

Chapter 6

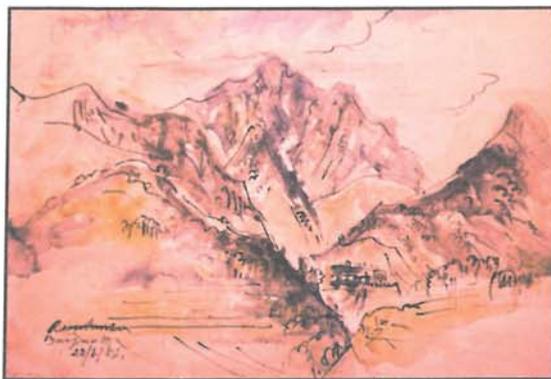
Categorization of Ramkinkar Baij's watercolour landscapes

Ramkinkar Baij's landscape in water colour can/ may be divided into four categories.

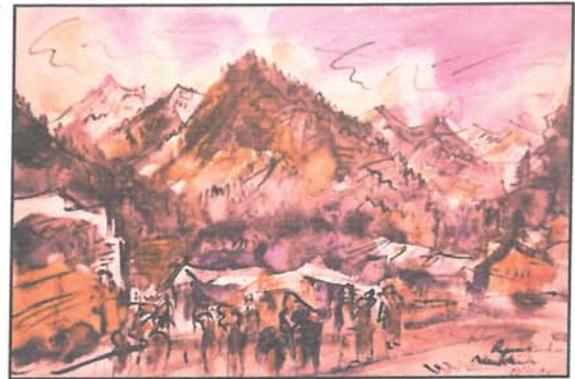
Mode of structural representation and the methods in Ramkinkar's landscape

In 1930's and the beginning of the 1940's Ramkinkar Baij was found to create colour structures with the application of disintegrated colouring and used 'Khager Kalam' (local pen which was used in Bengal before Pen came) or the hind part of the brush to draw some lines for the sake of emphasis on his watercolour landscape. Black colour has been of great help here as 'Khager Kalam' therefore there has been created depth and volume in the lines. The application of colour is in keeping with cubism. A tension is created out of the perfect use of coloured line. Pure lines have been used to impart lyricism. The characteristic feature of this rhythmic line is in the use of line like that of a sweep. Some noted sweeps or twisted sweeps can be found in this. But more emphasis has been made on massy line or linear masses. Though the work in the beginning i.e. of the 1930's & 1940's so the excess lines later on this has been lessened and in the close it has been reduced nil. At the ending part of the 1940's he indulged in colouring on paper directly or building structures. He kept breaking structures according to his own choice and appropriateness

of style. He was abided by the conditions of breaking structures and side by side dared avoiding the conditions. Actually he had mastery in any of these structures may, be it personal world or the material world. He studied so deeply that he could catch the structures with ease. In a word he is a class by himself. Broad patches are found in Ramkinkar's oil painting. We find massy lines or massy gestures in cases of water colour work (flat), especially in the works of the expressionists. In this context may be referred to the seven pairs of Woolflin which include a pair of centering round this mass and line. The excess of line movement gives rise to a Baroque quality. One must organise oneself in order to balance. In Ramkinkar's work we find the reflection of his own energy.



(A)



(B)

**FIGURE 133(A) Study of Mountains, Baijnath, watercolour, 1956.
(B) Kulu, landscape, watercolour on paper, 1956. Collections: N.G.M.A.**

In discussing the perceptual effect of location, we become inevitably concerned with the factor of balance or equilibrium. Especially in a work of art all elements must be distributed in such a way that a state of balance results. Then comes the question in mind what is balance and why is it indispensable?

The answer must be like this- to the physicist, balance is the state of a body in which the forces that act upon compensate each other. In the simplest way of explanation this is achieved by two forces of equal strength that are pulled to make a balance in opposite directions. The definition is applicable to visual balance too. Exactly like a physical body, every finite visual pattern has a fulcrum or centre of gravity. And just as the fulcrum of even the most irregularly shaped flat object can be determined by locating the point at which it will balance on the tip of a finger, so the centre of a pattern can be determined by trial and error. According to Denman W. Ross, the simplest way of doing this is by moving a frame around the pattern until the two balances; then the centre of the frame coincides with the centre of the pattern. Except for the most regular shapes, no method of rational calculation is available that could replace the eye's intuitive sense of balance. From our previous speculation it would follow that the eye experiences balance when the physiological forces in the cortical field are distributed in such a way that they compensate each other.

The centre of gravity of a painting roughly coincides with the centre of the frame having slight deviations from the geometric centre occur mainly for two reasons: The difference of 'weight' between the top and the bottom of a visual object tends to push the perceptual centre upward; the interaction between the pictorial pattern and the structural representation of the plane may cause the displacement of the centre of the framed space.

Again if the question rises why is pictorial balance indispensable? It must be remembered that visually, just as physically, balance is the state of distribution

in which everything has come to a standstill. In a balanced composition all such factors as shape, direction, and location are mutually determined by each other in such a way that no change seems possible, and the whole assumes the character 'necessity' in all its parts. An unbalanced composition looks accidental, transitory, and therefore invalid. Its elements show a tendency to change place or shape in order to bring about a state better fitted to the tonal structure of Ramkinkar Baij's water colour landscape paintings.

The above discussion concerns art in two ways. First of all, compositional balance reflects a tendency that is probably the mainspring of activity in the universe. Art accomplishes what concern be realized by the overlapping strivings that make-up human life. But at the same time the work of art is far from being merely an image of balance. If we refine art and this is the second point as the striving for, and achievement of balance, harmony, order, unity we arrive at the same perverting one-sidedness as the psychologists did when they formulated the static conception of human motivation. A work of art is a statement about the nature of reality from an infinite number of possible configurations of forces, it picks and presents one.

The wielding Ramkinkar's brush was not to make someone happy; rather it was done with spontaneity. He was absolutely involved in the midst of creation surrounded by urge for creation. He indulged into chatting only because where he was getting mental satisfaction and getting ample substances for creation. He never engaged himself in any work unnecessarily. It may be remarked

that Ramkinkar is simply a name for restiveness for creations- be it micro or macro. Though some of his works are in miniature form and one will always find a voluminous or gigantic quality in them.

Certainly the limitations of the line of Ramkinkar's water colour landscapes constitute a characteristic feature of the work. It may be said that the line of Ramkinkar's water colour landscape is in keeping with his character. His sketch itself has its painting value. Both the solid and the liquid structures are observable in Ramkinkar's water colour landscape.

Serenity is hardly found in Ramkinkar's work. Always restiveness is found or felt in his works, just as are does in the works of Vincent Van Gogh. His object was to give expression to the shape, beauty and mode of hills, jungles or common sceneries. At the time of analysis some of his landscape paintings are found the geometry just like that of Paul Cezanne. He was not clutched up by the difficult diversity of Cezanne. Gradually Cezanne learnt upon the difficult design of shape and still objects or still lifes got prominence in his paintings. The portraits done by him stood still. In Ramkinkar's analyzed shapes he did not forsake the life rhythm of nature. As common folk now and then his paintings show the portraits of Santhal men and women, farmer and labour. He sought to offer a cooperate picture of life by assimilating many characters. For example in a painting, a farmer wearing a *toka*, (a locally made big cap on his head) where he was enjoying lunch with his wife was sitting beside him and giving breast milk to her son. In the building picture his wife is offering

bricks to the builder, in the field lay his child. In the 'Harvesting' picture two farmers are piling up fagots on the bullock cart. No trace of pleasure can be found on the body or face of these ever laboring people. His Santhal's or common are the creations of direct experience.

If we look at very minutely each and every water colour landscape work of Ramkinkar Baij, then we find out that Ramkinkar's chase for the rhythmic structure which took him a step further. It steered/moved him into a kind of cubist analysis of the total picture field. The earliest examples of this kind (probably datable to mid nineteen thirties) are some drawings in black and white with fluid ink. They showed birds in flight, laying more stress on the flight and the rhythmic resonances of the flight, than the bird themselves. Some showed birds flight against house structures, playing the kinetic against the static. Others showed houses amongst trees. After these a cubist feature is discernible in all his subsequent work, whether they are drawings, paintings or sculpture.

Cubistic feature was of an individual kind which played an important role in Ramkinkar's work. It steered clear of the central cubist ethic which, if one may say so, was concern with the stereo-visual relationship of objects and space leading from there to an analysis of the image components into an object or space image, superseding its previous visual logic with new one and giving it, in the process, a new expressive or dimensional reach. Although one can see that Ramkinkar was very much aware of the work of a core –cubist like

Picasso and brought into a number of his works a kind of plastic ambivalence or metamorphic distortion comparable to his, the major part of his work shows that he used the lessons of cubism and its antecedents in a rather personal way.

Understanding from the Sociological parameters behind the creations

Sociological point of view concerns environment. In Ramkinkar's work one finds the characteristic features of Bankura, Birbhum, Dumka, Nepal, Rajgir, Bodhgaya, Cherrapunji etc. The life style of the inhabitants has been reflected there in. Through his works he sought to make us understand that none of them has any existence avoiding nature. For example, suppose he showed some people are working in the field, he showed his response to the society and the change of the looks of voice. One aspect of environment has always been expressed in his paintings. The jungle he showed was the creation of office inner self. He saw seasons, felt those with the core of his heart and expressed the essence. This seeing is not covered with romanticism as in other artists; rather it is something viewed by the son of soil. Shunning the path of romantic view like Abanindranath Tagore or Raja Ravi Verma, his works reflect the characteristics of making something lively with heart in the midst of reality. The figures in Ramkinkar's paintings are the labouring people the society who had been working for the development of the society since the dawn of civilization. The sophisticated people of the society had never been the subject of his paintings. The beauty of nature so mesmerized in Ramkinkar's painting that the down trodden underdogs surrounding him came to form on

the subject matter of his art like as we find Tagore's view of the working class life in the 10th poem of the anthology '*Aarogya*' - '*Ora Kaj Kore*' -

“They do work in the country and abroad

In every nook and corner of rivers and seas of Bengal and Kalinga

In Punjab, Bombay and Gujrat.

In every sound high and low

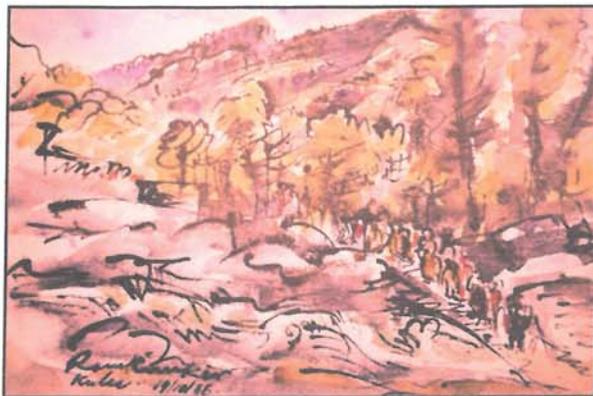
The day's journey gets glorified through their works

The contrastive encounters of joy and sorrow, day and night

Speaks of an absolute welcome of life

Upon the extinction of hundreds of dynasties

They work on.”



(A)



(B)

FIGURE 134(A) Kulu, landscape, watercolour on paper, 1956.
(B) Road Builders-I, Bhubandanga, Birbhum, watercolour landscape, 1949. Collections: N.G.M.A



(A)

(B)

FIGURE 135(A) Harvester, watercolour on paper, 1948
(B) Harvester, watercolour on paper, 1944. Collections: N.G.M.A



(A)

(B)

FIGURE 136(A) Two Buffaloes and a rider, watercolour on paper.
(B) Fishermen, watercolour on paper, 1951. Collections: N.G.M.A

Ramkinkar Baij realised to the core of his heart that not only in history but also in the development of society only the working class people found their place in the past as would do in future. Therefore only the working class people found prominence in his work. His enthusiasm arose out of the existence of those people just as it did not happen in case of his use of lines. In reality we have seen line runs some times in a zigzag way or some times in the straightway. We find a sensibility of every work when that crosses the theme.

In Ramkinkar's work we find not only the workers, but also the poetry of life where a delight is always in work. The lines used by him emphasize the motion of the picture. Sometimes it appears that the figures are running instead of working. Bankura, a land of famine has offered the world of art to rare genius Jamini Roy and Ramkinkar Baij both of whom are born artists. Their primary inspiration for being an artist came from the local folk art. Though initially adept in Western or European style Jamini Roy one day came to the folk art of Bengal, leaving aside every luxury of happy life, like the prince of Kapilavastu, in order to get escaped from the pangs of false imitation to get freedom. Getting hypnotized and pleased in his long painful devotion the folk art of Bengal one day rewarded him with the magic wand of success. Receiving that the restive Jamini Roy got propitiated. Ramkinkar got no such a key in his life; he did not get because he never wanted to be appeased anywhere and static life was unthinkable to him as his smile was absolutely simple, he sought to embrace and touch and shake and do everything about art. In one of his unpublished autobiography he has openly admired and spoken in these words- "Many women came to my life, some with her physique, and some with a great mental attraction. But I for soak none; rather I embraced them with meticulous care. I digested them to the core. Do you know the meaning digestion? That device was learned from my Gurudev (Rabindranath Tagore). Many pictures, figures, imagination and feelings arose out of that."

Just in this way he kept a vigil always on everything alive on the earth which puts the world of creation into rhythm secretly he smelt it, chewed the essence

and suck out every possible substance. As in the world of post Rabindranath, Bengali poetry's rich tradition was followed by Jibanananda Das who found inspiration from foreign literature and expanded the sky of Bengali poetry up to a far off sky of the universe. In the period of Abanindranath, Nandalal, and Ramkinkar the landscape was being made based on self introspection. In Jibanananda's poem we got the splendour of Yeats or Edgar Alan Poe, sometimes a flash of light of Keats or Whiteman. Similarly in Ramkinkar's paintings we find sometimes the flashlight of Cezanne, Picasso, Braque and many more.

Ramkinkar will take you by the hand for a walk into his painted water colour landscapes. But he only accompanies you up to a point, leaving you alone to venture deeper into his magical landscapes. For, these are mysterious terrains that yield their secrets bit by bit- as you wander in them. Yes, there are trees, shrubs, bodies of water surrounded by different human beings sometime bits of sky or the huge undulating sky.

Understanding and analysing the different format of his creations

In studying landscape, Ramkinkar Baij chiefly used the one fourth or less of an imperial sheet. He composed his intimate study in a small format diary page. In every of his paintings we find a movement of small masses. We indulge the present work as fake when we find the mass movement is absent i.e. the mass remains static. The chief characteristic of his work emphasis was on diagonal movement. Even a diagonal movement is observable in the images. The depth

of all landscapes is shown through diagonals. There are diagonal movements in the compositions of Turner and Constable. Besides we find that in cases of straight and angular linear movements. Sometimes in Ramkinkar's work there are loop movements. There is certainly a centered place in his works. We have seen all the movements or elements may not be found in a single place in case of abstract paintings. In Ramkinkar's landscape paintings we find the use of lines that is not continuous. The line continues up to the necessary point of showing colours. Even there, there is a movement. We know various artists have various modes of the movement of brushes. Sometimes we get pleasure from seeing those patterns. A circle originates out of the movement another circle gets thwarted in Ramkinkar's water colour landscape paintings. A tactile feeling can be had in his out lines.

Ramkinkar followed a new format in landscape paintings, especially water colour painting. He would divide the areas with water colour dots on paper with broad brush. He aimed at the match of colour and line so that every impression gets united in a single whole. Using black ink through the hind side of the brush he would end the painting with some modes expressing lines. The freshness and transparency of the water colour created light and air mode in the picture and offered weight to the line designs.

He did not accept any trend of the extremely conservative go of the day in his contemporary Bengal School and Bombay School. Avoiding the path of the patronizing of any government or rich sector he formed his sculptures on his

own way through his indomitable energy. The workful rhythm of life of the common folk has been reflected here. The open earth was taken to be the display ground of his sculptures. No contemporary political incident shadowed his paintings or sculptures. The common men and nature were the chief shelters of his paintings and sculptures. His art imparts language to the soil, suffering and pleasure of those people whose life does not alter with the charge of state power. Such people of his are really men having innate connection with dust and sun and rain—not translated through the romantic emotion of a citizen. The mania of gentlemanliness of Santiniketan did not contaminate him. He could deal easily with the high profile person like Rabindranath to the down trodden Santhal's. Therefore his paintings and sculptures are not made of the surface level non subjective product of an artist; rather one can realize the essence of humanity and objects. The common folk or the Santhal's did never find an expression in any artist. His men are not only flesh and blood individuals. Their portraits reflect the replica of their inner selves. He even showed nature on an expression of evolution of life rhythm. His landscapes do not mark any particular place or date; rather one can discover a universal condition there. There has been expressed on unity of depth, generosity, hardship, softness and beauty.

Unique is his boldness to ignore the contemporary tradition and institutions. Instead of empty idealism he brought close relationship between the thought of art and soil and humanity. He did not create any label on art like those of pent beast. He had the responsibility for him, for humanity. He did not aim at

pleasing any opportunist group. Art was no business to him. He loved the life spread out in fields and streets. In his sculptures and paintings he just imprinted the love of life. Side by side with the practical appeal in Ramkinkar's work the role of thematic appeal is no less sounding. He was a skilled artist and creating this thematic appeal with his intellectuality. In his composition the external and internal got interwoven. The presence of characters in his water colour painting appears to us to be substituting the setting of the play.

The flow of Ramkinkar's work so mingled with him and his that he never had to take refuge in duality. He has simplified his compositions where his characteristic feature of transparency is evident. Side by side with a deep calm the ups and down of his artistic individuality is clear in various surfaces. Ramkinkar never imitated anybody though it may be supposed that he might have followed somebody unconsciously. Yet, nothing of that kind is reflected there. He always kept himself individualized. Therefore though his works were created in the 1940's or 1950's or at best the 1960's of the 20th century those are adorable even in the first half of the 21st century. The application of water colour even in 60 or 70 years ago appear to have been created just yesterday. Ramkinkar looks upon everything as a form-not in an outline. Everything in this world appeared three dimensional to him. He would always say—'there is nothing line like in this nature—everything is in particular form.' It is we who have drawn the lines and tried to bind up everything in enclosure.

Ramkinkar's sense of finitude was noteworthy in every aspect that he did or touched. The exact sense of the expansion or contraction of a line or the

way of the expansion in respect of the paper concern seemed to remain in his fingertips always. His lines in various respects can be summed up as something absolutely poised and pithy. The speedy application of various colours was able to create some epoch making creations. Even within moment painting would expressed itself in the background of paper. He was able to wield brush to pore. He had an accurate sense of the proportion of using colour and water.

Each and every landscape of Ramkinkar appears unparalleled not in the expressive use of colour but the finery of application. Though his paintings contained colour the lines were so prominent and acute that they were sufficient in themselves. His paintings are not only characterised with a sportive gaiety but also with a hide and seek playfulness. Above all these were always much open breathing space in all his paintings.

Modes & Methods of the process of colour application

Ramkinkar simply tried to express the emotional response through his works of what he saw. Though his work always contains compactness and it was brought about consciously or unconsciously, we find the use of easily accessible colours of nature in Ramkinkar's water colour landscapes. It may be firmly said that no enforced or mental colour was used by Ramkinkar. If it were so, then Ramkinkar's paintings/pictures would show the colours of poetic feeling or its touch as in Rabindranath who once said—"The emerald became green through the colours of my consciousness and ruby turned red." But no such matters are observed in the work of Ramkinkar. It was mainly caused by the truth that no 'play theory' worked in his creations. It should

never be said that he had little of poetic feelings in him for he would recite 'Ulysses' by the Occidental artist James Joysess and also by Tennyson. So it would not be an exaggeration to say that Indian poetic world was at his fingertips. Though he had an emotional mind he would prove to be highly or seriously reality centred while at work. So his paintings always came out of the soil of reality, down-to-earth persons and surrounding nature. He used viridian green, ultramarine, yellow and vermilion as his favourite colours. Though he sometimes used other colours yet those were very few.

But Ramkinkar abstained himself from using bright colours in his work like those of western painters or of the Govt. College of Art & Craft passed out students and artists. There are several factors working behind this perhaps—first the direct use of bright colours truly accommodate the atmosphere but suppressed the real flavour of nature. In Ramkinkar's water colour landscape painting the background is always rustic of tribal dominated area. These helped him to preserve the real flavour of natural circumstances. He never used the so called bright colour in order to keep intact the flavour of the environment and situation.

If the colours contain thickness, they do not become so transparent. Therefore oil colour landscape and water colour landscape differ. In the creation of water colour landscape Ramkinkar has always used transparent colours. Opaque colour can hardly be found in his work. It has only been used as a touch merely only in necessities. The freshness of nature is always visible due to the

use of transparent colour. According to the great cartoonist Chandi Lahiri—in most cases Ramkinkar did not directly used colour taking that directly out of the tab in the background of paper. Such use gives birth to an unnecessary dazzling brightness. The pictures appear to be created out of raw colours instead Ramkinkar used the colours very clearly mixing those with other colours so that we can feel the original touch of nature. Should he use that directly in the so-called way then he could not project the originality of nature which is unmatched with the personality of Ramkinkar.

Absolutely observable is the beauty of the application of fresh colours in Ramkinkar's water colour landscapes. We hardly find the use of opaque colour in those. Therefore side by side with the freshness of nature we have the taste of the twisted mode in them. We find the use of viridian colour side by side with the use of pale yellow. As juxtapositions of colours we know if directly used this viridian gives stiffness in painting but Ramkinkar Baij does a magic with that though he used that directly the stiffness got vanished. Side by side with the opposition of movements we find the oppositions of colours. He used tonal quality side by side with the application of colour yet the paintings remained flat. But the pleasant beauty or the harmony of colours is astonishing. Ramkinkar had an extraordinary individuality in water colour landscape paintings that was absent in his contemporary artists. We find the simultaneous use of sombre colour or dark colour.

Ramkinkar Baij started his educational career with the practice of painting. In student life he mainly drew realistic or naturalistic painting those were chiefly in

wash technique. Gradually he finished up the painting with recurrent covering of colours. This practice of drawing pictures continued till the appointment as a teacher in Santiniketan and went on at pace till the final moment of his life. What Ramkinkar had in his mind is that a colour with glossy brightness expresses the urbanity of art but simply fell to give vent to the original flavour of soil, of rustic simplicity. Unlike the western painter/artist, therefore, he abstained from using brilliant colours. A number of causes worked behind this. In most cases the background forming Ramkinkar's art concerns some rustic or tribal inhabited lands. The fading colours enabled him to preserve the flavour of soil.

Creating its textural quality on the plain surface is not only an exceptional characteristics of Ramkinkar but also a new discovery in which one wonder how is this possible to upheaval such indescribable feature on a plain surface because our knowledge and experience commonly tells that such a textural quality is possible on rough surface only not on the plain surface. He seldom worked on handmade papers and yet those inspire us to research. Even there he created new textures. It is really peerless on the textural surface. Actually he would always keep himself in art research. Therefore Ramkinkar has been able to here that the same kind of research again and again on him and his various works surprises all and sundry. Let us utter Ramkinkar's own words – "Scarcity is the mother of invention but not the necessity," though we are acquainted with the proverb - "Necessity is the mother of invention."

In Ramkinkar Baij's work we find that there can be multiple layers of understanding. The portrayal of a certain activity would seem to be the main focus where as in fact it may further go on to say something more. Ramkinkar Baij, it seems is a master in the art of this kind of story-telling. Of course he leaves much to the imagination of the viewer but that he gives the reins of understanding completely to the viewer. He goes on to look beyond and he pulls in the viewer along with him in that journey. The presence of characters in his water colour landscape painting appears lively and dynamic, just as we see in the setting of his dramas. The character appears to us to be substituting the setting of the play.

The dexterity of grading the applicationary density of the colour with highly skilled brush strokes add a weight, depth, gravity and in contrast to these there , at the same time we find sharpness, an entertainment factor of frothy effervescence which may make the true appreciator feel elated. The twisting of the colours be it through the brush strokes or through potential mode of applying the colours or combining them needs a high degree of skill and efficacy. This may be achieved by meticulous practice, however if the artist himself/herself is adept in minute observation and mandatory self education. Then it is not hard to achieve.

Shri Tarak Garai an eminent sculptor and a 1967 entry batch and pass out student of Kala Bhavan of Santiniketan and also a student of Ramkinkar Baij gave a salutary information that no Indian or Occidental artist has ever worked on. Many a artists have done landscape on water colour, even with surprising

innovative genius that was never found. For example, Ramkinkar would wet handmade paper first as others do but the next stage is entirely different. He would directly press the seeds of Puin (creeper used as a vegetable) and then after the papers got dried he would make a border line with shoe-ink with his nail. Thus would come out a new type of water colour landscape. Whenever needed he would apply one or two colours before the application of black colour. But the fact surprise is that of his entirely new passion presented to the audience or students within moments.

Such watercolouring of him is even a matter of discussion not only among his contemporary artists but also the modern ones. Though prepared not through an easy endeavour his creative works conquer every's heart simply like the advent of a day light and it would do the same even in future. His water colour landscapes are easily accessible. The simple creations of Ramkinkar easily come to our purview and help us find a new way. He was so open minded that his expressions appear to be a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility. His sensitive mind and generous nature somehow displayed through his landscapes. As he never encouraged in him any self-centered mentality his works hardly contain any flavour of subjectivity. It was as if he was always viewing the subjects of his creation with an inner eye of the soul and not with the physical external perseverance.

Ramkinkar Baij and his one particular creation – “Basanta”

Ramkinkar Baij himself has named this painting as Basanta. Any sensitive enthusiast, after viewing this creation perhaps will think of a particular Tagore

Song “*Phagunero Nabino Anande* “, Which literally translated would perhaps mean “the fun and enjoyment of the new arrival of spring”. The western and the north western regions of southern West Bengal is rich in laterite and red-soil. Though aridity is a chief feature of these regions, they do however receive a substantial amount of rainfall. This results in the formation of lush deciduous as well as evergreen forests. All these trees at a certain time of the year (especially spring) get new leaves. The old withered ones too change colour and fall away. Some also have new flowers during this season. It won't be an exaggeration at all to suggest that the forest bursts into a riot of colours the vibrancy of varies hues is spectacular. *

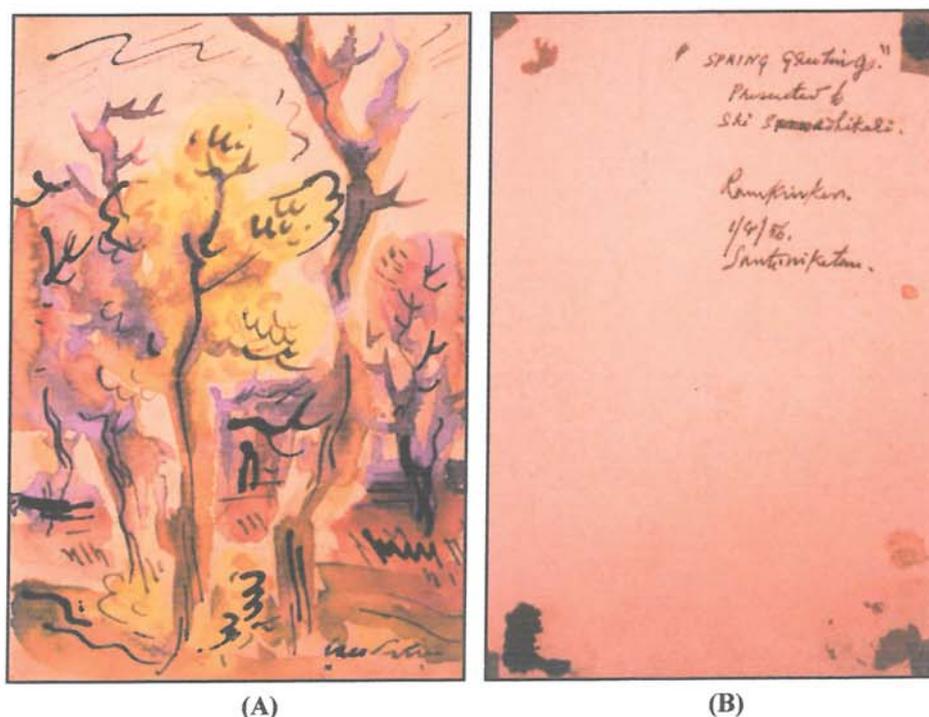


FIGURE 137(A) Spring Greetings, watercolour on paper, 1956.
 (B) Backside of the ‘Spring Greetings’ Collection: Late Shri S. Adhikari.

Ramkinkar was a true product of this environment. He was born and brought up in the district of Bankura and had spent almost his entire adult life in

Santiniketan, both being situated in the same geographical region as mentioned above.

The mineral content of the soil too carries a lot of variety. This becomes evident most of the times, either due to erosion or because the rain water washes the top soil away. People, who have had the opportunity to enjoy this spectacle, agree that it is truly a rare and extraordinary sight. Tagore himself had observed all these; the result being that we get some of the most wonderfully aesthetic descriptive lyrics and poems of our era.

Shri Ashok Taru Bandopadhyay, a Tagore song vocalist of renown had produced and directed a 'Long Playing Disc' titled *Navin*. The cover illustration was that of a multi-branched twig with a new bud and flowers but absolutely devoid of any leaves. This particular cover design had become legendary as it had deeply touched many an enthusiast.

This particular water colour created during 1956 carries the same magical ethereality. The first thing that attracts the eye of the viewer is the precisional density, the main body of the work having been constructed with an almost near perfect fusion of yellow, blue and vermillion which has been used liberally. It must be remembered that a creation needs to have a lot of weight and sharpness to achieve timelessness. Ramkinkar seems to have achieved an almost supreme classicality. The brush strokes seem to be bold, spontaneous and effortless.

Let us therefore, try and understand some of his identifying features and their presence here in this particular painting: -

- 1) Ramkinkar's works are definitely identifiable by his proportionate use of colours. In some cases, it seems that he is only interested in using minimum colours.
- 2) His background in the field of sculpture becomes apparent when we get to see his continuous usage of black outlining lines which he seem to have put on after he had finished his work with colour.
- 3) His paintings reveal a condense character which also speaks of his background in three dimensional work.

the a painting of Ramkinkar that he presented to

Explanation of Dinanath Bhargav's Painting

One of the most brilliant advantages of this particular work of Ramkinkar lies in the fact that like quite a few of his other works this too contains the name of the location. Barakar, because of its close vicinity to industrial areas like Kulti, Niamatpur, Asansol, Ranigunj and Chittaranjan is actually an extension of the said belt. The presence of a huge amount of unskilled labour (tribal as well as non-tribal) and their daily incessant toil can be a fascinating subject for artists of different genres. He did study the coalfields and its adjacent places of this area. Amita Sen has talked about excursions which took place at Rabindranath Tagore's initiatives. She specifically mentions about ^{her} the excursions to the different mines. There is one other painting of which depicts an image which very much represents a mining/industrial scenario.

The procession of workers through a small pathway (something which seems to represent a small gulley or a dry-nullah) towards an industrial complex in itself speaks volumes about the changing scenario of 'the then' contemporary society.

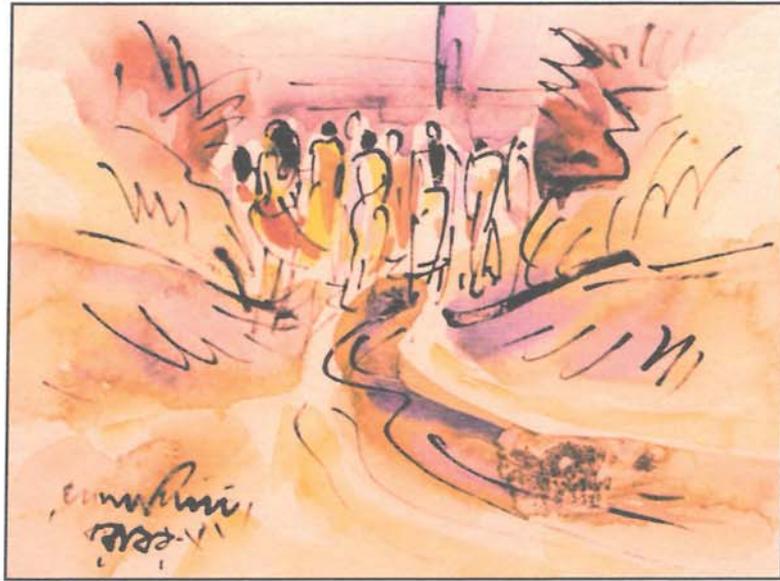


FIGURE 138 Barakar landscape, watercolour on paper, 1949. Collection: Shri Dinanath Bhargava.

The colours speak of toil and yet the softer non-specific imagery assures the viewer that there is no dearth of positivity within the apparent negativity of the external so-called cheerful-ness of industrialisation. It is as if Udayshankar's 'Labour and Machinery' or Charlie Chaplin's 'Modern Times' is being presented in a different light. The colour cellulian blue and its contrastive hues tell us quite a few untold stories that are there. It is known to us that the regularised work mode cannot all be bad. Despite all its negative attributes, any kind of work mode based on profit based/oriented consumerism does have its positive point. Whereas poet John Donne's poems, the above mentioned creations of Charlie Chaplin and Udayshankar—all speaks about negativities of the industrialization of human work made and the over mechanization of human life and psyche—this particular work of Ramkinkar does try to show the whole aspect in some kind of a positive light.

However, a deeper analysis may reveal another particular aspect. The background of the huge industrial complex has been projected as an ultimate goal; as if a huge artificial backdrop is being represented where the characters leaving their natural settings and are gradually fading into the final horizon of ultimate industrialization. The longer base of the trapezium is representing the open wide nature and the smaller base of the farther aim is representing the narrow mandatory mono-focused intimacy of mechanical/industrial future.

Shraavana Poornimaa Procession

A master that he is, it is as if Ramkinkar's deliberate intention to leave the conclusion in the hands of the viewer.

The three paintings obtained from a personal collection in Bhopal (details are to be added later on) show certain curious aspects which are rather unique.

Here we get to see Ramkinkar's signature in Bengali script (which in the course of our in-depth study have come to know that this was something which he usually didn't feel like doing). Perhaps the personal nature of his of his relationship with the owner of this collection had led to such unusuality – we'll never come to know.

Here we get to see a group of people in a procession on the *Shraavana Poornimaa* accompanied with musical instruments like Khol, Karatal (musical instruments of Bengal) etc. The individuals are either playing some instruments or singing or may be doing both. The men having been showed in longer forms they comfortably match with the cylindrical forms of the instruments. It is evident

that this is a musical procession, the kind that we get to see during some kind of celebration. The *Vaishnav – Sankirtana* mode can be referred to as a comparative example. However, an eyewitness account available to us (the person in question – Goutam Deb Burman was a Professor of Visva Bharati University (Kala Bhavana) and also a resident of Santiniketan in those days) makes it quite clear that this was a musical procession of a different nature. Enthusiasts and individuals who diligently study the annals of those days and familiar with the psyche and ethos of Rabindranath’s teachings will very well understand a certain stand point. An element of celebrating the nature in its purest form (one can say a secular way of appreciating the prolificness of different forms of Mother Nature) was quite famous in *Santiniketan*. We can understand this all very well when we get to see the way his songs based on seasons is often gathered by different individuals under the name of “seasonscape” (*Rituranga*) and thereby it becomes a different interpretation of Tagore from the stand points of different individuals.



FIGURE 139 Shraavana Poornima Procession, watercolour on paper, 1959.
Collection: Shri Goutam KrishnaDebbarman

Tagore's mode of celebration of life was very different from that of the ancients. Whereas, the ancients always incorporated religious and spiritual elements in such celebrations, Tagore's stand-point (as mentioned earlier) was more ^{or} less secular and aesthetic in nature.

This particular piece of Ramkinkar is said to be a depiction of the musical procession (*Vaitalik*) being done to celebrate the full moon (*Poornimaa*) of the month of *Shraavana*, the second month of the monsoon season in Eastern-India (particularly in Bengal).

When assessed from the stand-point of form and technique several features of this painting can be pointed out:-

1. The figures have not been drawn in a meticulous detail even though they are a prominent feature of the whole scenario; it seems that a conscious effort has been made to blend them homogeneously into the complete factor denoting the celebration of the season.
2. The trees and the human figures have been depicted similarly giving them a particular 'cylindrical'-ness so as to make them a 'homogeneous' part of the whole perhaps.
3. Even though for the sake of the depiction of the figures and the trees a lot of horizontal brush strokes have been necessary, a conscious effort, it seems has been made to give a prominence to the left-to-right dynamism indicating the directionality of the procession.
4. The connoisseurs of the world of visual-arts are very much aware of a particular feature. In the world of painting 'yellow ochre' and 'Prussian

blue' are very rarely synthesized together. Many would not even dare to do as such because of the difficulty of juxtaposing, or even using these two in close proximity as the creation would tend to obtain an unkempt or 'dirty' look. It would perhaps only take a genius like Ramkinkar to attempt something so rebellious and dramatic. Ramkinkar Baij has spontaneously sketched the figures directly marring an outline with brush.

5. The dog depicted in the foreground of the figures in the procession is also another unique feature of this creation. We human beings, in our social existence have made the domestic dog a regular factor of our daily activities, especially in the suburban and the rural areas where taking care of them is not such a big issue; if left to themselves, they'll survive on their own. However, it's common knowledge that they do roam around in our vicinity and scavenge the scraps and also behave in a tame affectionate manner if tended to properly. Ramkinkar has brought the 'dog' as if he is emphasizing the fact that dogs do share a close bond with the human society in a rather effortless manner.
6. Even here the presence of dog is seen in the figure of the 'Santhal Family' sculpture. The presence of dog once and again comes up in Ramkinkar Baij's compositions. Though every figure is in a miniature form here yet the absolute dexterity of the artist has put into work the individual expression of every figure.
7. The singing posture of every individual has been expressed through Prussian Blue flat downwards with the mixture of yellow ochre. The

blending of two colours with a rare skill inspires wonder. However there is a slight hint of black colour in view of making prominent the long trees and their leaves in the backdrop. The outlines of the figures have been drawn by the artist with the hind side of the brush after dipping that in black ink. Some white colour has also been used to give hint to the white attires of some men & women, though that is hardly noticeable. Again of the other transparent colours the beautiful handling slight opaque colour fills a skilled landscape painter/artist with wonder. Moreover, the procession of artists singing '*Aji Jato Tara Tabo Akashe*', accompanied with musical instruments like Khol, Karatal etc. on a *Shraavana* full moon night casts romantic outlook.