

Beauty of the Divine



Ganga and Vrksshadevi



Shiva, Trimurthi

In Indian philosophy, our experience of beauty when we respond to a sunrise or to a great work of art is seen to be a moment when we perceive the Grace which underlies the whole of creation. In that moment, the veils of illusion of the material world are lifted and we see beyond...

An artist presents the world around him, shaped by how he sees it: by his perceptions and beliefs. The early art of India is a valuable record of the vision of one of the most ancient civilizations in the world. What makes it most fascinating is that this is a culture which continues till today.

The art of ancient India brings before us a vision of great compassion. It is a view of the world which sees a harmony in the whole of creation. It sees the same which is in each of us, in the animals, the flowers, the trees, the leaves and even the breeze which moves the leaves. All that there is, is seen to be a reflection of the One.

The phenomenal world of separated beings and objects seen around us is an illusion, perceived and brought to us by our senses. This information provided by our senses is of a personal and not an objective nature. Absorbed in this, we are blinded to the reality beyond. The primary illusion is the perception of ourselves as individual entities, which leads us on a path of egoic existence. On this path, we are distanced from the truth. The high purpose in life is to seek reintegration with the One, to perceive ourselves as part of the beauty of the One, the divine. To see oneself as a part of the divinity of existence. And thereby to lose the pain of a life caught in the web of endless desires.

The aesthetic experience is considered to be of great value in Indian thought. It lifts the veils of illusion which hide the truth from our eyes. Our experience of beauty when we respond to a sunrise or to a great work of art is seen to be a moment when we perceive the Grace which underlies the whole of creation. In that moment, the veils of illusion of the material nature of the world are lifted and we see beyond... In that instant it is not our material preoccupations which fill our consciousness and thereby blind us to the greater reality.

The moment of the aesthetic experience is stated in Indian thought to be "akin to Brahmananda", or the final ecstasy of salvation itself. Therefore art has played a most important part in the life of the Indian subcontinent. The Chitrasutra of the Vishnudharmottara Purana, which was penned out of earlier oral traditions in the 5th century AD, is perhaps the oldest known treatise on art in the world. It states that art is the greatest treasure of mankind, far more valuable than gold or jewels.

There are no gods in the early philosophic vision of India. There are deities: deities who are the personifications of concepts and qualities. The qualities are within us and by responding to these deities brought to us in art, we awaken those fine aspects within us.

Looking upon these, meditating upon these, helps to fill us with those fine qualities, so that eventually those best parts of us grow and fill us. When we are filled by that grace, there is no

Contd.

Cultural Calendar for June 2010

June 8

Hindustani Vocal Music Recital
Sangeeth Nipun Manjula Seneviratne
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

June 11

Film: Sampurn Ramayan (In Hindi)
Episodes: 137 to 144
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration: 3 hrs

June 15

Film: Palassey ki Jung (Battle of Palassey)
(Documentary in English)
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m. Duration: 1 hr

June 21

Film: Song of the Sanctuary
India Infrastructure- An opportunity
(Documentaries in English)
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m. Duration: 55 mins

June 22

Violin Recital
Dr.Thushara Ratnayake, University of Visual &
Performing Arts
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

June 28

Bharatha Natyam Recital
By Ms. Lakshmi Sharma, Ms. Sakitha
Kugamoorthy & Ms.Josita Peter, Graduates of
Kalakshetra
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

June 29

Film: A Tale of Two Cities- Mumbai &
Bombay
(Documentary in English)
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m. Duration: 1 hr

(Admission to all programmes is free and on first come first served basis)



Anantasayana Vishnu

space left for base desires and pain: we have become that deity.

For the Indian sculptor, the grace of divinity is everywhere. The stone before him contains the image of the Divine and it is for him to but remove the outward aspects and to release that form which is within. It is not only a personal joy of discovery and creation, it is also one of sharing the beauty inherent in the world with others.

The creation of art in India has been a process of meditation: a process of a life spent in worship and discovery. The creation of the beauty of form is for the sculptor, a joyous rediscovery each time of the glory and beauty which is divine.

The sculpture of India is naturalistic in a vastly different way from the art which attempts to portray only the transitory shapes of the objects of the world. Here naturalism is the expression of that sense which moves beneath the surface of objects, that inner being of the trees, animals and people: the spirit which moves the whole of creation.

As the ego and belief in one's identity is considered to be an illusion of our limited sensibilities, the focus was never on the individual. For about a thousand years in early times, vast quantities of art were produced in India. This depicted deities, mythical creatures, animals, plants, trees, forms which combined these beings in a great harmony, and also common men and women. Yet this art never depicted the kings who patronized the art. Nor was the name of the artist

Contd.

SANDESH

The monthly newsletter of the Indian Cultural Centre, Colombo



ICC

Indian Cultural Centre

133, Bauddhaloka Mawatha,
Colombo 4, Sri Lanka
Telephone: 2500014, Fax: 2598674
E-mail: icc@slnet.lk
ICC Website: www.iccrindia.org

June 2010

Dinkar Kowshik, Man with umbrella, water colour on paper, 75 x 51.5 cm, 1958

Past Events

7th April

Bharatha Natyam recital by Vikas & Samanthi, Graduates of Kalkshetra



Vikas & Samanthi, Graduates of Bharatha Kalakshetra presented a brilliant Bharatha Natyam recital at the Centre which kept the audience spell bound. The evening was

very well enjoyed by the dance lovers gathered at the Centre.

23rd April

Bharatha Natyam recital by the students of Ms.Suriyakala Chandrika Jeevananthan



Both senior and junior students of Ms.Suriyakala Chandrika Jeevananthan presented a captivating Bharatha Natyam recital which comprised of classical and folk dances. The recital lasted for one and a half hour. The evening was very well enjoyed by the audience gathered at the Centre. Around 75 to 80 guests attended the recital.

30th April

Hindustani vocal music recital by Shashtrapathi Sangeet Nipun Asith Attapattu



Shashtrapathi Sangeet Nipun Asith Attapattu presented a memorable evening of Hindustani Vocal Music recital at the Centre. His programme lasted for an hour and half and he sang several ragas and songs. It was a treat for all music lovers. Around 50 -60 guests participated.

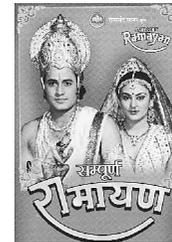
27th April

Talk-cum-Panel discussion “Economic Prospects of Sri Lanka, with special focus on the North and East” Talk by Dr. Muttukrishna Sarvanathan Discussants: Deshamanya Bradman Weerakoon & Mr. Prem Kumar Thampi



The Indian Cultural Centre organised a panel discussion on discussion “Economic Prospects of Sri Lanka, with special focus on the North and East” on 27th April at the Indian Cultural Centre. The talk on the subject was by Dr. Muttukrishna Sarvanathan, Principal Researcher, Point Pedro Institute of Development, Point Pedro. Deshamanya Bradman Weerakoon, Former Presidential Advisor and Mr. Prem Kumar Thampi, Country Head, ICICI Bank, Colombo also further discussed on the subject. The discussion was followed by an interactive sessions in which the audience also shared the comments and views. The discussion was followed by a reception. Around 80 to 90 guests attended the discussion.

Films in June



Sampoorn Ramayan (Episodes: 137 to 144)

Sampoorn Ramayan was the first mythological serial shown on the Indian television, created by Dr. Ramanand Sagar. The serial portrays the story of Lord Ram in a most aesthetic manner and carried a lot of devotional value. Sampoorn Ramayan gives a lesson on deep rooted culture of India, traditions and the heritage of pure ethics and principles.

Palassey ki Jung (Battle of Palassey)

The film shows the Mughal Era nearly 300 years ago, the undivided India. The Mughal Empire was tottering. The Nawabs in different provinces were almost Independent. Foreign Merchants, specially the Dutch, Armenians, French and British were making a bid to capture the Indian Market, their "Paradise". The main hunting ground was Bengal. British traders were bent upon capturing the Bengal Market by hook or by crook. Murshidkuli Khan, The Nawab of Bengal, had set up his capital at Murshidabad. The next Nawab was Sirajuu-Daula who ruled from 1725 to 1739. The great Battle of Palassey took place in the regime of Siraju-Daula.



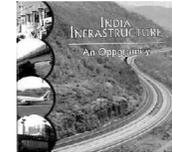
Song of the Sanctuary

The film explores the pioneering initiatives of environmentalist and physicist Vanadana Shiva, Social activist Beena Sebastian and feminist writer and publisher Urvashi Butalia.



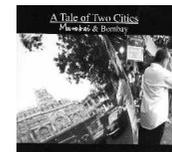
India Infrastructure- An opportunity

The film showcases the flurry of activity being witnessed by infrastructure all over the country and to explain the PPP Model for Public-Private Partnership to Prospective investors in the Private Sector.



A Tale of Two Cities - Mumbai & Bombay

The film focuses on the two faces of the city, Mumbai and Bombay in the mutual and inclusive globalization. The success and growth of Corporates is to a great extent the contribution of the positive attitudinal aspects of a large workforce and the multiplier effect of the service fundamentals, as seen in Mumbai, are rare to find elsewhere.



New Courses

Hindustani Vocal Music

Course fee : Registration fee Rs.250/=
Monthly fee Rs.500/=

Registration commence from : 1st June 2010

Yoga

Course fee : Registration fee Rs.250/=
Course fee Rs.2000/= (4months)

Registration commence from : 1st June 2010

Beauty of the Divine..Contd.

mentioned. According to the ancient treatise on art-making, the Chitrasutra, personalities are too unimportant to be depicted in art. The purpose of art is a noble one, to show the eternal beyond the ephemeral.

Thus, works of art were meant to convey the Truth as experienced yet again by the artist. No thinker or artist claimed that it was solely him who had seen the Truth. Each teacher of the ancient period in India states that he only follows in the footsteps of others who went before him. The emphasis was on the loss of the ego and not the perpetuation of it. And art was a prime vehicle of the communication of these ideas.

Images from the material life are very often used in the art. The achievement of knowledge is likened to a victory. We see images of deities trampling the demons of ignorance. However the demons smile as they are vanquished. In this world, where all is seen as part of a cosmic whole, there is no anguish finally. The richness and complexity of the life experience is presented. Our perception of the material world is not denied. The interchanging perceptions in our minds and senses of the ephemeral and the eternal, is described as a 'lila', a dynamic play. In the search of the truth, the experience of this 'lila' cannot be avoided and there is no attempt to deny this reality.

One of the greatest contributions of this philosophic stream is that there are no contradictions seen between the spiritual and the world of the senses.

This philosophy does not seek to deny our response to the beauty we perceive in the world, including the human forms around us. In fact, it sees this beauty as a reflection of the glory of the divine. The beauty of the human form, which is constantly before us in life, is not presented in a manner which would awaken base desire and pull us down with its burden. This art sees the grace in all human and other forms as an aid to awaken a joyous understanding within us. It seeks to elevate us through our aesthetic response.

There is evidence everywhere in Indian monuments of a great cosmopolitan culture from earliest times. Influences of art from everywhere were received warmly and some of them continued in the main flow of art through the centuries.

Artistic styles, motifs and iconography spread swiftly in early times to all corners of the country. Therefore we find that there were pan-Indian themes and artistic styles since ancient times. Regional variations and colour add further richness to these traditions.

What survives today of the early art of India is only a small fraction of what would have been created. Yet it consists of such vast numbers of monuments and sculptures that it staggers the mind. The corpus is gigantic and spread to every corner of the Indian subcontinent.

The story of art is the story of humankind: of man's perceptions and thoughts. From the early river valley civilization onwards we see the foundations of the art of one of the oldest civilizations. We see a vision of the world and the roots of a culture which has survived more than 5000 years till today. It is a culture based upon the belief of an underlying unity of the whole of creation. Joyous surrender to the natural order, rather than assertion and control over forces around us, mark the vision of life and the art of ancient India.

The author is a renowned art historian, film-maker and photographer.

Source: India Perspectives, Text & Photographs: BENOY K BEHL