity. In the 19th century bazaar paintings of Kalighat, one of the archetypal images is

that of the striped tiger and its victim, lying prostrate at the feet, and in the act of being mauled. Once again, there is no definite story. And yet, when reminded of this curious resemblance of his own painting to a prototype, Jogen Chowdhury remarked that he could never recall having seen such a picture. It has surfaced from the subliminal level; yet it is a symbol most apposite for a period in our history!

Image and Iconoclasm

As an image-maker, Jogen establishes himself from the start as an iconoclast. The images most familiar in this country are those set up for worship each day: household gods, daubed vermilion red and fierce orange, Ganapati, Lakshmi, Durga. Once a year at least, they are invested with divine powers, the presence manifest of the deity. Then they are carried in procession on the shoulders of the most devout, to be immersed in sacred waters. Very rarely do they appear in the work of Jogen Chowdhury; and if they do, they are startling interpretations. He sets about his task seriously, to destroy our conventional norms of beauty, to search for new values.

Ganapati (1976) is introduced into a square frame, bloated and swelling out with huge ears to fill the space. With two small eyes he surveys the world, and with another two he squints to read the *Bhagavad Gita* held in his plump hands. In an earlier incarnation of 1973 he appears not only as half-man but as an androgyne. The wrinkles of pink flesh are creased like the skin of an elephant, to yield two prominent breasts and an aggressive trunk running alongside the creeper and the frame. The attempt at distortion is, of course, deliberate.

Ma Lakshmi, evoked in 1977 as his only tribute to the goddess, is rendered replete with all iconographical details – but without any of the charms with which she is usually endowed, being the goddess of beauty as well as of wealth. Here she is seated solidity on a full-blown lotus, enthroned and wearing the crown that is so familiar in pith images of the goddess in Bengal. But the forbidding look, the grand, imperious air are that of the Bengali matriarch of a middle-class household. Swathed in a sari, she clasps to her bosom the *Lakshmi-Jhanpi* or money pot. The artist comments on his interpretation :

> One day I thought I should do Lakshmi. We like money, so we worship Lakshmi. She is a middle-class woman : the resemblance is deliberate. Like most Bengali women of that background, she is intent on property and money-with that extraordinary look of authority which you sometimes discover on the faces of such women ...

Sundari (1977) is also a take-off from the pliant earthy images of terracotta temples in Bengal. Nude to the waist, she arches over to one side, raising her arm in a

provocative gesture. She looks out at the world with an intense appeal in her eyes, with a depth and lustre to them that is disturbing. But gone are the supple curves, the smooth textrues the divine Surasundaris adoring the temples ! The belly bulges, the arms are flabby. "She may be a prostitute — that would not be unusual, with a name like Sundari," is the artist's comment.

Man on a Sofa (1976) intoduces us to a large corpus of flesh, a man who would seem to be naked, wedged into a sofa. As much space is given to the large sofa, treated with infinite attention to texture, as to the man who is accommodated within it. With a full bloated face and closed eyes, he oozes flesh rather as though it were bandaged cloth. The head droops, the hands are bunches of bananas. Is this an indictment of the civilized society to which we belong?

The Preacher (1977-78) is a subtle masterpiece in its economy of line and force. On a large space of five feet square the impenertrable form summons up an unforgettable 'portrait'. Seated with his back to the viewer, with his head sunk into the torso, he assumes an anonymity that immediately distances the viewer. The positioning is significant, indeed crucial, to the statement. Why does *The Preacher* have his back to his audience? Is he one of our leaders of the nation, a mound of flesh who governs with a mere flourish of the fingers?

An interesting feature about these new paintings is that whether they are large or small, irrespective of size, they are invariably square. Rarely is a rectangular frame, a vertical or horizontal frame selected by the artist. The square frame, surely the most difficult to order into composition, becomes indispensable for Jogen Chowdhury, since "sometimes the juxtaposition of forms speaks for 'itself' ". He admits that he is influenced by the division of space as used in traditional tantra art, where the emphasis on form invokes the magical quality of the image. The 'image' projected tends to fill the entire frame, to swell and expand, encompassing the void. It exercises a magnetic hold over the beholder.

The Intellectual (1973) intoduces us to a bland pumpkin; a translucent form projected against a dark ground, against the horizontal emphasis of a table. The image is placed in such a way as to confront the viewer with the truth, which is irrevocable and uncompromising. Even more so than the *Man on a Sofa*, the intellectual has nothing to say for himself; he has become a vegetable. This is once again a still life; but a work that makes a devasting statement about the lifelessness of the human intellect.

Some three years later, at the artists campt at Kasauli, Jogen Chowdhury painted

the *Portrait of P.C.* where the bland profile of the erstwhile Education Minister arises out of the pumpkin form of *The Intelectual.* It would be difficult to resist the connection. With this portrait, the artist is launched on a series of new and terrifying images of the people around him, archetypal images which are grafted on to the mind's eye.

Portraits of People

I observe people in great detail. My pictures are not exactly portraits of particular individuals. It is the total history of the person which invloves me.

Jogen Chowdhury, August 5, 1980

As the Curator of art treasures at Rashtrapti Bhavan, Jogen Chowdhury lived for many years within the precincts of the President's Estate. A colonial bungalow with slender pillars and portico, high ceilings and smooth cool floors formed the immediate enviornment. From his studio room the open door looked out into a small, enclosed garden : a cabbage patch, banana fronds, papaya trees and a dilapidated *tulsi* shrine splashed with sunlight. The windowsill was crowded with little potted plants of weird, knotty shapes, each pushing out shoots every day. "Even a plant has as much substnce, as much reality as a human being."

The studio is an enclosed space, womblike. On the mantelpiece are displayed a Tanjore glass painting; a bronze image; two heads in clay, grimacing, worked by the artist, and two caricature heads by his son Pupun. Funny, ghoulish faces. One is struck by the remarkable resemblance to his paintings, neatly stacked in some order against one wall. Some small favourite postcards and drawings by his 10-year-old son are posted on a board above his desk. The papers are weighted down by white and black stones of beautiful organic shapes.

The mantelpiece is dominated by the square frame of *The Intellectual*, the one meditative piece that brings order into the studio. A painting hidden behind the glass almirah reveals a luminous image of *jabaphul* entitled Spring 73. This is pushed out of sight, so as to avoid any disturbance, any counter-image. There are not other forms here to relieve the eye, to mitigate the sense of equilibrium that is arrived at with square paintings, smooth stones and organic plants. Here in this space, the artist is free to exercise his imagination.

Jogen Chowdhury asserts that image-making cannot be merely imaginative, or decorative. "It should be a strong communication of the artist's experience of reality."

Reality, of course, has different meanings. In Jogen's recent work, as we have observed, there appears to be a magical fusion between poetic fantasy and biting satire.

There is something about these figures with their intense, hypnotic stare that arrests the viewer. There is, too, an odd sensation of familiarity, so that we feel as though we have encountered these faces and figures elsewhere. Finally, they leave that peculiar kind of impact which we carry away with us so that later, when we encounter these 'people', even if we have never met them before, they are now indeed known to us.

Take his *Face of a Patriot* (1980), wearing a Gandhi cap as a little white boat set asail, the mouth smiling and yet tight-lipped, the eyes beady and the face lined with authority. His *Kneeling Face* (1980) is that of a bald politician who bestirs himself to look down upon the masses that beseech him, the narrow slit eyes fawning hypocrisy. His *Portrait of a Retired Civil Servant* (1977) possesses the scarred, haunted look of a man who has been groomed through years of diplomacy into sullen discretion; yet he bears the cheeks and jowls of a butcher. Do we encounter here a man who is dedicated to the service of the nation, who has soiled his hands in blood?

Through his official assignments, the artist has undoubtedly had access to a range of state dignitaries, politicians and official personnel. But his experience does not stop there. Visits to the theatre, to *jatra* performances running through the night, the annual entertainments at *Kali puja*, the crowds thronging the Kali temple, the visit to Gole Market to buy fish, evening discourses with artists at Gallery 26, all provide an unending source of nourishment. Being loquacious by nature, he enters into discussions with visitors who become his resource material.

In the image of a housewife from Calcutta, the head is askew and the lips drool with the red *tambula* of the *paan* that she has eaten a sultry beauty to be encountered, shall we say, on a humid afternoon with the fans whirring when the green shutters are down. Contrast her then with the poignant head, profiled and indomitable, of the *Mother of Eighty-Four Thousand* (1980), a metaphorical name for the universal mother who suffers every kind of indignity for her children.

Several of these images border on the archetypal. Ma Yasoda (1979), like the eternal Madonna, is the epitome of all motherhood, radiating a gentle strength and sadness which is evoked through the wistful glint of her eyes, the nath in her nose, the round bindi upon her forehead. *Portrait of a Punjabi Beauty* (1977-78) features yet another kind of beauty, in full bloom, the cheeks flushed with good health, the hair gathered together with a *dupatta* to set off the broad nose and eyes. Here are four women -each of them with a certain stamp of authenticity about them which indeed raises them above the level of the stereotype.

Could we describe these as portraits? Sudden abrupt close-ups. Faces that snarl and sneer, smart and wince, appear aloof, dismal and bleak sometimes, are proud and unyielding. If we were ever of the opinion that Indian society could be character-

ized by a few generalizations, here is evidence to the contrary, of a considerable and conscious variety.

Certainly, the element of caricature is often latent in Jogen's images, if not explicit. Take his *Lollipop Bridegroom* (1980), with the face flushed pink above the cream *sherwani* buttoned tight and immaculate; and yet with the eyes rolling around like marbles.

In the Indian legacy, satire is not a genre that developed well-apart from a few Mughal and Bikaner drawings of uncommon sensitivity, and some folk paintings that possess bizarre sense of humour. Among these are the *patua* scroll paintings of Bengal, with which Jogen is familiar, and which now surface in his interpretation of individuals. In these scroll paintings, the use of posture and of gesture is crucial to the image, as is the hypnotic stare. Jogen Chowdhury enlarges his spectrum from focusing on faces of violence, of tears and anguish and hypocrisy, to depicting figures in their entirety - as they sit or kneel, or ponder over their agony.

Worked in ink and pastel, the stark profiles and hatched lines bring a certain tension to these figures, that summons up their total personality. *Man III* (1980-81) observes the politician once again, with his Gandhi cap, pondering over his next move. *Man II*((1980-81) is shown from the rear, scratching his head. *Man IV* (1980-81) is pent up in anger, wielding a clenched fist, while *Man VIII* (1980-81) throws his arm over his eyes to shield himself from confronting the truth.

To bring greater fluidity of line to these figures, Jogen Chowdhury experiments now in watercolour, in the medium of the bazaar artists. The contortions and distortions now become irrespressible. *Boy* (1982) depicts the naked child from the rear, seated on his haunches, his bloated belly and spindly arms relating the whole story. Rarely has the human form been used in such a variety of positions, to depict a wide range of society.

Portraits are summarily disclosed not only through the close-up of the face and gesture, but by "the total history of the person". In his genre, Jogen Chowdhury is at his consummate best when it concerns a known, a familiar personality, resurrected from shreds and scraps of evidence from the past, on the boderline between recollection and recreation, between fantasy and reality. It is in these images from the past that the artist returns once more to that peculiar kind of sensibility explored in his dream images.

In his portrait *Noti Binodini*, Jogen Chowdhury discloses his impression of the celebrated stage actress of the late 19th century who rocketed to fame.

In her portrait, Binodini gazes out to catch the viewer's attention, to engage him in conversation in a manner that becomes both beguiling and bold. This direct con-

frontation is unusual, and almost unique among Jogen's portraits of women which are often profiled, at most a demure three-quarter view. We observe the strong, stubborn chin, the serious expression in the eyes which do not have even the hint of a smile. All this is a bit disturbing. Where is the coquetry that might be expected of a courtesan?

As we pause before the portrait, the gaze of the woman becomes stubborn, intense, persistent - and also, anguished, as though to say, "Look at me, if you dare. Here I am, in my totality. There is nothing to hide..."

The sari that once covered her head has slipped, revealing her exquisite black hair. The old-fashioned Victorian blouse, with its frills and flowers, reveals more than it conceals of her two breasts, which are laid bare. The eyes retain an intensity that suggests passion, and terrifying despair. The mouth is full, sullen, sensuous. The large circular *bindi* upon the forehead, the single *nath* upon the nose, emphasize the contours of her breasts.

What is perhaps shocking about this image, what hurts most of all, is its sense of stark realism. With all her accessories, with the flamboyance of frills and laces and jewellery intact, she is yet devastatingly real. There is no denying the fact that she exists, she is alive. The breasts, round and bared, palpitating, are there for all the world to see. She looms up, a figure from the past, yet devoid of any shadows, any mystery - clear as the light of day. Unlike the dream images of the fish or the lotus which floated in space against a dark ground. She is defined against a positive white space which is in itself a radical change in treatment. This helps to place her in the present, acutely self-conscious of her presence.

In the ultimate analysis, this becomes the moment of crisis in Jogen Chowdhury's career. The dream image is shattered. The past no longer dominates or overrides the present moment.

Although she emerges from the past, she no longer belongs to it. In this portrait that curious mix of fantasy with reality, which formed such an essential part of this sensibility, is now resolved. Fantasy becomes part of the real and the tangible, part of the social dilemma in which we find ourselves ensnared. Fantasy becomes part of the paradox of living.

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