

prominence and language. He uses agility and freedom of drawing with verve. Also distortion and placement of the body in a darker space is a result of fierce necessity of his artistic self. Body becomes forever placed in a threshold. Jogen's figure sense is purposefully dissymmetrical. One even interacts with kind of body as if it is on the verge of being swelling out.

Jogen adopted a new way of depicting space. Since the space he wished to depict was claustrophobic, confined as a narrow presence within a dark fold. One could notice recession in depth, but also a stark frontality. Everything floats almost literally in Jogen's works, they appear rootless. They are suspended in a limbo from anywhere to go nowhere to settle. His figures look 'compressed' because of darkness around and loaded because of very well drawn fullness of form. There is a sense of melancholy because of sensuousness of figures and also auroma because of dark background, moon, lonely hand, deciphered body, luscious apples, strange tiger etc. Jogen's famous painting 'Tiger in the moonlit night' (1978) is such towering expression of melancholy and auroma. It is in this sense he has a distant relation with Henri Rousseau particularly when he paints his auroma pictures. Jogen has also a tendency to crowd his picture with vegetation, tropical snakes, wild flowers etc. like Rousseau. His black space is disturbingly indeterminate but confined. Experience of partition in his boyhood left behind in Jogen a sense of displacement. He carried an inevitable isolation and he could transfer the same into an artistic language from his student days. One needs to see his works deeply to feel this displacement. He far transcended standard depiction of refugees of his earlier works and did never romanticise them with false party colour. And uncertainty of combination of human figures, snake, flower etc. produce enigma which stays in viewer's minds. And this suspended union often takes place in the space of carnal night, in an intimacy of nature which is Jogen's hallmark. Jogen dissolves from sometimes in a vast dark ocean. Figures appear as boneless, as if made with fats only. And there we find fruit like breasts, dislocated hands etc. These dislocations occur in a dream like mental conditions. And these form arabesques are flowing into nowhere. At the same time Jogen was locating also those loose forms, specifying them with detailed rendering of body of painting (in this case, pastel and ink primarily) Jogen often suggested dramas, his characters are sometimes hero, heroines of Bengali drama. Figures have a tendency to pause and act. Figures often can be observed with their cast of characters as actor.

Jogen's forms become woven, he is obsessed with his hundreds, thousands pen and ink mark on pastel and these forms are entrapped in surrounding black. Jogen has deep love for farce, it's deep coarseness. He often can use obscene to a great

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effect to remain true to his experience like 'couple' painted in 1984. Rather woman in his paintings carry amorous desire, even carnal instinct but man remains deeply passive as if they are in pause, in perpetual indecision.

Jogen paints a pair of rounded breasts, firmly shaped as if they are huge fruits, but at the same time fruits appear like body parts. Jogen's still lives, apples, other vegetations are also very sensual and there is deep erotic presence and often there is some enigmatic intervention in these still lives in the form of slender hands with delicate fingers. Common place still lives turn into mysterious objects, there is an underlying thrusting growth in his depiction of fruits, flowers and vegetations and also he forces an integrated pattern in all these. This aura is superbly expressed in 'Reminiscences of a dream-44' of 1973, its rich sensuousness and exultation is overwhelming through an undergrowth of vegetation Jogen rarely paints phalluses while painting males but he regularly depicts nipples, buds, wet cloths.

Jogen Chowdhury seriously questioned the fixed forms of academic art, the settled cultural skill. In a way he understood his exiled status from linear European Modernism while he was in Paris and after returning to India he produced works which were far different from a bourgeois taste. As agenda of the most artists in Calcutta was and still is to fit somehow modernist vocabulary into academic, skillful expression, he was cut above in his originality. Jogen also rejected sentimentalism of left over of Bengal School and also gross folk conversion in the name of modernity though he was definitely inspired by Kalighat Bazar art. That he could reject selected sets of representation for certain rational individuality definitely proved his talent.

Jogen's often-voluptuous indulgence of the flesh is also very sensuous gratification, his rendering of huge female breasts is juicy, succulent. Often bodies are grotesquely enlarged or piled atop other bodies and pillows etc. His maculine heads look cunning and strange. Jogen's paintings transit between clothing and nudity, there is a continuous flux between these two identities. And interestingly, exaggeration that accompanies his works is never forced. Sinister grim male faces, grotesque fantasy never look distasteful. Distorting and emphasising the lacerated body are strangely present, but at the same time intensely personal. Almost boneless bodies appeal to the erotic and their vulnerability is heightened by contrast to the surrounding darkness and designs.

Often his figure is a combination of body parts along with exaggeration here and there and the fleshy softness carries a vulnerable quality. His rendering of faces reminds us Walter Benjamin's comment on Marcel Proust 'The wrinkles and creases of

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our faces are the registration of the great passions, vices, insight that called on us'. Jogen is an active participant in his national culture but extraordinarily open to happenings in other cultures as well. Often he can reassemble constituents of his earlier works with new designs to produce new variations.

Jogen's figures often bear hopelessness and totally bodily paralysis. But they have themselves disfigured them through their imperfect passion. Their contorted bodies lack bones. Jogen also dismantled age-old icons particularly Ganesh, all these are in process of decomposition and decay. Also these figures appear as subject to Indian summer, the way male figures keep off shirts and leave upper portion open are examples of summer life in India. These thick and exceedingly fragrant bodies often are attached with untidy beds. We can call Jogen's bed is bed of love and sickness. Often figures lie on bed bruised and battered.

Jogen contorts not only hands, figures, arms and legs but also mouth, whole of face, as if becoming a victim of greed and passion. Particularly male figures are often grotesque in appearance, they carry an imperfect sexual appetite. One also immediately notices rowdy cloths around the figure. Bengali middle class, Marwaris, Jatra-theatre artists are always under Jogen's scrutiny. Jogen can paint human flesh as jelly. In many paintings of his we see manifestation of man and woman as couple—together, sometimes nude, sometimes performing as actor, actresses. They even hold closely, grasp but also observe each other. do they resist separation showing each other form of body?

Sexuality and eroticism are the intricate intersection in Jogen's works, these burst forth even in his depiction of dishevelled beds and phallic pillows. Night in his works creates an environment of dream world where it flickers in the imagination in eroticism. demonic tiger, sex, cruelty all pass through process of metamorphosis. In this paintings neither sex is anxiety free nor it can do away with ritualistic performance between male and female.

Jogen's painting is often night cinema, a cinema of eros, moon light, dreamscene, where often woman's body becomes emblem of archaic night. Also Jogen continuously paints exhausted body, particularly male body. This is body resigned, exhausted. Then all these are to be perceived from deep within a dark room. Particularly these works remind poem called 'Restatement of Romance' by Wallace Stevens.

This night knows nothing of the chants of night,  
It is what is also I am what I am;  
And perceiving this I best perceive my self

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And you. Only we two may interchange  
Each in the other what each has to give  
Only we two are one, not you and night,

Nor night and I, but you and I, alone,  
So much alone, so deeply by ourselves  
So far beyond the casual solitudes.

That night is only the background of ourselves.  
Supremely true each to its seperate self,  
In the pale light that each upon the other throws.

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## Night Theatre

### Jogen Chowdhury's Paintings

Tapan Bhattacharya

Jogen Chowdhury is a painter of human acts and passions. He learned craft of painting quite earnestly in Govt. Art College, Calcutta, he had every possibility to turn into a skillful academic artist and instead he thought to discover new 'expression' to suit his marginal status, he relocated academicism into something very new imagery. Rarely an artist can 'separate' his skill for modern language to emphasise such displacement and ambiguity as Jogen. Otherwise we would not find ominously detached hands, rags in stumbled heap, even trailing breasts miraculously attached to a female figure. He has a tendency to put strange forms in an infinitely ambiguous space. May be, that is his kind of sur-realism. His incongruous objects, everyday things are also firm, meaningful and make a chord in our deep consciousness. He as an artist hoards selected images like the hand, folded draperies, body with fats, establishes theme in a monumental scale. And he continuously tries to give new context to such forms.

Mainly Jogen works in two modes. One is painstaking detailed pen ink and pastel process. Other is his broad sweep with ink brush and colour. First working process is like weaving producing deep complex textile. Jogen in some of his finest works describe an actual darkness and also within that actual darkness finds even a bleeding body, a cut mark. Same darkness infiltrates into serious viewer's mind. And rarely a luminous moon illuminates the scene, making it a glowing cinema. Jogen's paintings were not drawn from life and environment like many works of Nandalal, Benod Behari and Ramkinkar, rather Jogen's works were mental constructs as well as produced in lonely studio space. His works were inspired by cultural isolation. Jogen did never fully identified with Paris school and questioned modernist homogeneity.

Jogen was also drawn heavily with Freudian theories. Particularly his late 60's and early 70's works, Madras days are ample example of these. We notice curious ruptures in his works, unexplained disjunction of scales and proportion: Swollen, fragmented or dislocated forms could be noticed of human figures, erotic application of flowers, snakes etc, or dismantling of age-old icons. For this kind of surrealism was deeply rooted in social psyche. For him and many others in Bengal the childhood experience of partition, displacement was crucial, but he was most successful to transfer his diasporic into images. One notices in his figures certain iconography like wiled

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figures, anxious eyes, amorphous shapes and these dislocations were deeply rooted in his unconscious.

Jogen's figures are often cold voluptuousness, particularly woman breasts are being exposed as deeply rhetorical excess. As if shock and boyhood enchantment with naked body is always with him. Bodily degeneration, contorted bodies, even disordered chaotic bedrooms are expression of deeply fractured and displaced senses.

Albrecht Durer's disfigured woman, floating pillows in his etchings have distant relation with Jogen's works. But at the same time it is to be kept in mind that Jogen did never consciously tried for such a similarity and that have only now become apparent. Another artist who is similar to Jogen's sensitivity is London artist Lucien Freud. Both of them independently carry paradox of rendering human figures, substances in soft, withering form. Both are deeply engrossed into depiction of bodily degeneration, body with fats etc. And this process of softening of forms for Jogen Chowdhury also appear as erotic materials. Jogen worked obsessively with the motifs that began in late 60's and early 70's. Also Jogen has an ability for self renewal within his themes.

Jogen was drawn into Bergman's films early in his career and was drawn in the famous director's depiction of hands in screens.

In Jogen's works isolated hands are extremely important, these depictions are poetic, symbolic etc. Sensitively drawn hands carry tall, slender figures with many different postures. Seeing these hands one also remember Poet Jibanananda Das's description 'Naked isolated hands' in his poems. Something strange also can be seen in Jogen's description of mundane things like pillow, pile of clothes, folded draperies etc.

Jogen's drawing style reminds one weaving of cloths. The Calligraphic patterns in Jogen's works involve cross hatching, densely clustered curls and dashes. His use of black in background also can be depicted as space cancelling device. The technical finesse is such that invites close examination and generates a nervous excitement. Jogen's awareness of the freedom of the body and its placement in a dark background is definitely diasporic. His works make us aware of existing as human beings, of our desire and sexuality, of being fat and aged, of getting old, of being mortal. Fatigue and resignation are two sign marks of his works. One understands Jogen's deep scrutiny of our bodies and the same scrutiny also gives rise of sense of dislocation. That is why such a dark background is apt. Jogen converts flesh into sort of membrane and that can be manipulated. In their folding, wrapping there is more