

Conclusion

Individuals have their own sense of appreciation and taste which are differ from person to person. Ramkinkar Baij was an exceptional personality with a strong individual sense of originality which we have found in every sphere of his life and works. Every breathe of his absorbed the life-surrounds him, and passing through each vein until it is conceived in his mind and delivered to the visual world with an intensity of thought. His constant search for inner quest and uncompromising attitude to break the conventional mediocrity, and hypocritical interpretation of values of art and life enthroned him as an individual that made him a complete creative person in the Indian Modern art.

The idea of landscape painting is inherently ambiguous. Whereas it is routinely used to describe an undifferentiated view of land, any attempt to excavate it further reveals that landscape is perhaps one of the most deeply charged modes of creative inscription. What are the processes through which distinct agendas of individuals manifest themselves in creative ways? What effect does the cultural location of the historical actors within specific genres of the visual arts have on their responses to the environment? Throughout this discussion, it has been highlighted how, in the process of fashioning an individual identity embedded in an overlap of cultural identities, new vibrant and potent forms of self-fashioning come into being. Within the domain of aestheticised representation, landscape painting then becomes an ideal vehicle through which personal desires are often expressed.

We utter the name Ramkinkar Baij was a man of thunderous personality and occupied the position of an above average personality who was devoured by a spirit of restlessness. Whenever necessary he changed the type of his application according to his own style-breaking traditions. At the same time he worked with tradition whenever he felt it was indispensable. Ramkinkar played various roles in his water colour landscape study and took all his art to an excellent tune where every picture has come to be a line of a song, crossing the boundaries of mere picturesqueness. Beauty is transformed into the most beautiful. The various colours as applied by Ramkinkar made every landscape unique. Each of Ramkinkar's landscape paintings is an instance of the process of adding and extraordinary ease and perpetual newness to limited colours.

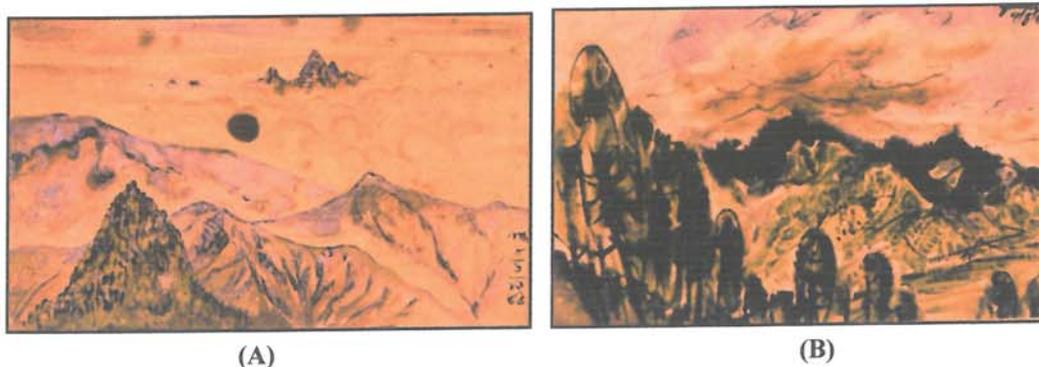


FIGURE 154(A) Nandalal's watercolour landscape study in Ghata in 1945.
Collection: Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan.
(B) Ramkinkar's watercolour landscape study in Ghata in few years later i.e. 1956.
Collection: N.G.M.A

Another notable trait is the relation of his picture with his life style a quality absent in any artist. Like the 18th century English poets he got woven into art in body and soul. His pictures were integrally interrelated with his own life style. None can match the magic realism there and this is really very rare in the works of any other artist till date.

Ramkinkar's landscape study may be viewed as the projection of the momentous with their essence. He was accustomed to painting landscapes since his childhood and those were chiefly used as backdrops of plays. There the landscapes would appear based on the subjects only. The landscape would appear to be simply a background. The colours used for the background were always in keeping with the figure. We can see the uses of measured lines in Nandalal, but Ramkinkar's lines are not always measured lines, but rather spontaneous ones. Though he is not at all objective in his lines, the character of every object is determined through it.



(A)



(B)

FIGURE 155(A) Nandalal's Konarak sea study in the year 1941.
Collection: Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan.
(B) Ramkinkar's Konarak sea study in the year 1951. Collection: N.G.M.A

Far from offering objectivity through his lines he just merely tried to give a hint or a concept through this. His lines come to portray the shape or attitude of portraits. Spontaneity of lines is the soul of his paintings. The relation of lines appears to be eternal with the spots of colours and brush. He had a tendency to show the formation in every line. No definite shape was desired to be reached through that shape. No essence of drawing is there because the

spots get a definite shape sans the lines. Every arrangement can be understood through the shape of his paintings. colours are displayed in the paintings like Cezanne. He created shades in such a beautiful way that the characters of the objects are determined through that.



FIGURE 156(A) Nandalal Bose's Buffalo Study. Collection : Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan.
(B) Nandalal Bose's Buffalo Study .Collection: N.G.M.A

When the maturity of an artist reaches the pinnacle of perfection then he acquires the power of giving some understanding strokes of nature through the brush, i.e. he is able to express the character or the whole matter with a very few lines. But there is a saying that when a bird alights on one branch from other, it traces the way beforehand.

In the above mentioned three watercolour landscapes (Figure 148(A), 149(A) & 150(A), we can find out very easily that the differences between Nandalal and Ramkinkar not only from the compositional point of view but also many views like drawing, brushing, colour application, etc. In the composition of Nandalal Bose anyone can find out very minute and delicate line has been used but in Ramkinkar's very much forceful line has been used simultaneously

creating (a) dramatic atmosphere. In the painting of sea study it is seen in Nandalal's work a decorative pattern like art Nouveau movement or measured line has been used whereas Ramkinkar's sea study is full of essence capturing. In Nandalal's sea study anyone can see the applied colours but whereas in Ramkinkar's created colours through the use of only two colours. A dramatic atmosphere always present in the works of Ramkinkar Baij.

Ramkinkar followed a new and unique design in respect of landscape painting or water colour landscape painting. He would divide areas according to the design depending upon the nature of the water colour with a flat brush. He concentrated on the formation of colour and line so that they can get mingled in sole integrity. The transparency and freshness of water colour lent an air and light atmosphere in the painting. After space arrangement with bold lines on the opposite side of the brush, the shapes have been made prominent with lines in black colour.

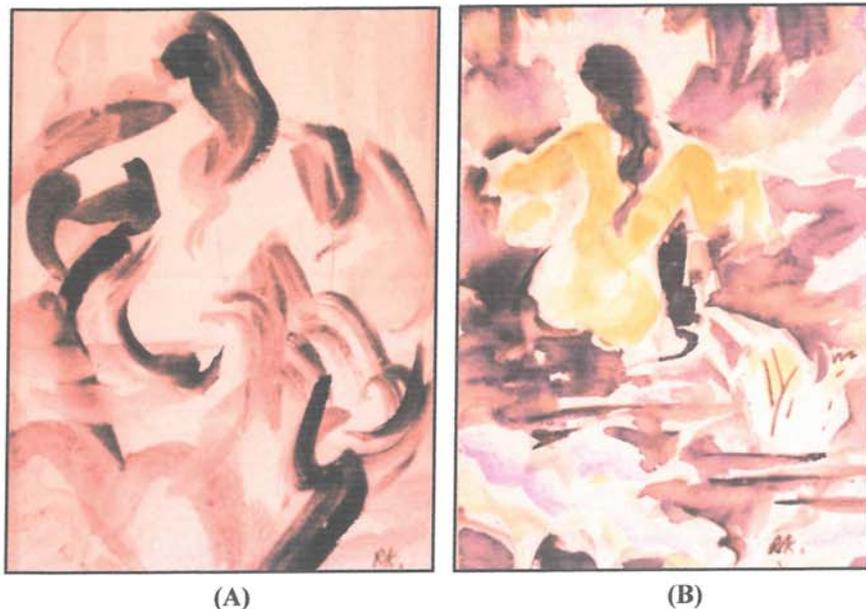


FIGURE 157(A) Study for woman in the pond, watercolour.
(B) Lady with a Pitcher, watercolour on paper. Collections: N.G.M.A



(A)



(B)

**FIGURE 158(A) Ducks, watercolour on paper.
(B) Birds, watercolour on paper. Collections: N.G.M.A**

Outside the imitation of the Occidental style and the out use of portraiture of Ramkinkar come foremost as a sculptor in modern age painting in India. He was the first sculptor of Bengal School.

When Ramkinkar started art cultivation in this country was flowing in two directions. The centre of one was Kolkata in eastern India and the other was in Bombay. Something excessive was the cult in the name of National art of the Kolkata centered Bengal School and conservativeness actually was the cult of the Bombay School which concerned itself with imitating the western art. The latter deemed the object of art to be an ideal follower of ancient feudal cult, ignoring time and history. They had no real connection with the realities of the world. Rejecting these two flows of art for art sake Ramkinkar ventured to pave his own way. Though in his initial works there could be found a slight touch of contemporary or ancient cult, in course of time those got extinct. He was inspired by real life experiences. His inspiration of imagination always arose out of the interaction with the world around. Sometimes his paintings

and sculptures turned to abstraction while trying to firmly express the abstract ideals. But even in those cases thinking controlled the structural quality and that was not possible handling the direct experiences.



(A)

(B)

**FIGURE 159(A) Study of a Horse, Bodhgaya, 1948.
(B) Two Horses, watercolour on paper. Collections: N.G.M.A**



FIGURE 160 Ramkinkar Baij riding on a Tonga along with the students, 1948. Collection: Anindya Kanti Biswas

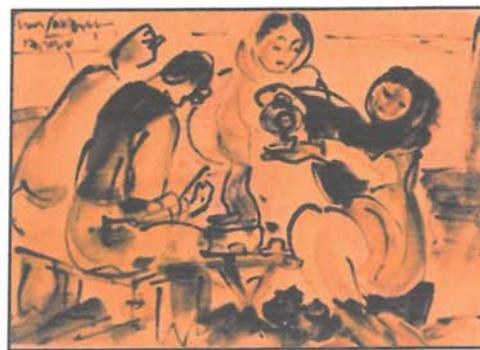
Abanindranath and Ramkinkar are on the two sides of the Bengal School. Brought up in feudal familial traditions, Abanindranath did not have to struggle for making a living or to acquire fame. Once upon a time doing something by any offspring of the Tagore family was highly unusual. Apart from this on his own merit and desire E.B.Havel offered him a very important position in the

Government. School of Art and Craft. He also got instrumental in the advancement of Abanindranath. Ramkinkar belonged to an ordinary family of Bankura. Though he went to school in childhood, he would portray the backdrop scenes of plays and write posters for the Congress party to earn his living. Discovering genius in him, Ramananda Chattopadhyay, a son of Bankura and the editor of the 'Prabasi' magazine and the 'Modern Review', took him to Santiniketan and introduced him to Rabindranath and Nandalal. Ramkinkar proved Ramananda Chattopadhyay right. Ramkinkar had to work hard for earning his livelihood in his student days and also later on to get recognition as an artist. Abanindranath indulged himself to excessive and romantic imagination in his art and thought. Ramkinkar did not cling to literary origins or the excessive for the creation of art. Rather real life experience was the base for the creation of his art. The medium of all the artists of the Bengal School including Abanindranath was painting, though sculpture had the most prominent place in art in this country. Though Ramkinkar gained success in painting, he took sculpture as his pre-eminent medium. However, alongside he regularly practiced watercolour landscape paintings. Though there was a shadow of the contemporary French art in the initial period, he somehow got out of it. Apart from the *Ashok Stambha* or *Lat* sculpture the traditional sculpture of the country was based on temples. The Indian sculpture in Ramkinkar's time was very much influenced by European realism. Nothing except portraits of the so-called heroes or princes and any romantic figure were made at that time. This feudal mentality was not reflected in Ramkinkar's sculptures and paintings. The naturalistic paintings of Abanindranath and the Bengal School artists could be seen in art galleries or

on the pages of the magazines. Therefore the society at large came to notice those. As Ramkinkar's teacher Nandalal opened up art for the common people by painting on the outer walls of the buildings, Ramkinkar also brought that into public by creating environmental sculptures in the open environment of Santiniketan out of his own volition. The time when the sculptors of the country started making a beeline to get commission work from the elite upper class or royal class or for decorating roads with these sculptures. Ramkinkar devoted himself to creative sculpture, throwing aside every bait. He did not even think of earning by selling his sculptures as per phase of his other peoples wishes. In the last life he did only one work according to order for Reserve Bank of India, New Delhi. Though he lived for three decades after Independence the Central Government or any State Government did not even think of commissioning a sculpture by him. His sculptures and paintings inspired a new thought in the perspective of his time. In his sculptures have been found kinesis, life, originality, on-the-earth reality and, above all, objectivity. His sculptures display a restless movement and rhythmic vitality on the surface.



(A)



(B)

**FIGURE 161(A) Porter, 1947, watercolour on paper.
(B) Open air tea shop, watercolour on paper, 1947. Collections: N.G.M.A**

Ramkinkar turned his eyes at the origin of the vitality of the common men, unifying them in the open rhythm of nature. The individuals of most of his paintings and sculptures are common men and women who have been employed for the requirement of outdoor sculpture, in keeping with the environment. They are natural as trees, as if coming out of the soil like trees. Their formation takes after that of plants and their skin shows the structural elements of soil or stone. These lively sculptures cannot be rooted out of their own environment and set up on the crossroads of a town or the luxurious yard of a five star hotel. As the Asoka figure cannot be thought of as the janitor of a five star hotel, similarly no sculpture of Ramkinkar can be imagined as something cut off from the environment. Yaksha and Yakshi are the subjects of the work he did for a building of a financial institution (The Reserve Bank of India) in Delhi. This Yaksha and Yakshi are not mythological figures. This Yaksha and Yakshi have been conceived as representative figures of investment and saving. They are short, big-bellied and having various cut marks on their bodies. Their bodies have a certain inertia that stands for the proneness for saving. A strong weight can be felt in these two sculptures carved out of hard rocks. No expression is even found in the faces of the Yaksha and Yakshi. The irony present in these sculptures is absent in Ramkinkar's other sculptures. The complaint made against the Bengal School is the proneness to spirituality leaving aside the fundamental qualities of drawing, and expression of feelings. Ramkinkar's sculptures are elastic like plants. Every organ of his sculptures is tied like the parts of a

tree. Seeing his sculptures the viewers mind feels the empathy of that sharp rigidity. His sculptures exclude any detailing or romantic emotions. Fine measurement is one of the great qualities of his sculptures and paintings.

At the time of his first meeting with Nandalal Bose, having seen the specimens of his work. Nandalal said, 'You know everything. So why do you come here? Okay stay here for two or three years.' In Ramkinkar's own words, 'Those two or three years of mine have not come to an end yet. He is no more but my meditation is going on that very road in search of the abstract within the subject. As a teacher he never thwarted free thinking. He inspired what one had a knack for. Many differences arose. Again the next moment he would deal in a friendly manner. Cubism inspired my works. Initially the teacher went against me but after much debate he did not thwart my works. Since that day he placed a certain faith on my art. He even tried to defend me against my critics. The figure near Santiniketan temple bears testimony to this.'



FIGURE 162 Shillong landscapes studied by Ramkinkar & Nandalal in the year 1947.
Collections: Late Smt Anjali Lahiri and Kala Bhavan Santiniketan.

This understanding and cordial relationship with students was continued by Ramkinkar as a teacher. As a teacher he also placed unfathomable faith on the students. The conservative picture of guru Nandalal drawn by his assistant teacher in Kala Bhavana, Benode Behari in his last phase of compositions is out of keeping with the experience of Ramkinkar. He depicted guru Nandalal as a patient, intelligent and sympathetic teacher. From the very beginning Benode Behari, Ramkinkar and Vinayak Masoji showed originality in their thinking on art. None of them followed their guru. Yet Nandalal selected them for teaching in Kala Bhavan under him. He had been conservative, and had Rabindranath been thoughtful about his conservativeness, the result would have been different. Rabindranath relied heavily on Nandalal; otherwise he would not have given young Nandalal the charge of Kala Bhavan (though he had initially offered this position to his relative, Asit Kumar Halder), and announce this in open ceremony. He certainly asked Nandalal to create an environment conducive to the freedom of students. Some teachers left Kala Bhavan after Rabindranath's death for personal reasons, but Ramkinkar did not leave Santiniketan or thought of accepting any lucrative job leaving students in the lurch. In the post Nandalal Santiniketan, Ramkinkar did not lodge any complaint though he was beaten by some arrogant English teacher (Prof. Sudhin Ghosh who was an Oxford fellow and was appointed by Satyen Bose, the then Vice Chancellor and a great scientist) or getting deprived of promotion according to rule. Finally that arrogant professor had to leave Santiniketan in the darkness of night and after being pulled up by the experts of the University

Grant Commission. The Kala Bhavan authorities were compelled to give Ramkinkar promotion. What is noticeable is that Ramkinkar was have used after Rabindranath and Nandalal left the world. Critics did not turn to see how Nandalal's personality kept intact the honour and the sense of well being of the students and the teachers of different ideologies.

When Ramkinkar came to Santiniketan Rabindranath was fully active. Various people from all over the country and abroad regularly visited Santiniketan. Since childhood Ramkinkar was thoroughly familiar with the life of the common folk. The environment surrounding Santiniketan and the life style of the inhabitants, the cultural atmosphere and freedom worked as inspiration for Ramkinkar's art. His creativity flowered from the study of nature, traditional knowledge and the fundamental spirit creation in the educational system of Kala Bhavan.

Though in private life Ramkinkar was highly irregular and restless, in his art world he seemed to be highly energetic and disciplined and true to his mission. Here none can find idleness and indiscipline. He viewed things deeply and grew heavily out from that. Even in the application of colour Ramkinkar is highly modern and well ahead of his contemporaries. He always indulged in reminiscences, jokes and offered himself to mirth and merry making.

The great Japanese artist Hokusai said "How can one run when one can hardly walk? How can one run when one cannot dance a little! Drawing can be equated with movement, the fullness of style is running; and an exact painting/picture is something which includes beauty and physical fitness."



(A)

(B)

**FIGURE 163(A) Harvester, watercolour on paper.
(B) Loading the Crop, watercolour on paper, 1947. Collections: N.G.M.A**

His art acquired hardness, well-knit condition and prominence from the open spirit of nature in Rarh, hardness of soil and the spirit of sunlight.

In general strokes that started bravely did not know where to go. Sometimes they bump into and spoil something else, or they may just wander about, or fade into doubtfulness. But in the case of Ramkinkar it was totally different because he had a keen knowledge of the line and its weight age. Stokes carries a message whether you will eat or not. The stroke is just like the artist at the time he makes it. All the certainties, all the uncertainties, all the largeness of his spirit and all the smallness are present in it. Ramkinkar's strokes in his watercolour landscapes proved the above mentioned technicalities. Ramkinkar's strokes which mark the path of a rocket into the sky may be only a few inches long, but the spirit of the artist has travelled a thousand feet the moment he made the stroke. In his work there are strokes which laugh, and there are strokes which bind these to laughter, which freeze the face into a set steady grimace. Ramkinkar's strokes carry the observer with exact degrees of

The discovery is so much variegated that achieving this kind of hue is hardly possible in any other landscape other than hilly ones (as found during my journey from Kalka to Simla by meter-gauge train. The prominence of hardy characteristic of the hilly areas gets moistened and sweetened through the light and shadow of the area. Though outwardly Ramkinkar had a very stern outlook and austerity he was as soft as a bud in his heart.

Ramkinkar' attitude was noteworthy in every aspect whatever he did or touched. The exact sense of the expansion or contraction of a line or the way of the expansion in respect to the paper concerned seemed to remain always at his fingertips. His lines in various respects can be summed up as something absolutely poised and pithy. The speedy application of various colours he was able to create some epoch making work. Even within a moment a painting would express itself. He had an accurate sense of proportion of mixing colour and water.

According to B.C.Sanyal(1902-2003), one of his contemporary artists of that time commented on Ramkinkar Baij's water colour landscape paintings very aptly "There was no duality between the man and his creation. Urbanity did not take the edge off his robust native vitality. At the ceremony for honouring him as a Fellow, organised by the Lalit Kala Akademi at Santiniketan, I addressed him as '*Kala Kinkar Ram*' and the laughter that burst out from his heart- will ever vibrate in my ears as indeed his works which pulsate with life shall endure."

The real nature of Ramkinkar's creativity is poetic and personal. All his best work comes out of a personal experience or observation and grows into something timeless and enduring. This growth and the transformations that ensue in the process were essential to its depth and power. To conform to a pre-conceived self image, or carry the burden of a pre-conceived idea, or work on a project or monument with a preordained design was irksome to Ram Kinkar. He avoided this as much as he could, but when he succumbed, suffered for it. That is why some of his later descriptive paintings have no special challenge in them. That is also why he could not finish his warrior's monument to warmers in Nepal and left it to his assistants. I think this is also the reason why his Reserve Bank piece is so unrewarding when you compare it with the sensitive preparatory studies. Also why his sketch of Gandhi, done immediately on the heels of his assassination, is so dynamic, while the commissioned statue in Assam is rather pedestrian.

Not earring a bit for any help from the government or the wealthy class, he worked tirelessly in his own way, caring only for the simple and the common folks. The energetic rhythm of the common people has been reflected in his work. He made the open earth his art gallery. No contemporary political event cast a shadow in his work. The chief sources of his painting and sculpture were flora and fauna all around. His paintings gave expression to those people whose life was not affected by political upheavals. His figures are of the downtrodden underdogs, far a cry from the romantically inspired. The gentleman's ways of sentimentality of Santiniketan did not touch him. He could equally deal with

a wide range of people like the stalwart Rabindranath down to the simple Santhal's. That's why his sculptures do not restrict themselves to the surface level. The inner self of humanity as well as an object can well be felt there. Prior to him in no work of any artist did the common people appear as suitable subjects figures are not mere personalizes but also an embodiment of some abstract qualities. He looked upon nature as an expression of the rhythm of life. His landscapes do not reveal any particular time or situation, rather these have a universal nature. That simply gives vent to the softness and hardness, the dense reality and the light heartedness of matter.



(A)



(B)

**FIGURE 164(A) Flowering Trees, Birbhum, watercolour on paper.
(B) Rajgir, watercolour on paper, 1948. Collections: N.G.M.A**

The venture he undertook to go beyond an institution is really unprecedented. Shunning the path of baseless idealism and excessive imagination he establishes Indian art on a sound footing of reality. He did not confine himself to conventional concepts of art. He was responsible to not only himself but also men at large. He was never opportunist; his art was never a business to him. He loved the life interspersed on fields and roads. That love and passion for life have been expressed through his paintings and sculptures.

Each and every landscape of Ramkinkar appears unpareil, not in the expressive use of colour, but the finery of application. Though his paintings contained colours, the lines were so predominant and acute that they were sufficient in themselves. His paintings are not only characterized by a supportive gaiety, but also with a hide and seek playfulness. Above all, there was always much open breathing space in all his paintings.