Journey of Delhi Silpi Chakra

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Abstract

A study investigated the journey of Delhi Silpi Chakra which was founded on March 25, 1949 by the spirit B.C. Sanyal, Kanwal Krishna, K.S. Kulkarni, Dhan Raj Bhagat and Pran Nath Mago founder member of the group. The group also symbolized the aspiration of young progressive artists in seeking something different schools of art. The group with its motto 'Art illuminates Life', made a promising start. The objective of this research paper was to explore the facts behind emergence of Delhi Silpi Chakra group. A comprehensive list of the member of the artists related to group but the major five founder member's contribution were discussed here, rest of the artists listed also here. For the shoring of contribution of Delhi Silpi Chakra, the major exhibition glimpses of new clips which published time-to-time than the era of this group also discuss in this paper. The group recognized that the art of the nation must express the soul of its people and must ally with the process of progress.

In the mid twentieth century India was a new democratic country carved out of the subcontinent and led by the Indian National Congress. During this nascent period of Independence its citizen sought to define its parameter and understand its reason for beings. The cultural sphere was highly politicized Authors wrote stories and poems that critiqued the way nationalist leaders handled the events up-to independence and partition of India and Pakistan. Within the burgeoning art scene, artists introduced themselves as modern and secular practitioners. Some were political, while many more were concerned with formal issues. Some incorporated indigenous traditions, while others turned to art practices from outside of India.

Form the 1947, Literature, Science and Arts are developing new techniques in almost all branches of artistic activity. The movement of modern painting originated in Bombay. The Bombay progressive during the 1930s and 1940s a number of communist group were active in the cultural arena in India. Along with theater profession and writers, visual artists joined together.

Shri Rabindranath Tagore was the first man in India to paint in modern art which he learnt in Europe. At the same-time the effect of were experiments those were taking place in western art, spread in India also. In this new style, the artist started painting for own pleasure and satisfaction. The modern artist did not care for the desire on liking of others and gave some new or metaphysical shape to living or visible objects by their own typical imagination, which they called as impressionism.

In this time most of the artists to create our identity. Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002), *M.F. Hussain* (1915-2011), and other formed the progressive artist group. They had lifted leanings, rejected the Nationalist Art of Bengal School, and embraced international modern art practices.

The 1940s were marked with significant upsurge in radical experimentation in Indian modern art. As India was justifying its fragmentation into 'National' and independent frames,

the artists during this time were looking for a means to articulate their expression with the Calcutta Group in 1943, Indian art saw a new avatar, devoid of romanticism and idyllic treatment of subjects and offering the 'real'. The progressive artists group consciously sought a new language which redefined contemporary Indian art. Similar impulses were seen in the movement happening in the capital city during a crucial phase when India gained independence from colonial rule. The group Delhi Silpi Chakra came into existence after many artists who migrated from Pakistan. They choose form an art circle in Delhi where they could exchange ideas and share their experiences. Unlike other groups, Silpi Chakra had its door open for artist and anyone , everyone could be a part of Delhi the group. The artists varied in essence but unit in spirit worked towards the some initiative; to create an unrestricted art movement.

In 1947, the Bombay Progressive Group was formed which was followed by the Delhi Silipi Chakra. This group some great artists i.e. *B.C. Sanyal, Kanwal Krishna, K.S. Kulkarni, Dhan Raj Bhagat, P.N. Mago* recognised that the art of the nation must express the soul of its people and must ally with the process of progress. In terms of marketing, the Delhi Silpi Chakra took up innovative means to market Modern Indian Art. In 1949 the Chakra held its first exhibition at barracks of the Masonic Lodge at Janpath which made a great impact on the art scene in the Capital. Since this initial foray, the Chakra held exhibitions and programmes and discussions regularly.

To propagate contemporary art, Delhi Silpi Chakra members organised exhibitions of their works in 'Mohallas' such as Chandni Chowk, Karol Bagh and the university campus 1949 and 1950. There was a good response from the public. Paintings were sold to University teachers, doctors, lawyers writers, actors and musicians and widened the base. B.C. Sanyal (1902-47) recollects in his article in the catalogue 'Delhi Silpi Chakra – The Early Years that those who could not afford a straight purchase a hire-purchase scheme was also offered. This enlarged the circle of patrons and the Chakras vibrancy existed till the mid 1960's.

Although most of the artists who had moved from Lahore to Delhi in the wake of the Partition became members of All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS) in Delhi, their association with it did not last long. Briefly the reasons were that the affairs of AIFACS, by and large, were planned and controlled by non-professional members who had no artistic commitment. Its programmes of activities was limited, the annual exhibition being the main event. It was then the only organisation Delhi-based artists could lean on for encouragement and furtherance of their interests. There were no commercial art galleries of the like we have now. But the few artist members in the inner circle of AIFACS following, rather than provided, leadership. Well established art societies in other metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Calcutta functioned much like AIFACS. As a result, there was growing discontent among the working artists. Some of them thought they would be able to bring about changes in the working system of AIFACS with the cooperation of other members, but they failed and remained suspect in the eyes of those in Control.

Our resignations would have gone unnoticed had we not decide to form the Delhi Silpi Chakra. This was its genesis. It was founded on March 25, 1949 by the three of us, together with Dhan Raj Bhagat and B.C. Sanyal (who was elected first Chairman of the group). Other who joined soon after includes Devayani Krishna, Harkrishan Lall, Satish Gujral, Ram Kumar, K.C. Aryan, Damayanti Chawla, Dinkar Kowshik, Jaya Appasamy, Prabha Rastogi (Nee Loknath), Srinivas Pandit, Dwarka Dhish and Brij Mohan Bhanot.

MOTTO OF SILPI CHAKRA

The Delhi Silpi Chakra with its motto Art illuminates Life', made a promising start, In, its manifesto, the Chakra declared "The group recognises that art as an activity must not be divorced from life; that the art of a nations must express the soul of its people and ally with the

forces of progress. The group recognized artists had to come together to work towards the progress of art and through art, help build a virile national culture and brighter life in the country. Membership was restricted to working artists, but writers, musicians, poets, critics and dramatists who shared the Chakras views were welcomed to associated with its activities.

FOUNDER MEMBERS OF DELHI SILPI CHAKRA'

The founder members of Delhi Silpi Chakra were B.C. Sanyal, Kanwal Krishna, K.S. Kulkarni, Dhan Raj Bhagat, Pran Nath Mago and they were joined in later years by artists such as Harkishan Lall, Satish Gujral, Devayani Krishna, K.C. Aryan, Ram Kumar, Damyanti Chawla, Dinkar Kowshik, Bishamber Khanna, Jaya Appasamy, Avinash Chandra, Prabha Rastogi, Kewal Soni, Mohinder Kaur etc. With no pronounced ideology, the Silpi Chakra group interacted actively with artists, and continued operating well into the 1960s. P. N.Mago, (1998).

1. B.C. Sanyal (1902-2003): Bhabhesh Chandra Sanyal trained at the Government College of Art, Calcutta, in the western academic style before moving to Lahore in 1929, where he set up his studio and the Lahore School of Fine Arts. After his return to India post-Partition, Sanyal headed the Delhi Silpi Chakra and was vice-chairman of Lalit Kala Akademic, New Delhi. Moving from an early idealistic but comparatively tentative art to one of greater imagination and introspection his work appears to chart the journey from tradition to modernity. He responded well to his environment and immediate surroundings, portraying everyday life, landscapes, realistic portraiture and semi abstraction. Some of his works bear the influence of Amrita Sher-Gil and the Bengal School. His love for colour, textures and materials seems almost baroque, with an ability to simplify the form into stark rhythmic shapes, Sanyal experimented with silkscreen, water colour and tempera, but excelled at sculpture. He painted a number of formal portraits of public men, but it is perhaps his uncommissioned casual studies that were a far greater success.

2. Kanwal Krishna (1910-1993): Kanwal Krishna was associated with several art groups' such as the Delhi Silpi chakra and the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.He was born in Kamilia in the canal colonies of pre-Partition Punjab, Kanwal Krishna lived the life, he said, *'of a wandering gypsy'*. He sought inspiration for his work from direct, personal encounters with the forces of nature as he travelled to forbidden Tibet, Kashmir, Europen and other places. In 1945, Krishna and his artist-wife Devayani travelled across the North West Frontier Province at the invitation of the Governor, visiting Afghasnistan, the Swat valley and surrounding areas to paint its landscape and life. In Tibet, he was one of the earliest observers, and the first Indian painter who was allowed special permission to attend the coronation of the Dalai Lama, an event he painted and filmed. Krishna's paintings reflect his mastery over perspective and depth through strange angle and curvature observed in the outdoor environment. The textures and tones achieved by his sensitive brushwork and restrained palette are laudable. A master printmaker, he would influence a generation of printmakers in India with is techniques and style.

3. Krishna Syamrao Kulkarni (1916-1994): Forced to paint signboards at the age of eleven when his father died, K.S. Kulkarni was born in a small village in Belgaum in 1916, Kulkarani worked towards a highly individuated pictorial language through an engagement with modernist techniques and mediums. After a diploma in fine art specializing in murals from Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay, in 1940, he came to Delhi in 1943 to work in textile design. Along with artists who had moved from Lahore to Delhi during Partition, K.S. Kulkarni became a member of the city's All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society and, later, the founder-president of the Delhi Silpi Chakra, from 1972-78, he served as chairman, Lalit Kala Akademi, Lucknow, and from 1973-78 as vice-chairman, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

In the treatment of human figures, Kulkarni combined the decorative grace of classical India painting inspired by Ajanta, with the vitality of modernism. Kulkarni played with the pure sensuousness of colour and form to heighten the plastic potentiality of form. His is essentially the world of the Indian peasant, swaying with rapture to the hypnotic melody of the shepherd's flute, riding with the rhythms of the bullock cart. He is not a chronicler of events, and neither does he idealize pastoral existence as an escape from the humdrum existence of the modern city. In fact, he would pain cityscape using bold, strong outline and strokes, as a stack of blocks learning against each other. In his works, the everyday received prime importance, drawn with empathy but not sentimentality. K.S. Kulkarni adopts a mode and painting style, with its bringing together of light and dark themes, that is instantly reminiscent of Picasso and recalls much of Souza's work. The subject here is two nudes, a man and a woman, who fill up the large picture frame and draw in the eye. Their animated movement and setting suggests they are dancing, as the man sings in accompaniment to his guitar. Kulkarni here experiments with multiple planes, an abandon in the use of colour and distortion in a tribute to the cubist masters he admired. The a dancers' bodies receive exaggerated distortion, each part broken up into sections and planes and coloured in a rage of primary and secondary shades within stark black outlines

4. Dhanraj Bhagat (1917-1988): Clay was the first medium that Dhanraj Bhagat started working with while studying at the Mayo School of Art, Lahore, but the medium left him uninspired. For him, its amorphous nature held little individuality. It was when Bhagat got his hands-on wood, with its inherent, tactile qualities, that he felt inspired to cave out forms in a strong, original style.

Bhagat's early wood sculptures bore liquid, stream-like forms of the sensual feminine, with soft, elongated, smooth lines charged by the lyricism and sensitivity of a young man who had not yet been traumatized by the horror of Partition. The post-Partition period is marked with works that acquire rough edges and unsmoothed chisel marks. The images from this period are deeply moving as they are charged with the intensity of the artist's personal experiences as a refugee from Western Punjab who had to make Delhi his new home.

Bhagat began experimenting with mediums in the his sculpture in the 1950s, and his figure began to transform along with each new medium. cement, *papir mache*, aluminum, copper, brass, each of the mediums suggested a new form and context to express. Exploring each medium's qualities, the artist started rendering his female figures differently. They acquired heavy, gravid, large and powerful his female figure differently. They acquired heavy, gravid, forms steeped in sorrow, far from the lyrical, light, smooth wooden figures of his earlier period. A series of mostly large, powerful sculptures executed in concrete marked his evolution towards abstraction. Having won various prizes, he won the National Award of the Lalit Kala Akademi in 1961, the Sahitya Kala Parishad Award in 1969, and was honored with a Padma Shri by the Indian Government in 1977.

5. Pran Nath Mago (1923-2006): P.N. Mago was born on 22 August 1923 in Gujarkhan- a small town near Rawalpindi in western Punjab. Mago’s parents instilled in him the spirit of appreciation of beauty and encouraged him to pursue his artistic interests. Prof. Pran Nath Mago (b.1923), an eminent artist, educationist and art critic, was a Founder Member of the Delhi Silpi Chakra. He has had varied experience -as a Professor in Fine Art, College of Art, New Delhi; Advisor to the Govt. of Malta on setting up an Art and Crafts School; and Director, Design Development Centre, All India handicrafts Board, New Delhi. His works, exhibited in India and abroad since 1946, were critically acclaimed and are in prestigious national and private collections. He has been the recipient of a Food Foundation Grant, has been honoured as Eminent Artist by the Punjab Art Heritage and has been awarded an Emeritus

fellowship by the Department of Culture, Govt of India. He has travelled extensively and delivered lectures in reputed universities and museums, in India and abroad. He has curated some important exhibitions for the Lalit Kala Akademi, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, British Council, New Delhi and The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. He has also written monographs on Amar Nath Sehgal and Gurcharan Singh, published by the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

OTHER ARTISTS RELATED TO DELHI SILPI CHAKRA

In the journey of Delhi Silpi Chkra most of the artists contribute their art work in various exhibitions, these artwork shows that in previous time the Delhi Silpi Chakra was rapidly emerging group in the field of Art and Aesthetics. The list of artists were involved to contribute their art works to enhancement of the Delhi Silpi Chakra. They were joined in later years by artists such as B.C. Sanyal (Founder), Kanwal Krishna (Founder), K.S. Kulkarni (Founder), Dhan Raj Bhagat (Founder), Pran Nath Mago (Founder), Hari Ambadas Gade, Avinash Chandra (1931-91), Bishamber Khanna, Bishamber Khanna, Damyanti Chawla, Devayani Krishana, Dinkar Kowshik, Gopi Gajwani, Gunen Ganguli, Harkishan Lall, Jagmohan Chopra, Jaya Appasamy, Jiwan Adalija, K.C. Aryan, K.H. Ara, K.K. Hebbar, Kewal Soni, Mohinder Kaur, Mulk Raj Anand, Nand Katyal, Nirad Chaudhuri, Paramjit Singh, Santosh Jain, Prabha Rastogi, R.K. Bhatnagar, Raj Jain, Rajesh Mehra, Ram Kumar, Rameshwar Broota, Shiavax Chavda, Satish Gujral, Shoba Broota. In this research paper the researcher taken pain to present the contribution of founder artist of Delhi Silpi Chakra rest of artists those contribute their work in various exhibitions as per the newspaper clips published time to time i.e. The Statesman March 12, 1949, 'Delhi Silpi Chakra Exhibition', INDIAN NEWS CHRONICAL, November 13, 1949, 'Exhibition of Painting by Delhi Silpi Chakra', THE STATESMAN, April 11, 1951, 'Delhi Silpi Chakra Annual Show', THE STATESMAN, October 7, 1951, 'ART', THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, February 23, 1957, ''Exciting' Exhibition of Sketches', THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, Monday, March 18, 1957, 'Delhi Silpi Chakra 'Annual Exhibition of Art', THE INDIAN EXPRESS, December 12, 1958, 'An Eye-opener to Art Lovers; Delhi Silpi Chakra Exhibition', THE INDIAN EXPRESS, April 7, 1962, 'End-of-season Surprises', THE SUNDAY STATEMAN, April 8, 1962, 'Delhi Silpi Chakra's Exhibitions', THE SUNDAY STATEMAN, April 22, 1962 (Link), 'PAINTING; Silpi Chakra Group Show', THOUGHT, April 28, 1962, ART; Group Show of Members of Delhi Silpi Chakra. Delhi Silpi Chakra Gallery, New Delhi, THE STATEMAN, 3 December 1963, 'Painters in Search of an Idiom', THOUGHT December 7, 1963, 'Exhibition of Paintings and Sculptures. By Members of Silpi Chakra. Shankar Market, New Delhi', THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, Sunday, February 2, 1964, 'Silpi Chakra Exhibition', THE SUNDAY STANDARD, February 2, 1964, 'Magic Touch in Paintings', THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, Monday, February 3, 1964, 'Silpi Chakra Exhibition Painting Exhibition', THE STATEMAN, March 31, 1965, ART: 'Silpi Chakra's Annual Exhibition', THE STATEMAN, 24, FEBRUARY 1967, 'ART: SMALL BUT GOOD ANNUAL', THE STATEMAN, 24, FEBRUARY 1967 (Link), 'Juniors at Silpi Chakra', THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, Friday, February 24, 1967, 'The Bizarre Dominates', THE INDIAN EXPRESS, SATURDAY, February 25, 1967, 'ART: Good Impact on Viewers', Delhi Silpi Chakra - The Early Years; (National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi; December 4 To January 11, 1997).

CONCLUSION

Thus, on the basis of glimpses of news clips researcher may stated that the contribution of artists for enhancement of Delhi Silpi Chakra such was a tremendous contribution for enhancement of the groups. The creation of art work of Delhi Silpi Chakra founder artists seems to be a magic for natural pheromone, human lime and others aspects. According to P.M.

Mago, that Delhi Silpi Chakra group recognizes that art as an activity must not be divorced from life; that the art of a nation must express the soul of its people and ally with the process of progress. The group recognizes that the artists have to come together to work hard towards the progress of art and through art help build up a virile national culture and brighter life in the country."

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