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CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART

After the decline of Mughal empire and the end of classical and medieval art of India. Contemporary art began with the British rule in India. **Raja Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore, Amrita Shergil, Rabindra Nath Tagore, and Jamini Roy**, were the pioneers of contemporary Indian Art. These young artists were more exposed to the western art movements. **German Expressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Dadaism and Surrealism** left great influence on these Indian painters, but at the same time, their struggle to retain Indian identity continued. A combination of western technique and Indian spiritualism became the essence of Indian art at this stage. Along with the western methods and materials, they also tried to use the far eastern methods of painting. Lot of experiments were done with print making (Woodcut, Lithograph, Etching etc.). **Pradosh Das Gupta, Prankrishna Pal, Nirode Mazumder, Paritosh Sen** and others of Calcutta group held the first show in 1943 and the progressive Artists group of Bombay exhibited the paintings of **F.N. Souza, Raza, M.F. Hussain, K.H. Ara** and others in 1947. While some artists were experimenting with western style, others like **Benode Behari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Vaij, Sailoz Mukherjee**, showed inclination towards **Japanese art and Folk Art**. Two of Bengal School artists, **Devi Prosad Roy Chowdhury** and **Saroda Ukil** played fundamental roles in introducing modern art movement in the Northern and Southern parts of India. **K.C.S. Panikar** and **Srinivasalu**, students of **D.P. Roy choudhury**, made their mark in contemporary Art while **Saroda Ukil** established an Art School in Delhi.



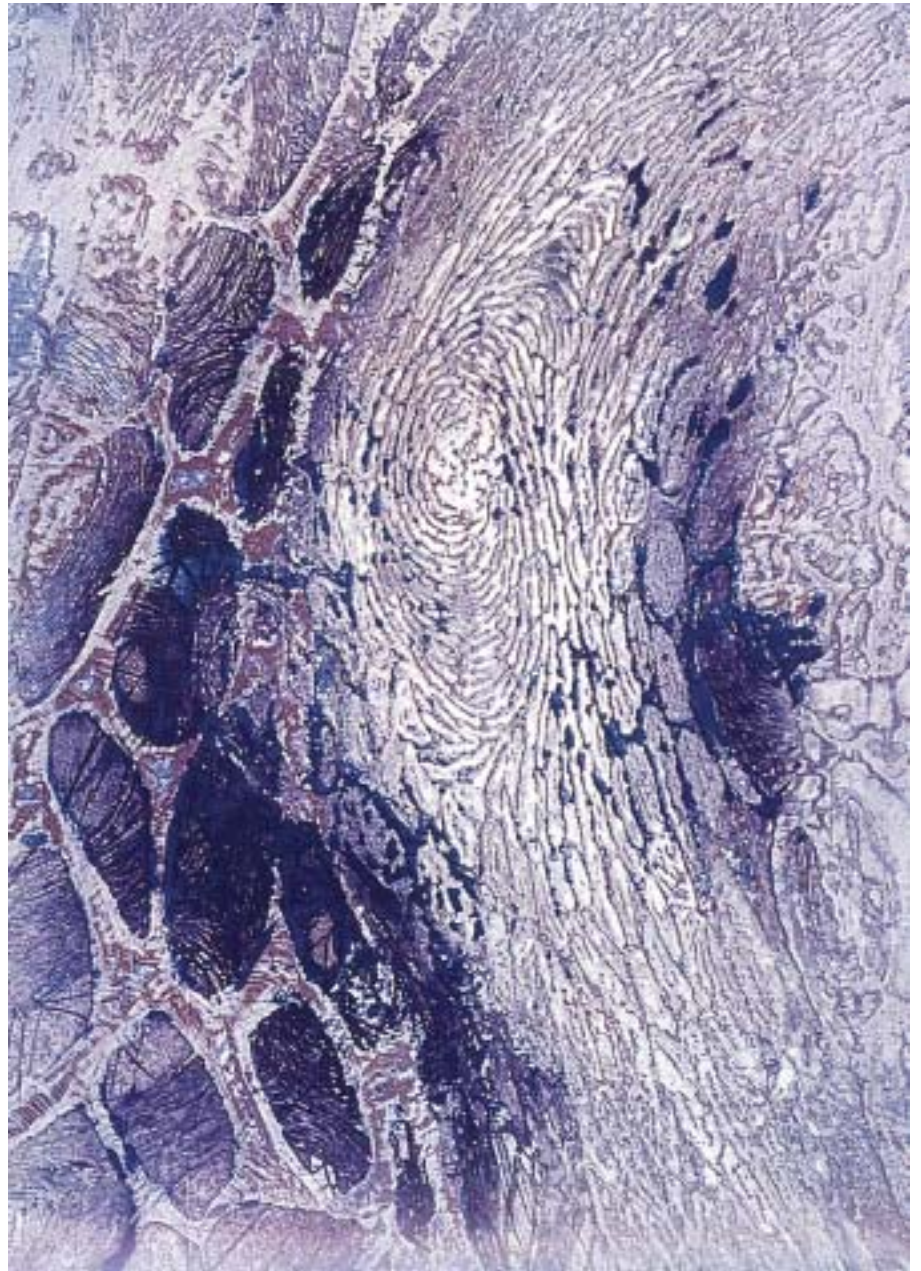
OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, the learner will be able to:

- describe the contribution of major art movements of India.



Notes



WHIRL POOL

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- State the name of the artists, who played important role in the development of contemporary Indian art;
- Tell about the methods and materials the contemporary artists used;
- Identify the famous Indian painters of contemporary period;
- Describe in brief the enlisted contemporary arts;
- Write in brief about the enlisted contemporary artists.

9.1 WHIRLPOOL

- Title – **Whirlpool**
- Artist – Krishna Reddy
- Period – 1962
- Size – 37.5cms x 49.5cms
- Medium – Intaglio on paper.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Graphics or Print making is very popular form of art which are being used by western artists for many centuries. Indian painters took interest in Graphics from the end of 19th Century A.D. Etching, dry point, aquatint, intaglio, lithography, oliography etc are used by many Indian artists. The main advantage of print making is to produce number of copies of the same painting. **Raja Ravi Verma** could popularize his paintings by printing many copies of his works in oliograph technique.

Krishna Reddy is one of the most famous print makers of that time. He was a student of **Kala Bhavan, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan**.

“**Whirlpool**” is one of the masterpieces of **Krishna Reddy**. It is done in intaglio process. This process is reverse of the relief method, because the surface of the plate does not print, as the ink being held only in the engraved furrows. The lines of design are incised in copper or zinc plate. Ink is used on it and then the surface is wiped clean with scraper. After laying a damp paper on it, print is taken by putting pressure in a machine. In “**Whirlpool**”, Reddy creates new forms from known objects and to take the form into abstraction. His main interest in the picture is to capture the force of nature. Everything is lost in the cosmic whirlpool. The images in the picture are non representational though some images like stars, flowers and clouds are not very clearly recognizable. His early experience of sculpturing helps him to understand the relief type intaglio effects in the prints which is the main beauty of this work.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.1

1. Name the print making technique artists use.

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MEDIAEVAL SAINTS

- Which print making technique has been used by **Krisna Reddy** for “Whirlpool”?
- What do you know about **Krishna Reddy’s** work “Whirlpool”?

9.2 MEDIAEVAL SAINTS

Title	–	Mediaeval Saints
Artist	–	Benode Behari Mukherjee (1904-1980)
Period	–	1947
Collection	–	Mural on the wall of Hindi Bhavan, Visva Bharati. Santiniketan.
Medium	–	Fresco Buono

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Benode Behari Mukherjee was a student of **Nandalal Bose**, the famous Bengal School painter. **Benode Behari** loved nature and its beauty and he based his paintings on that. He learnt the art of landscaping from Japan. He used very simple and rational lines like the Japanese artists. These lines have quality of Calligraphy. **Benode Behari** suffered from weak eyesight from his childhood and became totally blind in the later part of his life. Neither his poor eyesight in young age and blindness in later age could stop his creative urge.

All through his life he experimented with different mediums. In spite of his blindness, he created a huge mural at Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan.

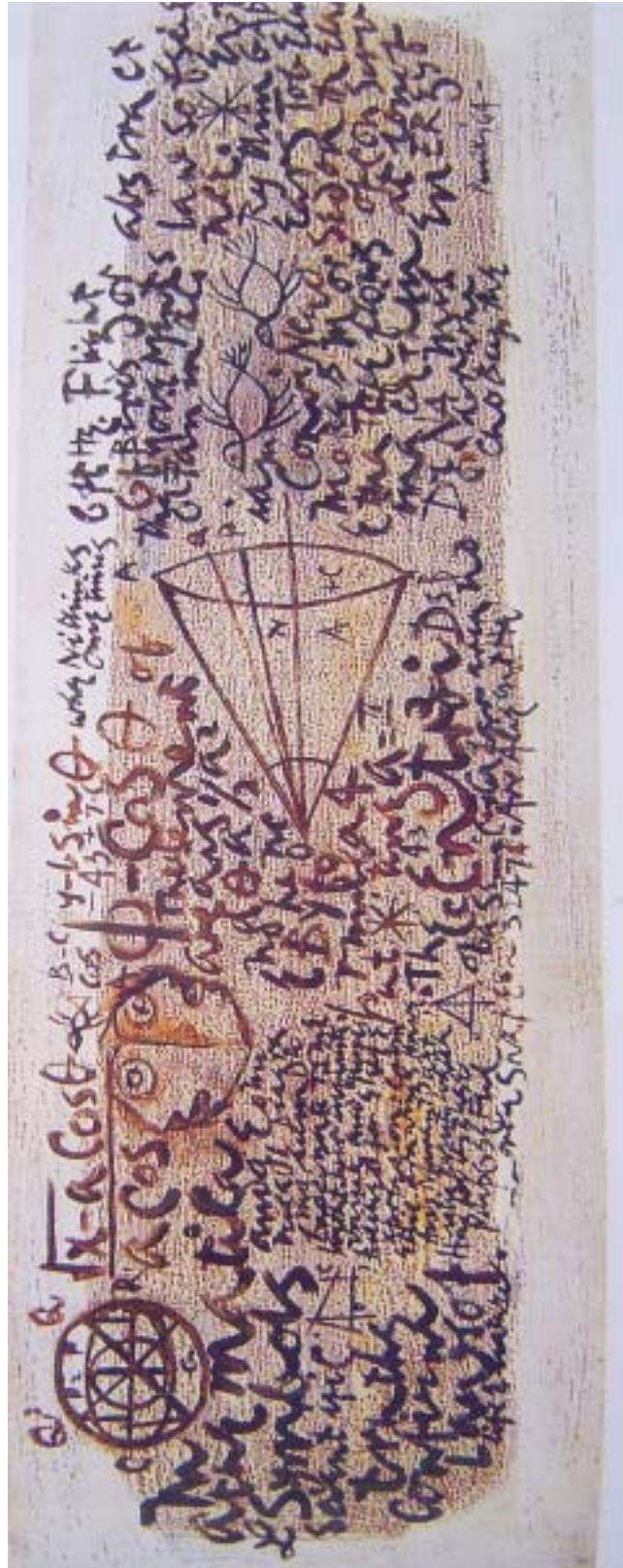
“**The Mediaeval Saints**” is one of the murals which he painted on the wall of Hindi Bhavan in “**Fresco Buono**” technique. It is a method of wall painting in which powdered pigments colours are mixed in water and are applied to wet freshly laid lime plaster ground. In this method the colour becomes the part of the wall so that the colours last long.

“**Mediaeval Saints**” is a wall painting (Mural) depicting the Saints of different religions of India. The composition is well planned to suit the size and shape of the walls. The huge and **elongated** forms of the human figures arranged with a river like flowing movement in perfect harmony and rhythm. The monument like quality of these figures remind us of Sculptures on the Grothic Church wall. The emphatic verticality of the composition is nicely balanced by smaller figures in horizontal continuity. The largeness of the figures express their spiritual greatness. The smaller figures represent the common people engaged in different activities of every day life.





Notes



WORDS AND SYMBOLS

The lines are very emphatic in this painting but the colours are very limited with brown, yellow ochre and terraverte.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.2

1. Write about **Benode Behari**'s teacher and his place of education.
2. Write in two lines about the technique of "**Fresco-Buono**".
3. What are the colours, mainly used in "**Mediaeval Saints**" Mural?
4. What was **Benode Behari**'s physical problem?

9.3 WORDS AND SYMBOLS

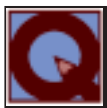
Title	– Words and Symbols.
Artist	– K.C.S. Panikar (1911-1977)
Medium	– Oil on board.
Size	– 43cms x 124cms.
Date	– 1965.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

K.C.S. Panikar could be termed as the most influential and pioneer in the development of contemporary art movement in the Southern part of India. He was a student of **D.P. Roy Choudhary** of Bengal School in the Madras School of art.

He had to do many odd jobs as a telegraph operator and insurance agent before he could establish himself as an artist. His style went through many stages from realistic to geometric. He was also a great teacher who inspired many painters from south and established the first artist village of India near Chennai named "**Cholamandalam**".

The enlisted painting is a very famous one from his series "**Words**" and "**Symbols**". It is a very different type of experimental work in which space is covered with calligraphy. **Panikar** used mathematical symbols, Arabic figures, Roman Scripts and Malayalam Scripts to create a design which looks like a horoscope. Tantric symbolic diagrams are also used. Colours play a nominal role in this painting.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.3

1. Mention the role of **K.C.S. Panikar** in the art scene of South India.
2. What is '**Cholamandalam**'? How it is related to Panikar?



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LANDSCAPE IN RED

3. Write two lines on enlisted paintings of **Panikar**.

9.4 LANDSCAPE IN RED

Title	– Landscape in Red
Artist	– Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002)
Period	– 1961.
Size	– 78.7 cms X 132.1 cms
Medium	– oil.
Collection	– Jahangir Nicholson Museum.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

F.N. Souza was born in Goa and grew up in Mumbai. He was expelled from his school and joined J.J. School of art. He was again expelled from J.J. School of Art in 1945. He was one of the young painters to form the “**Progressive Artists Group**” in 1947. Later he left India and settled in London. Subsequently he became one of the five top artists to represent them internationally. His lower middle class background and financial problems made him protest against society. He protested against all kinds of religious and social superstitions through his paintings. Like most of his contemporaries, **Souza** was also inspired by post impressionist and German expressionist painters. Especially he was greatly influenced by **Picasso** and **Matisse**. He discovered his own style by combining Indian temple sculpture forms with western art. He was a painter with relentless experimentation in all forms of art.

Souza had special love for landscape painting along with religious and social themes. The “**Landscape in Red**” is a good example from his landscapes.

It is an experimental cityscape. The artist tried to capture look of a city which is nothing but a concrete jungle. His cityscapes generally reflect the mysterious character of cities. The calligraphic use of lines are nicely arranged with colours. The colours and forms emerge independently in the composition. Red is the predominant colour here with few splashes of green here and there. No rule of perspective is followed. In spite of that the depth of space is clearly defined in the painting.

Souza created many types of works over a long working life. He is compared with **Picasso** by an European art critic for his works.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.4

1. Name one of the founders of “**The progressive Artist Group**”.



Notes



2. Write on few important qualities of **Souza's** "The landscape in Red".
3. Who did inspire **Souza's** art?
4. Name the foreign cities **Souza** Stayed.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

Indian contemporary art, which began with **Raja Ravi Verma** and Bengal School, continued to flourish in different metropolitan cities of India. Western influence became very clear on the young generation in spite of Bengal school's attempt to revive classical tradition of Indian art. The young generation of thirties and forties took inspiration either from the west or far east to give a new meaning to Indian art. Some of these painters went to western countries and ultimately settled there and those stayed back were struggling to discover their identity. It is heartening that many of these painters not only found their identity, but also could establish themselves as internationally successful painters.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Describe the influences that helped in the development of contemporary art of India.
2. Write about two painters of India who settled abroad and became famous.
3. What do you know about the Indian painter who became blind?
4. Write in brief about the Artist-**Souza**.
5. Describe in brief of **Panikar's** one of the famous paintings.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

- 9.2**
1. Dry point, Aquatint, Intaglio
 2. Intaglio
 3. **Krishna Reddy's** main interest in the picture is to capture the force of nature. Every thing is lost in the cosmic whirlpool. The images in the picture are abstract forms of stars, flowers and clouds.

9.3

1. His teacher was **Nandlal Bose**, a famous Bengal School painter.

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2. It is a method in which powdered pigments are mixed in water and are applied to a wet freshly laid lime plaster ground.
3. Brown, yellow ochre, Terraverte.
4. He suffered from weak sight and became blind.

9.4

1. He was most influential and pioneer in the development of contemporary art movement in south.
2. He established the first artist village of India near Chennai named “**Cholamandalam**”
3. “**Words and Symbols**” is an experimental work in which space is covered with calligraphy.

9.5

1. **F. N. Souza**
2. Experimental cityscape vision of mysterious world, calligraphic, no conventional perspective.
3. **Picasso** and **Matisse**
4. London, New York.

GLOSSARY

- **German expressionism** – An Art movement of 20th Century by painters like **Kandinsky, Kirchner, Nolde** etc.
- **Cubism** – A form of Art in which objects are simplified in basic geometrical shapes. Main artists are **Picasso, Braque, Leger** etc.
- **Fauvism** – A style of painting in which very warm and loud colours are used. Main artist is **Matisse**.
- **Surrealism** – In this style of painting very realistic forms are combined in an unrealistic manner, as it happens in dream. Main artists are **Dali, Chirico** and others.
- **Calligraphy** – Art of script writing.
- **Gothic period** – A Christian Art and Architectural style of 13th Century A.D.
- **Horoscope** – Diagram showing the relative position of planets and zodiac signs for use of in calculating births foretelling event in a person’s life. It is a part of Astrology.

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