CHAPTER - II

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The early 20th century India saw the beginning of indigenous modernism as a disavowal of the occidental Orientalism and its claim for modernity. Modernity and progress aligned to the growth of industrial development which also led to the destruction of handicrafts. The other project which developed with this idea of progress and industrial venture was that of establishing colonies and capitalistic exploitation of the colonies; an extension of which was the cultural hegemony. But the colonised started the process of decolonisation and in due course the reclaiming of their consciousness. The understanding of beauty was being framed as against the belief of Indian art being grotesque .The rationale of the western perception of Indian art was being questioned and debated. Calcutta and Santiniketan became the epicentre of this discourser. Siva Kumar argues that-' The Santiniketan artists did not believe that to be indigenous one has to be historicist either in theme or in style, and similarly to be modern one has to adopt a particular trans-national formal language or technique. Modernism was to them neither a style nor a form of internationalism. It was a critical re-engagement with the foundational aspects of art necessitated by changes in one's unique historical position.[1]

To reconnect this discourse on indigenous modernism, one has to look backward in order to move forward and hence the focus will shift to the construal of oriental Orientalism. During this phase of nationalism or early phase of indigenous modernism one sees the reformulation of the question of aesthetics in the Indian terms, the revival of Handicrafts and the redefination of the con

1 Interview by Parvez Kabir of R.Shiva Kumar,Humanities underground,2011

cept of design. This chapter becomes important as it focuses on the art writings which became a pedagogic framework for the 'Swadeshi art movement'. The women artists whom I have discussed in the further chapters had been influenced by these discourses which became almost normative. There is an effort to accumulate the cultural capital, or to be more articulate, the embodied cultural capital .This had been discussed by the pedagogues like E.B.Havell ,Abanindranath ,Sister Nivedita ,Rabindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose in their writings on art which had arguments carrying the traces of this nature of capital i.e. tradition. As Bourdieu discusses that it "consists of the consciously acquired and the passively 'inherited' properties of one's self (with inherited here used not in the genetic sense but in the sense) of receipt over time, usually from the family through socialisation, of culture and traditions. Cultural capital is not transmissible instantaneously like a gift or bequest rather, it is acquired over time as it impresses itself upon one's habitus (character and ways of thinking) which in turn becomes more attentive to or primed to receive similar influences."[2] Here the habitus is India.

To understand this discourse of revival the debate on Orientalism should be understood. The word suggests the intention to understand the religion, literature arts and the socio cultural environment of the east by the west. For Said it was a means of dominance and an extension of the imperialist policies. The first Governor general, Warren Hastings wrote that, 'Every accumulation of knowledge and especially such as is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise a dominion founded on the right of conquest is useful to the state.[3]

2 Bourdieu P, 1986, The Forms of Capital in Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education ed JG Richardson (Greenwood Press, New York). pp. 231-258

3 John M.MacKenzie,The Orientalism Debate,Orientalism ,History ,theory and the arts,p.3

However modernism in the west which rested on establishing difference and othering created the discourse of difference. This was quiet common in the occidental discourse on oriental art. James Mill states-'The Hindus copy with great exactness, even from nature. By consequence they draw portraits, both of individuals and of groups, with a minute likeness; but peculiarly devoid of grace and expression…they are entirely without a knowledge of perspective, and by consequence of all those finer and nobler parts of the art of painting, which have perspective for their requisite basis.[4]

Supporting this are some of Hegelian principles like India was non-being, all imagination and fantastic irrationality, completely lacking objectivity 'In this….struggle to spiritualize Nature, and to present that which is born of Spirit to sense,…..we meet with all the ferment and the motley of wild and unstable elements, the entire fantastic and confused world…of symbolic art, which half surmises, it is true, the incongruity of its manner of shaping, yet is unable to remedy the same save through the distortion of its figures, while straining after purely quantitative sublimity that seeks to devour all limits. In this phase consequently we think ourselves in a world steeped with poetic fantasies, incredibilities and miracle, yet fail to encounter one work of genuine beauty .[5]

But there is also the recovery of the consciousness, a prevalence of the counter hegemonic thought. The hegemonic stereo types were being can be taken over by the colonised and then used against the imperial masters, where characteristics (like the concept of the martial race' or the notion of spiritual, pre-industrial India) attributed by the imperial power come to be wielded as sources of resistance. The concept of the native informant transformed into

4 Mill.J .,The history of British India,p.356

5 Partha Mitter, ChapterIV Historical and philosophical interpretations of Indian art,Much Maligned Monster,p.213

that of the native scholars who were no more working as the marginalised characters serving western scholarship. They were not mediating anymore but reclaiming their intellectual space. Indian aesthetics, crafts and the discourse on design are the areas which became the realm of contestation, against the colonial project of cultural hegemony. The following discussion on aesthetics, crafts and design aims at a textual analysis, through which the discourse of counter-narrative of indigenous modernism, with its layered presence is being discussed.

(i). The disavowal of Occidental Orientalism and the framing of *Swadeshi* Aesthetics

The discourses on aesthetics became normative and almost canonical and there is a hegemonic tendency to erase the differences. The word canon suggests rule or standard. It legitimizes the cultural and political identity giving authority to what it codifies; as well as naturalizes the function. It advocates for a common culture. As Pollock points out; one of the most important aspect of the canon is –"In recent years the culture wars have broken out as new social movements target canons as pillars of the established elites and supports of hegemonic social groups, classes and traces."[6] The stylistic tendencies of art in India during early 20th century was being formulated keeping in mind the swadeshi trends, falling back on Indian aesthetics and the reinvention of crafts which transcends its original meaning/usage.

There prevailed an anxiety over the presence of Indian Aesthetics, what was its nature and if it existed et al .Max Muller writes—"It is strange never the less that a people so fond of highest abstractions as the Hindus should never have summarized their conceptions of beautiful."[7] During this time various oth-

6 Griselda Pollock, Differencing the canon, , Feminist Desire and the writing of art histories,Routledge,Chapter-1,pp.3-6

7 Foreword by O.C.Ganguly, Some notes on Indian artistic anatomy and Sadanga or the Six limbs of painting by Abanindranath Tagore , Indian Society of Oriental Art, pg-number not given

er efforts had been made in this direction to conceptualize aesthetic standards in Indian terms through *Silpa sastras*. Benoy Sarkar points out to the different perceptions of the art historical journey started by the colonisers and the writers of the counter-colonial discourse. In the sub chapter titled Philosophical art criticism he points out the distinction between the archaeological and the aesthetic analysis. He comments on the contemporary critical discourses on art and the indigenism which is framing art writing in India- "Not all art critics, however, are exclusively interested in these descriptive, historical, economic, anthropological or sociological aspects of fine arts. There are connoisseurs, who try to attack the problem from what may be called the psychological point of view. They analyse the ideas, the ideals, the 'nine rasas,'the message, or the philosophy of the paintings and sculptures."[8]

Initially this started with the Orientalist project of revival of the indigenous art traditions by Britishers for Western readership. Ram Raz's Essay of the architecture of the Hindus and Rajendralal Mitra's The antiquities of Orissa can be sited as two such early efforts. Gradually the anticolonial resistances took its shape in the formulation of its own histories in its own terms. For this, it was looking at the glorious Aryan past.'Shyama Charan Srimani's project was to look at the concept of art as a reaction against the imitation of the western models of art .For him art was a form of an imagination and sensibility. This was a new turn in art criticism or art history. Bhava[emotion],rasa[emotion] and saundarya[beauty] gained an important position. The main concern was the aestheticism and the spirituality in art.'[9]

Going back to what Warren Hastings talked about the mutual understanding of the culture of the colonised, I would like to dicuss E.B.Havell's writings .I will emphasise more on E.B.Havell from the colonial rethinking on art as

8 Benoy Sarkar,The Aesthetics of young India,Rupam, Vol.9,p.13

9 Tapati Guha Thakurta,Art histories and aesthetic discourse,The making of New Indian art,p.123

he had a deep impact on Abanindranath who became a mentor to some of the women artists whom I would discuss further. Havell reformulated the curriculum in the art schools. He attempted to transform the academic system which was keener on Industrial arts than on Fine arts or the indigenous decorative art of India. Between the years 1897-98 he introduced a number of classes in decorative design. He urged to remove the distinction between fine arts and applied arts. He emphasised on design education, as through it only one can democratise art, make art more reachable rather than the elitism of a space such as a museum. Havell pointed to the discrepancy between the colonizer's project of education and how it alienated the newly educated people from the perennial presence of indigenous art. He urged the revival of traditional craftsmen and artists. According to him---'Indian art is essentially idealistic, mystic, symbolic, and transcendental. The artist is both priest and poet … appeals more to the imagination and strives to realize the spirituality and abstraction of a supra-terrestrial sphere……..The idealism of the Vedas is the life and soul of Indian Art.[10]

Greece was the centre of all intellectual discourses in the west, it was the standard of comparision .Havell criticised the European point of view, and asked for the parameters to be changed. He mentions-'Before we hope to understand either Indian art or literature we must first of all come down from the pedestal of superiority from which we declare that the oriental mind is inscrutable.'[11] He gives examples of cultural differences which were prominent in the art historical writings on Indian art. He puts forth- "Standard books on Indian mythology, like Moor's 'Indian Pantheon' and typical collections, like that of the Institute at Oxford, give one the impression that all Indian Sculpture is barbarous, obscene, or trivial, and that painting as a fine art is almost unknown

10 E.B.Havell,Ideals of Indian art,The heritage of India,p.137

11 E.B.Havell, ,Anglo Indian Aloofness,chapter-1,Indian sculpture and painting, p.8

in India."[12] Hence Havell puts forth the idea of Art writing which expressed his ideas on national art which is the expression of National culture. 'Art is, in one sense, a universal language, but the finer inflections of it are so intimately associated with the national life thought that no one can pretend to understand any distinctly national phase of it who stands entirely aloof from its national environment"[13] He pointed to the capitalist overtures of the Britishers and its commodity fetishism. The Britishers were only interested in the marketable commodity. The Indian Fine arts of painting and sculpture did not belong to that form of capital, hence it received less attention.

The imposition of English taste is also discussed by him, particularly when he talks about the collection of the European copies as a symbolic capital for the rich bourgeoisie. In this context he also points to the influence of European universities in the production of clerks to support government functionaries. He himself tries to construct the Indian taste, to represent the orient in its own light, to create the idea of Indian art history. Museum as the idea of heterotopia construes the cultural identity. Hence when he took charge of the Calcutta Government art gallery which had only poor imitation of European paintings; he discarded them and collected Indian ornaments, paintings and sculptures and attempted to draw the contours of the nascent Indian art history.

He unlike many of his European counterparts saw the irrational(as put forward by the western scholarship on India) as the divine spirit, whereas Birdwood denies the concept of Fine arts in India and compares the Indonesian statue of Dhayni Buddha to 'A boiled suet pudding' he says- "Realism to the Indian artist has a different meaning from what we attach to it; for Indian philosophy regards all we see in nature as transitory, illusive phenomenon, and declares

12 E.B Havell, Museums of India art, chapter I ,introductory, Indian Sculpture and painting,p.10
13 E.B.Havell, Art study in Europe, Chapter 1, Indian Sculpture and painting, ,p.9

that the only reality is the Divine Essence, or Spirit."[14] He mentions that the artistic ideal of the human or divine figure, expresses the spiritual instead of physical strength which was being inspired by the Aryans.

'Just as the great Hindu hero, Krishna, has in Mahabharata a dual personality, one human and one divine, so this transcendental, lion-like ideal always retained in Indian art a symbolism of a dual character, according as it was applied to a human being or to a Deva, a spiritual being or Mahadeva-God.'[15] He talks about realism in the western sense as being different from that in India where the reality is imagined and being mediated by the mind and the ideas of Yoga. He remarks that in both Hindu and Buddhist artistic canons it is laid down that the forms of gods, who also, like human beings, acquired divine powers by ascetic practices, were nevertheless not to be represented like the human ascetic with bodies emaciated with hunger and thirst, bones protruding, and swollen veins, but with smooth skin, rounded ribs and the veins and bones always concealed. He evokes that the word used for a likeness is maya and the aim of Hindu philosophy is to get rid of Maya. Hence according to him by spiritual insight or intuition-rather than by observation and analysis of physical form and facts, that the sculptor or painter must attain to the highest power of artistic expression. He quotes Sukranitisara-'Only the images of the Gods should be made, for they confer heaven and happiness; but the images of men and others shut the door of heaven and bring ill fortune.'[16] Havell goes into the comparative mode with naturalism as the mark of distinction. According to him-'This must always seem to be the case in an art which is entirely creative and imaginative, instead of naturalistic. For, while imagination is the supremest virtue of the artist, it is also the rarest. Works of the highest imaginative

14 E.B.Havell, ,Realism in Indian art,chapter3,indian sculpture and painting, Indian Sculpture and painting p.24

15 E.B.Havell, The development of the divine ideal, The art heritage of India,p.143

16 E.B.Havell ,Portraiture, The art Heritage of India. P.57

power have not been more rare in Indian art than they are in any other country; but when a European fails in this highest poetic gift he finds a safe refuge in painstaking naturalism, which, to nine tenths of the public appeals more than imagination.'[17]

Nothing is more firmly rooted in the mind of the educated Englishman than the idea that, civilization was a peculiar product of Greece; that the Greeks established another important aspect to which Havell points out, the idea of the grotesque. Deo was the word by which God was addressed by the Indians, but it becomes devil, it was being named as deumo as found in the travel writings of the Bolognese Ludovico di Varthema, 1503-1508. After all, had not the Church Fathers taught that all pagan Gods were demons and devils? The travelogues are dotted with such believes. According to Dr .Fryer of Cambridge' there is a need to explain why Indian gods were cut in horrid shapes, the reason of which….though I should allow the diversity of creatures in all orders of the world, hath no other aim but to represent the Divinity, by whatsoever Image, Yet I cannot imagine such deformities could never be invented for that end.'[18] Havell tries to challenge these notions.He tries to understand the iconographical significance and the deeper philosophical thoughts behind them. Like he discusses *Kali* in the context of the Sakta literature, she becomes the personification of the Supreme power which withdraws everything into herself at the dissolution of the universe. 'A figure with three heads and four, six ,or eight seems to a European a barbaric conception, though it is not less physiologically impossible than the wings growing from the human scapula in the European representation of angels an idea probably borrowed from the East.'[19] He refers to the Guna doctrine the three conditions or gunas -i.e. .the opposing

17 E.B.Havell, Dilettantism and Indian art, Indian sculpture and painting .p.69
18 Partha Mitter, chapter 1, ,Indian art in traveller's tale, Much Maligned Monsters , p. 26
19 E.B.Havell, Hindu Allegory ,Indian sculpture and painting, p.60

of extremes and the equilibrating mean represented allegorically by the gods, the asuras, and by Vishnu, were recognised in Hindu Philosophy as attributes of the material manifestation of Isvara, the Supreme Lord.[20] He in his writings brings the philosophical discourses which contribute to the imagining of such deities.

He appears in that interface where there happens a transformation from Indian art and antiquities to Indian art and aesthetics. Havell's chela Abanindranath, as he called himself so, carried forward Havell's endeavour to frame the Oriental Orientalism and conceived it as more Pan-Asian in concept. I will discuss his ideas on art and aesthetics by quoting from his writings in *Bageswhwari Shilpa prabandhabali* which will give a comprehensive view of Abanindranath as the art ideologue. He discusses about the quest for selfhood in the framing of nationalist aesthetics. He says-'To lay the foundation of future, to frame the nationalist aesthetics and in search of identity one looks at the repository of culture. There comes circumstances which goes against the creation of art but in this very moment of crisis the nation thinks about what it had, what it has and what it will have in future.'[21] But along with this emphasis on nationalism he also stresses on the subjectivity of the artist. He says-'Humans didn't get any answer neither from outside nor inside, for this in various countries, in different times people continuously talk about aesthetics. From a pundit (intellectual) to the apandit (non-intellectual) everybody knows the beautiful exists, What is not to be considered beautiful is undecided. Time and space both becomes conducive and adverse to the concept of beautiful-this is almost decided, but what appears as beautiful is decided by an individual'.[22] He points out to the cultural context which shapes the understanding of aesthetics.

20 E.B.Havell, The Trimurti, chapter,The art heritage of India,p.150

21 Abanindranath Tagore, Shilpabritti , Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p.167

22 Abanindranath Tagore, Soundarjer sandhane, Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p.72.

For Abanindranath the act of painting is "*chobilekha*"(writing a picture). He states that-' If with the word one attaches the form then it becomes an uttered picture, but painting is the intertwining of *rupa*(form) and *rekha*(line) and word and thus it becomes *roopkatha*(fairy tale).[23] One can see the revival of the tradition of narrativity in painting, sometimes telling the tales of the past sometimes juxtaposing different times together as can be seen in his Arabian Night series. This narrative element will be visible in the murals and paintings of Nandalal and his students. The question of tradition in Abanindranath's context becomes very complex .He doesn't propose for a blind aping of tradition but he talks about transcending it. He says--'That day one of my students came with a painting by his maternal great-grandfathers' paternal grandfather, I mistook it as his, the student became happy but he didn't notice that I added a late before his name.'[24]

Thus Abanindranath ridicules the blindfolded imitation of tradition. Similarly he ridicules the concept of foreign elements. He mentioned---- "Like that, in another day a student brought a painting rendered in the foreign style by him, I erased the word '*Srijukta*' and put Mr. and speaking some sweet words bade him farewell."[25] He states -'The past will mingle with the present and create something new, the old seed would mix with a new seed and manifest itself, similarly past would move forward with the contemporary rhythm towards the future success-otherwise there is a trouble.'[26]

What Abanindranath tried was not only to emphasise on the Indian character of the content in contemporary art practice but also the practical aspects, the method and material. When Abanindranath discusses folk art, he

23 Abanindranath Tagore, Shilpo o bhasha ,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali,p.42
24 Abanindranath Tagore,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, Shilpir kriyakand p. 141
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.

talks about the pure pictorial quality and its reflection of day today life rather than the religious symbolism. He tried to adapt the freer structure of the folk in his attempt to use all the cultural heritage that can be used. To construct the contemporary Indian art, he looked at European art and the discourses of art in the Indian Shilpa texts as well as Mughal, Rajasthani and Far Eastern style of paintings.

Abanindranath brought the discussion on Sadanga, Six limbs of Indian painting, thus pointing to the normative but often infuses it with local references rather than the *sashtric* ones. Like the "*Potol chera*" which is a very much colloquial Bengali reference for beautiful eyes. He questions the rigidity of the shastras as canons. He links this normative aspect of the Indian art practice with that of Greece. 'Once upon a time the artists had this in mind that they would collect beautiful fragments of things and assemble a beautiful form. In Greece a sculptor chose fifty pieces from five Greek beautiful women and surprised entire Greece. For a time span there was adoration of this form but not forever, at least there came a time that the artist thought it was foolishness to imagine as such. In our country also the same thing happened-the pandits only thought that the shastra sanctioned sculptures are beautiful, those *shastras* are nothing but some measurements and *padma-ankhi, khanjana nagana ,tilaphula, shukanasa ,kadali kanda ,kukkutanda ,nimbapatra* together formed an aesthetic and spiritual pattern."[27]

He emphasises on imagination rather than any rules. He says-'Even if the measurements become perfect by following the shastras - *sarvangyay hi kaschilaksye prajayate*'-one hardly gets a *sarvangasundara* (perfect form).Hence -'*shastramanen yo ramya ramya nanya eva hi.*' The *shastra* became esteemed but the art practice became redundant. Hence some said-

27 Abanindranath Tagore,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, Shilpir kriyakand p. 141

'*Tad ramyam lagnam yatra cha yasya hrit*'.This means the transcendence of *Shastras* and the importance of the artist's involvement with the making. But the shastras answered back -*shastramanbihinam yad aramyam Tad Vipaschitam.*'The *shastrakaras* held the prestige of the pandits. Even though they didn't think that the artist would remain ignorant (if they didn't follow the rules), but the artists of that time followed (the rules). Hence the sculptors followed the same (stylistic trend).'[28] He urges the art practitioners to look at the paintings and understand the nuances of painting by directly experiencing a painting and try to understand the processes of visualisation. According to him- 'These won't be very useful as art text. One has to go to a *chitrashala*(picture gallery). The process of drawing and painting inherent in the ancient paintings can be learnt only by looking at a painting. This had not been documented in any shilpa shastras . In none of the *shilpa shastras* are these written accurately. The colour application, the places which were polished, the different brush strokes and the playfulness of colour-all these are to be learnt by looking at the paintings. These are processes beyond the shastras, (visible) in the paintings till the time of Mughal badshahs, then came Europe, China, Japan. [29]

He remarks that the shastras can be challenged and remodelled according to the need but also points to the importance of mantra which helps in the contemplation of form and inspires imagination.

He further quotes and analyses-

Pratimakarako martyo yatha dhayanarato bhabet
Tatha nanyen margen pratyakshenenapi va khalu.

The shastrakara wrote that there is no way other than to follow this path of meditation. 'The *sanyasi* meditates on the *Arupa* or formless, ineffable and reaches the zenith of bliss, becomes unconscious but that kind of meditation

28 Abanindranath Tagore,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali ,Shilpashastrer kriyakand, P.114
29 Abanindranath Tagore, Shilper kriyakand, Bageswari Prabandhabali,p.115

is impossible for the shaping of any form. In the morning if I start meditation focusing on the morning sun ,the school children saw that the rshi is meditating, but whether the rshi is meditating on opium ball or the ball of fire or of butter and sugar candy- nobody understood unless, the rshi expressed his meditation in the form of a language-'*Jabakusuma shankasham kashyapeyang mahadyutim* or sang the hymn on the sun in *bhairavi*; he combined the form of hibiscus and sun and created the divine form.'[30] He explains the function of *Shastra* ,'*Shastra* is not for them who are so superior that they would transcend the prescription of shastra and so small that they would be outside the preview of shastra, shastra is not meant for both. *Shastra* is for the middle ones. They built and perfected by imitating the good ones. *Shastra* was not built as the fence to future development. The main aim of shastra is to guide those who doesn't know anything. Though one meaning of shastra is to keep under restrictions, but if the application of the strictures doesn't change according to time-space-person then people will act against shastras .If one has to work with the shilpa shastras then from the very beginning , one has to be conscious - one should have a clear knowledge of mata or opinion and mantra. Opinion belongs to one person, ten people can agree or disagree. That which is correct for one person may be incorrect for the other, different people have different opinion. The mantras are completely different. Opinion is preached through one person and *mantra* is being manifested through the most transcendental truth. In *Shilpa shastra* both opinion and mantra exists, the artist can discard opinion but not *mantras*.'[31] This statement denies the rigidity of the canons but not the meditative spirituality which is more imaginative than the canons. In relation to such discussions he also mentions-'Opinions will tell us when a particular arts will take a certain form and by which method a sculpture and painting takes shape , mantras will let us know the main aim of the meditation on arts or

30 Abanindranath Tagore, Ruper man pariman,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p.281

31 Abanindranath Tagore, Antar bahir,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p.106

the path of aesthetic quest which doesn't transform even if there is a change in country-time-person, such deep truth and facts would be talked about..... From the Buddhist period till the Mughals and the British period the artist tread different paths following different people. In Buddhist period, one sees the expression of three different views: the Greek, Persian and Indian in the carvings and paintings on the base of the Buddhist chaitya viharas ! In the Mughal period there is a clash between Persian and Indian, during the British period the European ideas became prominent. In between, here and there one also observes examples of arts which are contrary to the opinions and on which the shilpa-mantras work and from these examples only the creator knows the true nature of Indian art.'[32].

Abanindranath like Havell also addresses the issue of grotesque and the misunderstood ways of representation in Indian art. He points out that according to Lord Curzon the idols are not related to our Gods but for him Brahma, Vishnu , Maheshwar all of them are some sub-human/ inhuman monstrous grotesque figures.'[33] The proportions which are ascertained for the Gods and their Vahanas are all expansion and contraction of all known forms/natural forms. The enlarged form of human body becomes the ogress, if the proportion of the boar and the human is enlarged then it becomes a varaha avatara ,a bird and a human makes a kinnara, the hugeness and the increased number of limbs make a God and Goddess-someone has four hands, someone has ten someone has four, ten faces, elephant's head, *Narasimha,Naranarayana,Harihara, Haraparvati*. The bird and the eye together becomes *khanjana* eye (*khanjana chokh*) the two unequal things become equal……Thus in this entire living world equal and unequal proportions become one and the icon maker gives the

32 Abanindranath Tagore, Shilpayan, p.43,

33 Abanindranath Tagore, Shilper kriyakand,Bageswari Prabandhabali, p. 128

world a shape, a universal form (vishwarupa).[34]

Abanindranath like Havell criticises the archaeological notions of art history which has a scientific approach and thus misses on the locale of the art practice/object, the context and the imagination which shaped it .He gives this analogy-'One doesn't know entirely about the character and nature of somebody's family by considering/matching the genealogy, one only informs about the birthdate, date of dying, name and location. It doesn't tell us about the good or bad character clearly, in art practice too such things happen when one sees art practice through archaeology.[35] Moreover he mentions- 'When the human society was new then fencing was very much needed to protect the arts but when the plants (which acted as fence) grew up then the dyke and the fence had to be increased otherwise the *jat*(character) lives but the plant doesn't grow. The *rasikas* rather than increasing the fence or protecting the *jat* started to protect the plant's life in different countries, they started to mingle the species of one plant with the other, with one nation and the other'.[36] Thus Abanindranath brings about the discussion on hybridity in Indian art .Hybridity, which was there since time immemorial and its future possibilities as such. Hybridity was very much visible in his own art practice, the references range from Persian to Mughal and even Chinese and Japanese.

Thus one can see that the colonial hybridity became the focus of the discourse on indigenous-counter colonial hybridity .Ania Loomba discusses the colonial hybridity as-'Even as imperial and racist ideologies insist on racial difference, they catalyse cross-overs, partly because not all that takes place in the contact zones can be monitored and controlled, but sometimes also as a

34 Abanindranath Tagore ,Ruper man pariman,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p 280
35 Abanindranath Tagore, Shilpabritti,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p.164.
36 Abanindranath Tagore , Jati o shilpa Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali , , p.185

deliberate policy.'[37] In Loomba's discussion hybrid means the influence of the Britishers on the colonised, the shared culture with the colonised elite. Abanindranath further discusses the cultural changes which are being reflected in the art forms and thus refers to the hybridity in Indian art practice. He brought out the discussion on Ajanta in this context. He comments-'In the time of Kalidasa '*Tanvi shyama Shikhari dasana* 'was the ideal form of beauty. During Ajanta and before Ajanta this ideal only continued, the feminine type brought by the Mughals, Armenians and Europeans transformed this .May be someday the Chinese will change it. The taste changes, the ideal changes, the earlier pattern of art changes.'[38] He warns about bad imitation-'In one hand the indigenous lotus recites the *panchali* of Dasarathi Roy,on the other hand the sky becomes blue like the blue bell flower of Scotland resembling the blue eyes of the foreigner, it appears to be "good" to the people but it gets written that it is not so, in the *book of Chitragupta*'.[39]

The retention of the indigenous is being stressed. He wrote-'The artist is active, if there should be art then there should be activity. The first activity is to retain the indigenous within the country, to adapt the foreign one, thirdly it is not the lectures on art but the experience of working on the painting, sculpture, dance ,music and acting(which is needed).'[40] Thus he stresses on nurturing the indigenous elements in art practice and also the cultural environment of the artists. If one searches the sea one finds fish, salt, pearl but not diamond, one has to search the earth/ soil where the artist was born and where he started creating.[41] He critiques the colonial educational system too. He says-'The education given through the national theatre, fine arts or Indian museum and

37 Ania Loomba,Hybridity,Colonial and Post- Colonial identities,Colonialism/Postcolonialism. p.145

38 Abanindranath Tagore, Soundarjer sandhan,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p.73

39 Abanindranath Tagore, Jati o shilpi,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p.189

40 Abanindranath Tagore, Shilper kriyakand,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p.116

41 Abanindranath Tagore, Antar bahir,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p.92

Calcutta University introduced the Fine arts of the present and the past Indian situation,it's like listening to the fairy tale of the past,it excites the imagination a little ,but we did'nt get our own arts in the proper form,in its fuller manifestation. The *rasabodh* which engaged them (in the past) in their beautiful creations at that time is to be carried further rather than the nationalist project. The way in which a nation should welcome the arts is like welcoming a new bride, a new festival should take place …..then only will *Laxmi* reside in home and *sree(*grace) will return and the actual well-being would take place'.[42] He goes on stressing on the importance of the experiential reality, reflecting the local environment. For Abanindranath the immediate experience which is being aestheticized is far more important than the *shastric* rules.

He says----'There is both beautiful and non-beautiful—there is crystal clear water on one side and in another is the pond full of hyacinth. People see them differently so they perceive one as beautiful and the other as non-beautiful, but the creator of the world uses both to beautify them . The *Rupadaksha* deals with both of them. Last year during the eclipse, I was leaving *Purnima utsav* of Santiniketan all alone. On my journey back I was feeling sad as holding the hands of the *rasika* I couldn't meet the beautiful, but the best of the poets suddenly covering the ponds with moonlight alongside the railway line presented them before my eyes. This wonderful incident taught me how to beautify the non –beautiful.'[43]

All his comparisons to describe art draws from the feminine space or nature and sometimes both mingle and become a singular entity. This also underlines the contemporary socio-political conditions like the feminization of nationalism. The humiliated colonized *Bhadralok* invoked the myth of *sakti* or the female power to compensate for the feeling of powerlessness by making it stand for the motherland as well as the awakening consciousness .The equa-

42 Abanindranath Tagore, Jati o Shilpa,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p.187

43 Abanindranath Tagore,Asundar,Bageshwari Shilpa Prabandhabali,p.170

tion- - -*purustva>naritva>klivatva* is subverted rather this equation becomes important –*androgyny>purusatva or naritva*.[44] Thus the asexualized womanhood becomes important. The concept of femininity is adapted to define the ideal male .As being mentioned , Art was also referred as *kalalaxmi*----When Abanindranath talks about *rupavidya* he says----'From the very beginning people see rupavidya as the female companion[sahachari]of his leelas and till now looks similarly. "*Grihini sachiva sakhimitha*" just as it is for the beautiful lady similarly it is for the *rupavidya*.'[45] The boundaries of line encircles the rupavidya like a moat, it doesn't imprison, like a *mekhala*, like anklets ,like the river banks, the line becomes the mate ,the wife ,and flows with the rhythm of music, like the string of veena ,rekha becomes one with the other ,the *rupavidya* and *rekha* becomes one and excites *rasa.*[46] *Rekha* becomes a beautiful woman only when the *rupa,* colour and *rekha* are well mingled and one perceives *rupa , rekha* and *rasa* simultaneously.[47]

Imagination became important as against naturalism in the discussion of Oriental Orientalism. One sees the discussion of it through the philosophical ideas and that of aesthetics. Imagination also articulates the difference between archaeological / historical view of art writing that depends on a wider perception of aesthetics. Abanindranath points out –'-If one has only a bit of intelligence one can write the history of art but the elements with which art history is made cannot be derived from it------ Napoleon was the artist possessing *vir rasa*, in his hands were built the history of Europe . Ceaser, like an artist built Rome …..The historical incidents are hard like stones, the historians can't change it a bit but a novelist, poet, artist can even melt the stone, the maker can give it any form and leave it.'[48] He further talks about idealization of natural form through the

44 Ashis Nandy,Intimate Enemy,The psychology of Colonialism,p.53
45 Abanindranath Tagore,Rupavidya,Bageshwari shilpa Prabandhabali,p.198
46 Abanindranath Tagore, rupa dekha,Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali, p. 230
47 Ibid.
48 Abanindranath Tagore,Shilpa o dehatatwa,Bageshwari Shilpa prabandhabali,p.72

aesthetic discourse. 'To judge the plants anatomy from the seed's anatomy and to judge the anatomy of the ideal form from the anatomy of the human form is equally foolish.…Just as destroying the anatomy of the seeds the plants appear, like that discarding the anatomy of the monkeys appear the human being, similarly destroying the medical anatomy, the artist discovers artistic anatomy, which according to the *rasa* increase or decrease ,bend, like all the natural objects ----like the tree trunk ,stalk, petal, clouds, waterfalls.'[49] He again talks about inspiration and idealisation as an important source for art practice. But in his attempt to articulate the understanding of Indian Art and the reformulation of Indian aesthetics, he subsumes marginalized practices like the *brathakatha* which belonged to the feminine space and was documented as a part of ethnotyping which was to serve not the anthropologizing gaze of colonizer but the nationalist masculinity. Even the peripheral life of the subalterns were aestheticized, a subaltern body which was assumed to be natural, is being reduced to a type.

Abanindranath criticizes the depiction of the santhal life, he resists the "crudity" of santhal life, for him it should be idealized/aestheticized. He says—"But one day while roaming in the forest I saw a dark girl putting flower in her hair .Watching this I felt as if that girl has also merged with nature, as if she is nature's daughter. I drew that dark girl, I didn't paint her portrait, I painted a type……there is a wave to paint primitive and crude, what is there? Strength! this is wrong .In nature there is nothing as such .There is a tree, the tree's trunk is so hard and rough, like crocodile's skin. In that branch only young green leaves are seen .In nature crudity is covered by aesthetics."[50]

He personifies nature. This he takes up as the valid definition and goes on discussing and draws analogy with Chinese and Japanese art .This had been

49 Abanindranath Tagore,Shilpa o dehatatwa,Bageshwari Shilpa prabandhabali,p.72
50 Rani Chanda,Shilpiguru Abanindranath Tagore,p.42

criticized by Coomarswamy-----'It is impossible to accept Tagore's subjective interpretation of those terms ; they can far better be understood in a purely practical sense as distinction of types ,ideal proportion, expression of mood[with reference to the theory of rasa] ,Embodiment of charm, Points of view [with reference to stance, sthanam] and preparation of colours [grinding levigation].'[51]

The year 1902 sees another turn in Abanindranath's role as a pedagogue. In this very year arrives Kakuzo Okakura. Okakura has already established his own school *Nippon bijutsu* which spoke for a nationalist art practice in Japan and prior to that he also worked with Professor Ernst Fenollosa in the preservation of ancient Japanese tradition. There were parallels between the thought processes of Abanindranath and Okakura as pedagogues. "According to this school, freedom is the greatest privilege of an artist, but freedom always in the sense of evolutional self-development .Art is neither the ideal nor the real. Imitation, whether of nature ,of the old masters ,or above all of self, is suicidal to the realisation of individuality, which rejoices always to play an original part ,be it of tragedy or comedy ,in the grand drama of life, of man, and of nature.''[52]

Kakuzo Okakura and Abanindranath met in the year 1902.Both these pedagogues found the common passion for building up the national aesthetics, a counter discourse to the Occidental Orientalism. Okakura contributed to the Japanese studies. The *Toyoshi*(Japanese Oriental history) was based on 'cultural difference', it looked for the Asiatic unity to frame its own identity. "Okakura was more interested in regaining 'a lost beauty of Asia', to counter 'negative and conflictual Western influences"[53] He writes further that Asian culture is a unity, a continuum in large part only comprehensible or tangible to Asians, working on a longer time scale and of a greater richness and depth than that of the West.

51 Kakuzo Okakura,The ideals of the East,Calcutta 1973,p.13
52 Kakuzo Okakura,The ideals of the East,Calcutta 1973,p.13
53 Stefan Tanaka,Japan's Orient,p.266

He used the idea of the 'magnetic triangle' which consisted of –tradition, nature and originality. They all lie in harmony never overpowering each other. But in his Asian triangle Japan is positioned in the apex where India stands for the 'Individualism of Vedas' and Chinese communitarian ethics represented by the 'communism of Confucius. But there is a form of sublation in this model. He said-'Asia is one. The Himalyas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilizations, the Chinese with its communism of Confucius, and the Indian with its individualism of the Vedas. Arab Chivalry, Persian poetry, Chinese ethics, and Indian thought all speak of a single Asiatic peace, in which there grew up a common life, bearing in different regions different characteristic blossoms, but nowhere capable of a hard and fast dividing line.[54]

His texts point to the 'rebirth of Asia based on a renewed consciousness represented through its creation of art .Idealism and not realism matters ,one can draw parallels with Abanindranath's idea of Bhava here. Okakura mentions in his Ideals of the East-'The stream of ideas is the real: facts are mere incidents. Not the thing as it was, but the infinitude it suggested to him is what we demand of the artist. It follows that the feeling for line, chiaroscuro as beauty, and colour as the embodiment of emotion, are regarded as strength, and that to every criticism of the naturaliseque, the search after beauty, the demonstration of the ideal, is deemed a sufficient answer.'[55]

Okakura states-'Fragments of nature in her decorative aspects: clouds black with sleeping thunder: the mighty silence of pine forests :the immovable serenity of the sword :the ethereal purity of the lotus rising out of darkened waters: the breath of star-like plum flowers :the stains of heroic blood on the robes of maidenhood; the tear that may be shed in his old age by the hero; the mingled terror and the pathos of war; or the waning light of some great

54 Rustam Bharucha ,Another Asia, p.17

55 Okakura Tenshin, ,The Meiji period:1850 To the present day,The ideals of the east, p.103

splendour-such are the moods and symbols into which the artistic consciousness sinks, before it touches with revealing hands that mask under which the universal hides.[56] Again reflections of idealism and romanticism can be seen. He tries to relate the metaphysical aspect of religion with aesthetics and brings in the discussion on suggestion which resonates Abanindranath and Nandalal. He writes-'Art thus becomes the moment's repose of religion, or the instant when love stops, half-unconscious, on her pilgrimage in search of the infinite ,lingering to gaze on the accomplished past and dimly-seen future—a dream of suggestion, nothing more fixed—but a suggestion of the spirit, nothing less noble.''[57]

According to John Clark-'The beautiful is discussed in reference to a current national position or state of being. The characteristic of this third discursive position is extreme motility, whereby a thinker or artist is able to switch with alacrity between political discourse on the national and aesthetic discourse on the characteristics of the national.'[58] Aesthetics is being contextualised again and again with parameters having similar outlines. The colonial project of acculturation of its subject and the attempt to decolonize the mind by the colonised is being apparent in A.K.Coomarswamy's discourses on art, he reflects on this aspect of colonialism and puts forth-'The object of government is to make the governed behave as the governor's wish. This is true of 'good' and 'bad' government alike of the rule of a conqueror, of a hereditary monarchy and of majority government by representation.'[59] He urges that to build up the foundations of the present one must invoke the past.

A.K.Coomarswamy is another important exponent of this new indigenous movement, a person according to Radhakrishnan responsible for the Indian

56 Okakura Tenshin, ,The Meiji Period:1850 To The Present Day,The ideals of the east p.100

57 Ibid, p.104

58 Okakura Tenshin and Aesthetic Nationalism, East Asian History,Number29.June 2005 Institute of Advanced studies, Australian national University.

59 A.K.Coomaraswamy, Individuality, Autonomy and Function,Dance of Shiva, p.163

Renaissance. He aimed at the philosophical aspect of Indian Aesthetics. For him art expression is a cultural experience rather than something subjective. He points out-'Taste reflects affectability and is not by any means disinterested. As expressed in the work of art ,where it becomes the determinant of 'style' (riti),taste, whether we call it'' good' 'or ''bad' ',reflects the character(svabhava)of the artist as individual, or more generally within unanimous(*sammata*)groups that of the environment(*kala-desha*).''[60] His works are replete with references from traditional texts. But what inspired him from those texts are not to be taken as standards but certain normative ideas which are being interpreted by him and whose continuity he traced to his contemporary times. He stressed that the vitality of a tradition persists only so long as it is fed by intensity of imagination. The most important focus of his writings is on the mental activity involved in the creation of art. He speaks of the *sadhana',mantram, dhyanam* through which the 'ideal' form is achieved. Contemplative vision (*Yoga Dhyana*) becomes important. It is being mentioned-'And so to summarize the injunctions which are scattered through the books in which are collected the prescriptions for images, the imager is required, after emptying his heart of all extraneous interests, to visualize within himself(*antarhrdayakase*)an intelligible image(*jnanasattva-rupa*),to identify himself therewith(*tadatmanam dhyayet or bhavayet)*,and holding this image as long as may be necessary(*evam rupam yavad icchati tavad vibhavayet*),then only to proceed to the work of embodiment in stone, metal, or pigment-*dhyatva kuryat*.[61] According to Coomarswamy pure form is both a priori and post factum at the same time- It is that by which or after which (anu) the aspect is induced, so as to exist before our eyes (*pratyaksha*). This reminds of Gombrich who puts forth the idea of schema and correction.

60 A.K.Coomaraswamy,Art in Indian life,p.76

61 A.K.Coomaraswamy,Art in Indian Life,Coomaraswamy,Selected Papers,ed.Roger Lipsey.p.85

According to him the artist compares a pictorial schema to direct observation of the world and on the basis presumes to correct the schema.

The materialism of the west is countered by the spiritualism of the east. He says-''The only condition of a renewal of life in India, or elsewhere, should be a spiritual, not merely an economic and political awakening, and it is on this ground alone that it will ever be possible to bridge the gulf which has been supposed to divide the east from the west.''[62] In this context the metaphorical becomes symbolic. He talks about innate forms and symbolic imitation. Coomarsawmy is pointing towards the coordination of ideal form and natural shape, they though being different are 'coincident in the common unity of the symbol. Symbol for him is not the double of the real/original but associative or metaphorical .He draws from the three guna principle of the s*amkhya darshana:* the artistic material is inert and crude which refers to the *tamasika* which the artist influences with his sattvika guna of an innate unity in which the crudeness is transcended through the symbol. For him art is not imitation but a symbolic adaptation of the innate forms inherent in the human mind and the creation of response in the audience/viewer. He adds- "The Indian imager was concerned with his own problem. It is interesting to see the kind of man he was expected to be. According to one of the *Shilpa-Shatsras* 'the *shilpan*(artificer) should understand the atharva *veda*,the thirty two *shilpa-shastras* and the vedic mantras by which the deities are invoked. He should be one who wears a sacred thread, a necklace of holy beads, and a ring of *kusha* grass on his finger; delighting in the worship of God ,faithful to his wife, avoiding a strange women, piously acquiring a knowledge of various sciences, such a one is indeed craftsman.''[63] Thus one also sees a combination of aesthetics and morality coloured by religion which reminds of William Morris.

62 A.K.Coomaraswamy, Young India, Dance of Shiva, p .161,

63 A.K.Coomaraswamy, ,Hindu view of art, The dance of Shiva, p.24

Coomarswamy, like Havell and Okakura believed in the concept of the larger narration of 'Early Asiatic 'culture which included the Mediterranean, China and Ceylon. He like Okakura talked about the Pan Asia, the focal point being Ceylon.He says-'Take for example Ceylon(whose people are now the most denationalised of any India):can we think of India as complete without Ceylon? Ceylon is unique as the home of Pali Literature and Southern Buddhism, and in its possession of a continuous chronicle invaluable as a check upon some of the more uncertain data of Indian chronology. Sinhalese art, Sinhalese religion, and the structure of Sinhalese society, bring most vividly before us certain aspects of early Hindu culture, which would be hard to find so perfectly reflected in any part of modern India.[64]

He subverts the idea of symbolism as a reductive argument as put forth by the occidental orientalism. According to him---'…..although words or other images are necessarily incomplete means of statement and communication, the given symbol may be perfect in the sense that it would not have been better found, just as the reflection of the moon in still water may be called perfect, though the moon is not in it otherwise than as an image .Just as the reflection is not substantially a doublet (savarna)of its subject, though it may be according to the workman's skill a perfect embodiment of the mental images present to his consciousness.'[65] For him the image whether in the mind or in the work is only a means to knowledge, not in itself knowledge. Artistic sense in the artist is the indivisible identity of form and concept, formal and pictorial elements in his mind, art in the work is the embodiment of this identity in a given material. He points to the relation between Symbol and imitation. According to him the success of the symbol lies in the metaphor, the concept of *Sadrishya* brings them together. The apparent multiplicity of nature is, in effect, intelligible through an

64 A.J.Gunawardana, Ananda Coomarswamy and the Greater India,Ananda Coomaraswamy Centenary Essays, p.29

65 M.Shivaramakrishna,Art and nature in Ananda K.Coomaraswamy's aesthetic, Ananda Coomaraswamy centenary essay,ed.C.D.Narasimhaiah,p.134

immanent, interior awareness on the part of the artist of its basic unity. And this unity can be communicated only through signs (*rupa*) and symbols (pratika). [66] Thus art for him is not imitation but symbolic imitation of the innate forms of the human mind with evocation of this innate form in the mind of the reader as its aim. He also like other scholars of Pan Asianism refers to Hsieh Ho to explain the significant form which exhibits the inter-relation of things, and reveals the spirit in the gestures of living things. Aesthetic emotion is being compared to the mystic experience (*brahmasvadana sahodarah)*. He refers to Sukracharya where he draws parallels to *dhyana* (meditation) by the worshipper and the dhyana by the artist. The worshiper recites the *dhyana mantram* describing the deity and relates it then to the imagined form so also the artist begins to represent the mental picture in a visible and objective form through painting and sculpting.[67]

Again, as I discussed previously there prevailed the idea of beauty as a nationalist discourse as against the frame of the west denigrating the east of not possesing the idea of aesthetics and fine arts and the discussion on the deumos or devas being looked at as the demons or the grotesques .Coomarswamy had an argument against this accusation. He quotes at the very beginning of the chapter Indian images with many arms – 'According to Vincent Smith- "Indian sculpture properly so –called hardly deserves to be reckoned as art .The figures of both man and animals become stiff and formal, and the idea of power is clumsily expressed by the multiplication of members. The many headed, many-armed gods and goddesses whose images crowd the walls and roofs of medi-eval temples have no pretensions to beauty, and are frequently hideous and grotesque.'[68] Or as Sir George Birdwood has put forward-'the monstrous shapes of the Puranic deities are unsuitable for the higher forms of artistic representa

66 M.Shivaramakrishna,Art and nature in Ananda K.Coomaraswamy's aesthetic, Ananda Coomaraswamy centenary essay,ed.C.D.Narasimhaiah,p.134

67 A.K.Coomaraswamy, ,Hindu View of Art,Dance of Shiva p.21

68 Imperial Gazetteer of India,1910,vol.II

tion; and this is possibly why sculpture and painting are unknown as fine arts in India.[69] 'According to Coomaraswamy the artists made the works by following the canons but had imaginations which the critic or art historian has to look for .He gives the example of a Javanese figure of Mahisha Mardini with ten arms, slaying the demon mahisha . She is a dread avenging power; yet she is neither cruel nor angry, but rather sad with the sadness of those who are wise, playing an inevitable part, though at heart no more than the spectator of a drama. This entire figure, damaged as it is, shows what tenderness may be expressed, even in *tamasic* images.[70]

Another example which he gives is that of the Death of Hiranyaka-shipu .He says-'The death of 'Hiranyakashipu…is a work that may be called grotesque. We have long learnt however that this cannot be used as a mere abuse. It would be difficult to imagine a more splendid rendering of the well-known theme of impious king who met his death at the hands of the avenging deity in man-lion form. The hand upon the shoulder, the shrinking figure with a mocking smile that has had no time to fade-what could be more terrible? These are figures expressing by their action their animating passions: or if not so then none have ever been. It would be unkind to contrast a work such as this with the' truth to nature' of the Laokoon.'[71] Thus one can see the appropriation of Indian aesthetics and philosophy being absorbed by him to articulate his ideas on art and framing of the oriental orientalism.

Another important personality who joined these pedagogues was Sister Nivedita. She was born in Ireland and as an Irish nationalist she wanted the re-vival of the folk culture and that of fine arts. When her interest shifted to India she wanted the same for India. She believed that the revival of Indian tradi

69 Sir George Birdwood,Industrial arts of India,p.125

70 A.K.Comaraswamy,Indian Images with many arms , p. 65

71 A.K.Coomaraswamy, Indian Images with many arms,The dance of Shiva, p.65

tional art forms were essential to the imagination of a new nation. In her early life she was attracted to Roman Catholicism due to aesthetic ideas inherent in it. She studied ancient religious paintings. Her friend Ebnezer Cook inspired and initiated her in art .He was a follower of Ruskin. There are also reflections of Ruskinian ideas in Nivedita's writings on art. Cook was associated with her Wimbledon School. This Ruskinian association inspired her to relate art with life. In 1899 during her travels in Northern India with Swami Vivekananda she started taking interest in Indian Art .In Chicago, she delivered a lecture on Indian arts and crafts with inputs from Swami Vivekananda. Prior to that he also spoke on this subject in Paris Conference of 1900.He criticized the Occidental orientalism. In 1902, Sister met Havell. She had paid a visit to the arts school and exchanged her ideas on art with him. The tangets met. Nivedita wrote art reviews and also introductions for Havell and Okakura's books. She was first critical about Abanindranath because of his European inclinations but later inspired him in this new language of indigenous modernism.

Later she inspired his disciple Nandalal Bose when he was a student in the art school. She admired Nandalal's paintings, but once criticized his painting on *Kali* and pointed out that he couldn't understand the idea of the sublime that is there in the *Kali* idol. She sent Nandalal and Asit Halder to accompany Lady Herringham to copy the paintings of Ajanta. She suddenly planned the tour, arranged the funds for their journey and later went there and monitored their work.

Her writings would talk about the strong hegemonic tendencies of the art theories of her contemporary times that is the idea of Nation as a hegemonic construct which influences all aspects of life. She says-'In fact the growth of a sense of Nationality involves, amongst other things, something like the spontaneous appearance of a sovereign faculty among us. It is like the perception of

their own unity and inter-relation, amongst the different parts of a single organism .Related to each other in the bonds of this idea, we become able to sit in National commission, as it were on the problems of our own society and our own future. And about nothing, perhaps is this more necessary than with regard to Indian Art.'[72] She talks about a change, a quest for the national identity. The formation of a national identity which can tide over the situation, the loss of aura of the subjugated colonial subjects. She says-'For it is not change that is destructive, but aimless or wrongly –purposed change. And precisely from such it is that the ideal of nationality, with its overwhelming impulse of moral direction and ethical stability, is to deliver us. Whenever we look, on the sea of struggle, we see this thought, that we be a nation, shinning as the pole star above the tossing voyagers.'[73]

She visits villages, experiences the real situation in villages, collects specimens of art and appreciates the trivial everyday objects of an Indian Household. According to her everybody in India even the lower strata of the society has an understanding of art, they can admire a painting, a pot, a statue. 'The culture of the eye is perfect in this land.'[74] In a similar note to Havell she also talks about a re-awakening which is born out of an anti-colonial struggle. 'An imperialised people have nothing to struggle for, and without the struggle upwards there can be no, great genius, no great poetry .Therefore, in periods of empire Art must always undergo decay. But the reverse is the case with ourselves. We have to struggle for everything, struggle to make our thoughts clear and definite; struggle to carry and scatter it, broadcast ,that we may all be made one in its name; struggle again, when this is done, to make it a reality to others as well as ourselves.'[75] She talks about spectatorship, deculturation of vision. In her

72 Sister Nivedita, ,Indian art,vol.3, pp.4-5

73 Sister Nivedita, The Function of art in shaping nationality,Vol.3 ,p.3

74 Sister Nivedita,Indian Art, (I.a),Vol.3, p.5

75 Sister Nivedita, The function of art in shaping nationality,Vol.3.p.13

writings it is mentioned- "Indian women, with this incomparable draperies, the beggars with the staff and begging-bowl that hints of Shiva; labour, beautiful in all lands, but here still further dignified by its wonderful gentleness and refinement; the priest in the temple, the boatman on the river, the mother with her child, the bride stepping forth to the bridal, Do you Indian students of Indian Art see nothing in any of these that you long to record? Can you not go through life seeking for the glimpses that open up the great vistas?"[76]

One can read the ethnographic tendencies to construct the national ideal. To collect specimens of art from all over India or document the Indians with their ethnic specificities and utility objects became an important aspect of this construal of *Swadeshi* aesthetics. There is also an appeal to include them, make them visible, and contextualize them in narrating historical themes. These ethnographic propriety becomes her critical parameters. We would see such reflections in her criticism of Sukhalata Rao's paintings .For her the true reachability of art education should be realized only when it has the Indian character. The inherent ethnicity of the art practice will make it more comprehensible and purposeful. She contextualizes a painting in linguistic terms, she compares a painting and a language and the affect which they produce. The affect which is weak or unintelligible if it is grounded or written in a' foreign tongue'. She says- "All great expression, whether by writing or drawing or sculpture or what not,is to some extent the outcry of a human heart for human sympathy,and men do not so cry in an unknown tongue.''[77] She approves of a language which shows the 'communal taste' and this is the aim again pointing to the hegemonic nature of the practice. In relation to this one can refer to the discussion on cultural difference or inappropriateness of certain representations which is not in consonance to the taste of the people. She mentions-'In Indian

76 Sister Nivedita, The function of art in shaping nationality,Vol.3.p.19
77 Sister Nivedita,Indian Art, Vol.3,p.7

art particularly, there is a tendency to become too intellectual or too technical, which is apt periodically to override the artistic instinct, and destroy art. Thus in Lahore Museum, after a long series of exquisite ancient sculpture which may or may not show influence of Bactrian or Chinese craftsmen, we come with a gasp upon the emaciated figure of a fasting Buddha. In Jeypore, also, we hear of a skeleton Kali. Now these things are wrong. They mark the dying power of an art-period. Art is not science. The pursuit of the beautiful-not necessarily the sensuously beautiful, but always the beautiful-is her true function. The artist has a right to refuse, as not suitable to his purpose, all that to his particular temperament appears as unbeautiful.''[78] Here one sees the reflection of idealism and artistic subjectivity. This statement tries to subvert many Eurocentric art historical writings which actually glorified this phase of art as it had some borrowed sensibilities from Greek art. Thus she like her contemporaries speaks for the ideal form and not the natural and derides the scientific vision

According to her, art is an activism. Art education should become also an expression of the nationalist ideals addressing the contemporary political situations. There is an emphasis on not only an establishment of the art school but it should have the autonomy of an university where-''the common talk amongst the students out of hours, to cover all the accepted conclusions, all the burning questions of the day; their reading to be marked by an insatiable curiosity for all the noble secrets of the world.''[79]

This relation of art and activism is to be seen in the women artist who are being discussed further. According to her artist's collectives/collective initiative by the artists should take place. She refers to the 'Fabian society 'of the socialist circle as the main source of a democratic culture, the London Positivists and the medieval movement in English art which began with Rossetti, Morris, Burne-Jones, Simeon Solomon were mentioned and similar endeavours were requested.

78 Sister Nivedita,Indian Art, Vol.3,p.18

79 idbd p.14

Her engagement with the creative circuit with the Tagore household is visible. Hence she also appreciates the initiatives of the Indian society of Oriental Art .In her review –'The exhibition of Indian art new and old, which was held by this society at the Government School of Art ,Calcutta ,during the month of February ,the imaginative character of old Indian art was well vindicated. It is not until a large collection of the best specimens has been brought together that we are in a position to form any opinion at all regarding the general character of the last five centuries of Our Art.''[80] This again reflects Havell's critique of the occidental politics of patronizing only certain kind of European art which is exclusive in nature and has imperialist narration written large in it.

Sister Nivedita,Havell,Abanindranath,Okakura and Nandalal were in a symbiotic relation which had the common goal of framing a nationalist aesthetics .Nandalal Bose was quite taken by Sister's ideas on art .The trip to Ajanta was arranged by Sister Nivedita in 1909 the initiative of which was taken by Lady Herringham,a British artist and connoisseur who came to India to copy afresh the Ajanta Murals. Sister Nivedita and Abanindranth suggested Nandalal's name. One can see the tussle over the overtly religious Sister and Abanindranath. Whereas Nivedita saw the meditative aspect of Indian art, Abanindranath would say, *Shilpir dhyan chok khule* that is the artist should meditate with his eyes open. Nandalal was influenced by both of them. Nandalal like Sister Nivedita thinks that common public should interact with art. He also mourns the loss of appreciation and practice of traditional art forms. He mentions-'If the objective of our education is total development, art training should have the same status and importance as reading and writing. But the provision that our universities make for this is sorely inadequate at present. It would seem that this is due to the general notion that art is the exclusive preserve of a few profes sionals and common people have nothing to do with it. When the educated

80 Sister Nivedita, The Exhibition of the Indian society of Oriental Art p.53.vol.3

do not feel any sense of shame at not understanding art, what question can there be of commoners? They cannot differentiate between a painting and a photograph. They gape in amazement at Japanese dolls as if they are great specimens of art. Garish German wrappers in red, blue and purple do not strain their eyes but give them pleasure. On grounds of utility they use tin containers in place of (elegant) earthen pitchers they can easily lay their hands on. The educated public of this country and its universities are mainly responsible for this. A cursory look at our educational scene will reveal that, while this country's cultural life has fanned out, its aesthetic sensibilities have grown distressingly worse. The only redress for this lies in spreading art education amongst the so-called educated public, as they set the standards for the people at large'. [81]

His teacher Abanindranth mentioned in his *Bageshwari* lecture that there was a need to cultivate the taste of art appreciation through writing on art making and also by practical experiencing of good art and by practicing art itself. Nandalal was thus inspired to write on art practice. He emphasised on observing nature. He found drawing as the means to understand nature in its true essence. For him the festivals based on different seasons help the students to understand the various nuances of nature. The students should be introduced to Nature's own festival of the seasons, to see with their own eyes and enjoy the rice fields and lotus ponds in autumn, the carnival of *palas* and *simul* flowers in spring. This is essential for the town-dwellers though, for the rural boys, pointing them out may be enough. On these seasonal festivals one needs to declare special holidays and hold picnics and games, encourage wearing of seasonal costumes. Once the students get acquainted with Nature, and learn to love it, their aesthetic sensibilities will never dry for through the ages, it is nature that has provided the source material for all artistic creation.[82]

81 Nandalal Bose,Place of Art in Education,Shilpakatha,p.23

82 Nandalal Bose,The art pursuit,Shilpa Katha,p.27.

He quotes- '*Isavasyamidamidam sarvam yatkinca jagatyam jagat*- Whatever is in this universe is God's abode. Our future art should see the whole world and its life and spirit of this Upanishidic mantra; and start anew….'[83] It reminds one of the discussion of the contemplative forms of Coomarswamy and Abanindranath which again highlights the spiritual aspect of art practice. He compares a spiritual seeker and the artist. Brings in the question of aesthetic essence *rasa*. He gives the example of the man who first conceived the image of *Kali* or *Nataraja* in his meditative mind, he was as much an artist as he was a spiritual seeker, the man who gave these forms was as much as a spiritual seeker as he was an artist.

He discusses imitation in relation to imagination. He says-'One cannot see everything in nature by optical vision alone. Also when one puts down what is seen by the mind's eye (imagination) its form is affected by the mind's condition? The mind observes facts partially, some facts it plays down, or accentuates. So' suggestive 'paintings cannot be close imitations; their painted image will be different from the factual image of the object.'[84] 'Thus one can again connect to Coomaraswamy's view on imagination of the artist and its expression through the art works. He like Coomarswamy also' talks about the apriori idea but in relation to *sadrishyabodh*.'[85] An accomplished artist observes nature well, takes note of form correspondences (similitudes) and devises his schemata. He is able, then, to put new life into traditional forms; his acquaintance with Nature unlocks to him its secrets; and he is able to infuse afresh naturalistic structure, movement and attributes into them."[86]

He also brings forth the discussion on visual analogies and thus again talks about organic element which is there even when the artist imagines the human

83 Nandalal Bose, Vision and Creation.Shilpa katha,p.31
84 Nandalal Bose, Introducing art ,Shilpa Katha,p.32
85 Nandalal Bose,Art and the use of Anatomy,Shilpa Katha, p.39
86 Nandalal Bose,Vision and Creation,Shilpakatha,p.40

form. He talks about a general rhythm. 'The type rhythm admits the possibility of *bimba*…'[87] An elaborate discussion on this will be done in the next section of this chapter, in relation to the concept of design and crafts.

Nandalal brings up another important aspect to the fore that is the question of anatomy. He focuses on the oriental understanding of anatomy. He says-'The European artist starts with an analysis of the parts and moves towards the whole; the Oriental artist starts with the whole and comes to the analysis of the parts.'[88] He talks about life movement. According to him the composition begins with life movement. The emotional expression develops from there. As the artist's powers of observation increase he learns to add details to his image; but only to the extent necessary; so that the details do not impair the life movement,' this reminds of the discourse on aesthetic emotion or even angika abhinaya.

He like Abanindranath brings up the comparative aesthetics-, he mentioned that 'A Chinese artist has said, "In the eyes of the real artist the image of a blade of grass and that of God are equivalent; each can evoke the same aesthetic experience. 'His discussions on art are also not bereft of Far eastern aesthetics. He talks about the difference between Indian and Chinese art traditions, according to him Chinese artists consider himself a part of Nature and tries to loose himself within it and the Indian artist, knowing that both he and Nature are both moved by the same life-rhythm, takes Nature for another expression or image of his own being.'[89] This reminds one again of how in *Sadanga* the associative quality of human and plant or animals is being discussed.The recurring image of Buddha and the defence of the Indian manner of portrayal surfaces in his writings .He says –'The image of the Buddha is an image of intense meditation, not the image of a person. When a certain emotion or experience seeks

87 Nandalal Bose, introducing art, Shilpakatha, p.33
88 Nandalal Bose, Art and the use of anatomy,Shilpakatha,p.34
89 Nandalal Bose, What is art? Vision and creation ,p.48

expression in a certain kind of image, or image type, and brings it to perfect beauty, it does not leave one any chance to go further in that line. The image of the Buddha is a perfect creation of this kind.'[90]

In the present context, Rabindranath Tagore becomes another important pedagogue who pronounces the same from *Upanishads* like Nandalal and points to the immanence of beauty in everything. He said; "Beauty is truth, truth beauty. The Upanishads too tell us -*anandarupamamrtam yadvibhati*, all that is ,is manifestation of His Joy, His deathlessness. From speck of dust at our feet to the stars in the heavens-all is a manifestation of truth and beauty, of joy and immorality."[91]

Humanism becomes the centre of his discourse. 'He reads humanism in the construction of Pyramids, Elephanta Caves and Konark temples. He says- 'Thus were the pyramids placed as notes of admiration of man for the vast expanses of the desert sands; the caves of Elephanta, carved with such artistic care, signify man's joy for the beach of a lonely island by the sea; the temple of Konarak ,raised with huge blocks of stone carried from long distance ,symbolize man's salutation for the glory of the sun rising out of the sea . Thus, whenever man has had a profound realization of the True as a source of joy abiding, he has put up a sign in sculpture, in temples, in places of pilgrimage, in capital cities.'[92]

Rabindranath's debates on the rationality of sciences as against the irreal spiritual world, the world of emotions. He focuses on the arguments by the colonisers and the spreading of their colonial project under the garb of rationality and questions them. He puts forth 'The world of science is not a world of reality, it is an abstract world of force. We can use it by the help of our intellect but cannot realize it by the help of our personality. It is like a swarm of mechan-

90 Nandalal Bose, What is art? Vision and Creation, p.48
91 Rabindranath Tagore, The sense of beauty, On arts and aesthetics,p.8
92 Rabindranath Tagore, On Art and Aesthetics, p.8

ics who thought producing things for ourselves as personal beings, are mere shadows of us. But there is another world which is real to us. We see it, feel it; we deal with it all our emotions. Its mystery is endless because we cannot analyse it or measure it. We can but say, "Here you are"[93]

He again mentions-'When an organization which is a machine becomes a central force, political, commercial, educational or religious, it obstructs the free flow of inner life of the people and waylays and exploits it for the augmentation of its own power .Today, such concentration of power is fast multiplying on the outside and cry of the oppressed spirit of man is in air which struggles to free itself from the grip of screws and bolts, of unmeaning obsessions'.[94] One can read the capitalistic nature of the colonial power in these lines; the power which erases the existences of civilizations, exploits and imposes certain cultural norms on the colonised.

Rabindranath also looked for the Far eastern sensibilities. He appreciated the aesthetic sense of the Japanese which was minimalist in nature. He mentioned-'If you ask me to draw some particular tree, and I am no artist, I try to copy every detail, lest I should otherwise lose the peculiarity of the tree, forgetting that the peculiarity is not the personality. But when the true artist comes, he overlooks all details and gets into the essential characterization'.[95] This finds a similar note in Nandalal Boses's concern for understanding nature.

Another interesting aspect, to which Tagore is pointing out is the experiential reality and how this reality weaves the philosophical within that matrix. For him the personal truths are not bereft of philosophical ideas, which are apparently abstract. They are quite common in Indian literature, because they have been woven with the fibres of one's personal nature. The Personal be

93 Rabindranath Tagore, What is art? On arts and aesthetics, p.11
94 Rabindranath Tagore, The religion of an artist, On arts and aesthetics p.33
95 Rabindranath Tagore, What is art? On arts and aesthetics, p.21

comes political. Here I am appropriating this particular thought of Tagore to understand the conscious attempt to appropriate the feminine space by the nationalist project of art education. Thus the readings of all these texts point out to the concerns of framing an aesthetics which includes the metaphysical aspect of Indian philosophy; the wider narrative of Pan Asia, the visibility of peripheral narratives of the folk and femininity .

This chapter attempted to trace the impact of culture on the nascent construal of discourses on Indian aesthetics which is again aligned to the imagination of nation. Dipesh Chakravorty mentioned in his essay 'Nation and imagination' -'Nationalism ,one may then say, presents the question of vision and imagination in ways more complicated than a straight forward identification of the realist or the factual which the political might suggest'.[96] He further puts forward the phrase 'piercing the veil' used by Rabindranath Tagore on the occasion of Sister Nivedita's death. He tries to understand the unveiling which transcends the reality or looks beyond it. Blending is a means to it, a blending of European romanticism with those of Hindu Metaphysics.'[97] In an almost similar note the writings by the pedagogues in this chapter show a blending of Hindu metaphysics ,romanticism, tracing of the tradition and opens up also the discourse of naturalism in this context of formation of the discourse of indigenous modernism as a counter-narrative of the colonial discourse of modernism. The discourse of aesthetics thus becomes ideological in nature, this has been mentioned by John Clark and it also articulates the discussion which I have started in this chapter. He says-'Aesthetic nationalism is the application to a nation, or some group linked to it by extension, of that contemplative attitude otherwise reserved for the art objects. But it is also an ideology because it is projective and seeks to realise, or impose, a characteristic set of values attributed to

96 Dipesh Chakravorty, , Nation and imagination, chapter 6,Provincialising Europe, pp.149-50
97 ibid

art objects or more generally associated with a specific society, through the mediation of the nation, either on the conceptual level or as a specific and world-oriented agency.'[98] Hence the conceptual underpinnings of aesthetics, contributed to the imagination of nation which was accused of being crude, uncivilised and incapable of any higher ideas of beauty.

(ii)The reclaiming of crafts and the discourse on design in the context of indigenous modernism

The debate on the existence of Fine arts in India was there since the inception of colonialism and is aligned to the idea of progress in the European discourse of modernity. The relationship between the west and the orient is dialectical in nature. The ideas of sublime and wonder which frames the imagination of the orient becomes an important aspect and this can be situated in the philosophical tradition of the west .Hegelian idea of the irrational east and the project of Enlightenment contributes to the construct of the Orient as sublime. These philosophical discourses construe the very foundations of British Imperialism. The concept of progress which is aligned with the idea of modernity was also deeply related with scientific advances. The art of painting in the west reflected this scientific approach with its clarity in anatomy, optics and naturalism. This is being well reflected in Maculay's statements in the context of Chinese art . He says-'Mary had acquired at the Hague a taste for the porcelain China, and amused herself by forming at Hampton a vast collection of hideous images and of vases on which houses ,trees, bridges and mandarins were depicted in outrageous defiance of all the laws of perspective. The fashion, a frivolous and inelegant one it must be owned, which was set by the amiable Queen, spread fast and wide. In a few years almost every great house in the

98 John Clark, What is Aesthetic nationalism, Okakura Tenshin and Aesthetic Nationalism, East Asian history,no.29.June2005,p.3

Kingdom contained a museum of these grotesque baubles.'[99] The presence of Oriental art in the west can be inferred from this observation of Maculay. Oriental art was there to fulfil the curiosities of the occidental connoisseurs and were of ethnographic value. As with the general display of utilitarian objects like textile and furniture, there were also the *firqa* paintings. These *firqas* spoke about the ethnographical interest of the imperial class in their subjects who were enframed by the anthropological gaze. Paintings during the Romantic period depicted Oriental architecture, sculpture and even textile to emphasize the idea of the existence of the exotic other. But in art historical discussions there were opprobrium of Indian Fine arts. One does see the influence of Japanese prints on the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters who wanted to be avant-garde as to be an avant-garde one needed to be different. But crafts and the concept of design entered the Western discourse in a different manner. In the earlier discussion I mentioned about Havell's perception about the capitalistic nature of British connoisseurship of Indian art. The empire was being only interested in trading of forms like textile and were not interested in investing in painting or sculpture. By the beginning of the nineteenth century private collectors in India, usually East India Company employees, compelled by the profit, were increasingly motivated by the necessity for the knowledge about the culture and history of the colonized natives. Massive documentation, censuses, encyclopedias, photography and connoisseurship developed. Along with this a new aesthetic movement in Britain started off with the revaluation of industrial design. Due to the industrial revolution there was a huge destruction of guilds and hence craftsmanship. According to Partha Mitter -'The aesthetic movement which voiced its discontent with the prevailing industrial design took two forms: there was a desire to formulate new principles of design to replace the vulgar,

99 John M.Mackenzie,Orientalism in Design,p.109

illusionist design; there was a concern for educating the industrial manufacturers and artisans as well.''[100]

The great exhibition in 1851 held in 'The crystal palace', London was another attempt to exemplify the marginalized, traditional Indian other. It had both craft and machineries. The crafts were appreciated whereas the technological acumen of the Indians were doubtful and derided. According to Saloni Mathur 'the Indian section at the Great exhibition is an attempt to formulate 'Correct' and 'good' principles of design and it could restructure the workmanship in Britain and raise the aesthetic standards of the British public.'[101] Critic and Director of Berlin museum, G.F.Wagen remarked on this 1851 exhibition -'Indian emphasis on flatness and design remarkable for the patterns, in which the beauty, distinctness and variety of forms, and the harmonious blending of severe colours ,called forth the admiration of all true judges of art, what a lesson such designs afford to manufacturers, even in those nations of Europe which have made the greatest progress in industry.'[102]

Birdwood, as I mentioned earlier was heavily criticized because of his comment on the Buddha statue, but he had a different perception about Indian design and craftsmanship. He mentions- 'In India everything is hand wrought, and everything, down to the cheapest toy or earthen vessel, is therefore more or less a work of art .It is not of course meant to rank the decorative art of India, which is a crystallized tradition, although perfect in form, with the fine arts of Europe, wherein the inventive genius of the artist, acting on his own spontaneous inspiration, asserts itself in true creation. The spirit of Fine art is indeed everywhere latent in India, but it has yet to be quickened again into operation. It has slept ever since the Aryan genius of the people would seem to have ex

100 Partha Mitter,The Victorian interlude,Much maligned monsters,p.222
101 Saloni Mathur,Introduction,Introducftion to India by design,p.18
102 Partha Mitter,The Victorian Interlude,Much Maligned Monsters,p.230

hausted itself in the production, of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. But the Indian workman, from the humblest potter to the most cunning embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet, is not the less a true artist, although he seldom rises above the traditions of his art.'[103]

Birdwood also criticizes the British policy of destruction of Indigenous crafts and praises hereditary craftsmanship for offering resistance. William Morris held serious criticism against this capitalistic exploitation. Morris states-'….the Indian or Javanese craftsman may no longer ply his craft leisurely, working a few hours a day, in producing a maze of strange beauty on piece of cloth : a steam engine is set a going at Manchester and that victory over nature and a thousand stubborn difficulties is used for the base work of producing a sort of plaster of China clay and shoddy, and the Asiatic worker, if he is not starved to death outright, as plentifully happens, is driven himself into a factory to lower the wages of his Manchester brother worker and nothing of character is left him except, most like, an accumulation of fear and hatred of that to him most unaccountable evil, his English master.'[104] He also held industrialization responsible for the destruction of the indigenous taste. He says-'Having thus tried to clear myself of mere reactionary pessimism, let me attempt to show why statically handicraft is to my mind desirable, and its destruction and degradation of life. Well, first I shall not shrink from saying bluntly that production by machinery necessarily results in utilitarian ugliness in everything which the labour of man deals with, and this is a serious evil and a degradation of human life.'[105] This focus on the revival of handicrafts influenced the swadeshi movement in Bengal and encouraged the colonized to reject foreign goods and grow indigenous products. There was severe criticism of the British government in India for the destruction of indigenous crafts for the large scale industrial endeavours . The resonance of this moment

103 George Birdwood,The master handicrafts of India,pp.131-32

104 William Morris,How we live and how we might live,p.15

105 WiilliamMorris,The revival of craft,How we live and how we might live,p.60

was also felt in India. As Saloni Mathur points out that in 1904, the nationalist historian R.C.Dutt would challenge such moves by the Britishers in his book 'The economic History of India'. She mentions further-'By tracking the repeated return to the image of the historical discourses, from the contested inventions of Liberty's department store to the Romantic renderings of a scholar like George Birdwood to the appropriations of the figure by nationalist thinkers like Dutt, Coomarswamy, Havell and Gandhi- I argue that-unlike in other societies-in the Indian case the nexus of relationships between modernity and the craftsman was over determined by the particular rhetorical and material effects resulting from the colonial economy.'[106]

The art colleges established by the Britishers imparted British academic art education which included sculpture and painting and industrial designs. But there was no reference to the language of painting from the Indian tradition. Though they paid attention to the local native design education it was still within the Oriental contour. This selective forgetting of fine arts can be situated in the context of the socio-economic concerns in the colonial administration. E.B.Havell though part of this colonial project carried his South Kensington School principles. This South Kensington School was a premier art school in Britain which introduced non-western designs in Britain. The influence of William Morris was also evident in his ideological orientations. Havell came to India in 1884 and settled in Madras where he taught till 1893. Osamu Note highlights a very important aspect in relation to the socio-economic context of the arrival of this arts and crafts movement. During the Great Famines in the late 19th century and the colonial administration followed the suggestion made by the Famine Commission that the agrarian economy be diversified so that the effect of famines could be minimized, the Madras government requested permission

106 Saloni Mathur,Introduction,India By Design,Colonial History and Cultural display,p.22

to appoint officers to conduct a survey on arts and industries in the province. In 1884 it appointed Havell to the task.[107]

This became a moment of immense importance as from this juncture of his career one sees the beginning of his interest in crafts .Havell criticized the colonial architectural design, looked for the pristine domain of indigenous design which was unspoilt and unaffected by Colonialism. Like Birdwood and writers like Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita, he too believed in the Romantic vision of Village India. Havell's village India was also based on his discovery of the text ,Shilpa Sastra because of his recognition that those who acquired the knowledge handed down by this text and engaged in the temple building were often the makers of practical objects in the village, crafts became a culturally authentic element embedded with the liturgical Hindu texts in the formation of his theory on Indian arts.[108] Hence craftsmanship was inherently associated with the preservation of the indigenous identity and freedom and 'the interest in crafts merged with the paramount notion of a great art heritage where art was equated with the highest realms of religion and philosophy and the loftiest aspects of national culture.'[109] Havell highlights the loss of the great crafts tradition and the dismantling of hereditary learning. He mentions-'The great majority of the students who attend the Schools of art are not, properly speaking, art students: they are neither drawn from the great artistic and industrial castes which number, roughly, some ten million craftsmen ,representing Indian traditional art practice, nor are they, generally, students who have shown any special aptitude for the artistic pursuits.'[110] He states further that there was no encouragement for the craftsman - 'There is only a very limited prospect of Government employment for successful students and no Indian artist or craftsman has ever

107 Osamu Note,E.B.Havell and the metamorphosis of Indian Crafts,Journal of the Japanese Association for South Asian studies,12,2000,p.210

108 Ibid.p.218

109 Tapati Guha Thakurta, Orientalism and the new claims for Indian art,The making of a New Indian art,p.169

110 E.B.Havell,Art Administration in India, Journal of the Royal society of arts.vol.LVIII.p.4

yet had any kind of distinction conferred upon him by our Government, though under native rule an artist was a highly honourable occupation which received due recognition from the state.'[111] Students were more eager to become a portrait painter or sculptor and didn't want to go for the industrial section unless they were lured by scholarship or a job prospect.Havell traces this problem also to the distinction of 'Fine arts' and Crafts.

Havell puts forth that-'There are technical considerations which make differences between artistic methods in a carpet, a mosaic, and a fresco painting, but all art is one, and both in Europe and in Asia the aesthetic philosophy which controls the weaver's fingers is the same as that which controls the painter's brush and the sculptor's chisel. No school of aesthetic thought has ever propounded one philosophy for the carpet weaver, and another for the picture painter and sculptor.The Indian art must stand or fall as a complete school of aesthetic philosophy; to maintain as an educational principle that the lower department of it has been successful and the higher a failure is to condemn all Indian art in the eyes of Indians who were capable of forming a considered and reasonable judgment for themselves.'[112]

Another important aspect to which Havell is pointing out is the idealism in the indigenous tradition of India and the rejection of it by the 'practical men' or one can read these words as realist men or the western art education which proffered realism. He mentions in regard to the Swadeshi movement in art spearheaded by Abanindranth - 'This new school, founded on a revival of Indian traditions of painting and sculpture, will, I am convinced, have a far-reaching influence which will not be confined, to the fine arts. It is a school of idealists,for otherwise it would not be Indian. The idealist is popularly supposed

111 Ibid. E.B.Havell,Art Administration in India, Journal of the Royal society of arts.vol.LVIII.p.4
112 Ibid.p.6

to be an unpractical person, and in our Indian administration is generally regarded with grave suspicion. Yet, I would venture to maintain most of the unnecessary difficulties which we have created for ourselves in India have been those of the practical man ignorantly trampling on Indian ideals. It certainly has been the practical men who are responsible for all the injury which we have done to Indian art and craft in the last fifty years. It is the practical men who have vainly tried in India to detach the Fine arts from the Industrial arts, believing that we can impose upon India European ideals in the former without destroying all Indian traditions in the latter.'[113]

The resonance of such understanding of Indian crafts inspired the pedagogic practices in Santiniketan where the concept of design was adopted to the language of painting. Havell also raises the question of insularity of the imparting of craft education inside the schools which had no direct effect upon the traditional Indian Handicrafts practice outside. He also talks about the neglected state of the handloom weaving and the declining taste of the patrons. According to him-'The Indian hand weaving has suffered, and still suffers in two ways .First, the weavers of brocades, like the kincobs of Benares, and all the finer textiles used by the richer classes of the population, suffer from the artistic ignorance of their aristocratic and wealthy patrons.'[114] He suggested remedies to such degradation of taste .Havell says-'The assistance that can be given to the Indian weaver of the highest grade lies, not in 'Improving' his methods according to the ideas of the European mechanic but in the better artistic education of the patrons ,by reviving the prestige of Indian art, and by widening the scope of the University Curriculum ,so as to add some degree of artistic culture to the crude utilitarianism which still forms the basis of the Anglo-Indian educa-

113 E.B.Havell,The teaching of the Fine arts, Art administration in India Journal of the Royal society of arts.vol.LVIII,p.12

114 Ibid.p.15

tional system.'[115]

He also talks about the timelessness of the Indian art and urges the young artists to use the 'living styles' of one's own country. This question of living traditions also become an important aspect in Coomaraswamy's discussion on craftsmanship. He like Havell brings up the discourse on the hereditary aspect of crafts .The hereditary comes not from direct inheritance of the father's individual skill but it comes from the passing knowledge from one generation to the next. He mentioned that the young craftsman is brought up and educated in the actual workshop, and is the disciple of his father. 'He expressed his anxiety over the destruction of this indigenous system by the industrial approach of the west. The deeply embedded religion and philosophy is being discussed by him in relation to crafts. He brings in the discourse of Mayamataya and talks about the laws of karma in relation to craftsmanship: 'Builders that build houses thus, after their death, will be re-born in a royal family; painters if they make images accordingly, in noble families; cunning and skillful builders, though they should die, are friends of mine, for as they do, they become rulers and nobles, such is the old saying of the sages. One who knows amiss his craft, taking wrongfully, that which the wife and children eat and enjoy, bringing misfortune on the owner of the house, that builder will fall into hell and suffer-these sayings are in Mayamataya ,what remedy can there be then, O builders?'[116]

Further he also points out to the belief that the Indian craftsmen have descended from the five sons of Viswakarma who were blacksmith, the second a carpenter, the third a founder, the fourth a mason and the fifth a goldsmith. He brings out the importance of hereditary craftsmanship and its impact on the development of the crafts.[117] He describes their training'….The forms drawn upon the panel are certain peculiar curves, gradually elaborated into a very

115 E.B.Havell,The teaching of the Fine arts, Art administration in India Journal of the Royal society of arts.vol.LVIII,p.16

116 A.K.Coomaraswamy,Religious craftsmanship, The Indian Craftsman,p.57

117 A. K. Coomaraswamy, Education, The Indian Craftsman.p.69

complex studies in applied ornament. Drawing from nature is never taught. After the hand and eye and memory have been trained in the use of the fundamental curves in this fashion, traditional ornament, repeating patterns and the like are taught, then mythical animals and designs with men and beasts in them. The pupil is also taught to use the brush, and assists his master in practical work in temples, at first by grinding the colours and general personal service, then by priming the surfaces, applying aground colour, and by preparing and taking care of brushes and pigments, and lastly, by filling in outline sketched in by the master for completion by the pupil. Experience is thus gained in practical work. There is nothing dilettante about the young craftsman's education. It begins early and is extremely thorough. While it is in progress he has, in addition to his ordinary education, to learn by heart various Sanskrit works on art, with their meaning. These technical works, composing what is called the *Silpa Sastra*, or 'science' of the arts,' describe various kinds of images and buildings, the kinds of jewellery proper for kings, the proportions of various tools and utensils.[118]

He also discussed religion and philosophy and the position of craftsman in the social order. The respectability of craftsmen equalled to the *Brahmans* and the guild provided social security to the craftsman. He compares their condition with that of their counterparts in the west. He says-'Freedom of the craftsman from anxiety as to the legal protection of the standard of work; his art not exploited for profit. These are the material conditions; even more important is that spiritual conception of the serious purpose of art, which we find expressed in the work of the true craftsmen of whatever age or place, but perhaps more in India than anywhere else.[119]

He situated craftsmanship in the socio-political context and related it with the contemporary' Swadeshi movement' of his time. Decorative arts or

118 A.K.Coomaraswamy,Education,The Indian Craftsman,pp.69-70

119 A.K.Coomaraswamy, Education,The Indian Craftsman,p.73

the concept of ornament became a major discourse through which the occidental orientalism framed Indian art as being enriched but lacking the qualities which would define it as Fine arts. Coomaraswamy pointed out that to consider ornament as a mere decorative pattern is highly reductive. 'Unwilling as we may be to accept such a proposition today, in a world increasingly emptied of meaning, it is even harder to believe that-'Ornament' and 'Decoration' are properly speaking, integral factors of the work of art, certainly not insignificant part of it, but rather necessary to its efficacy.' He further translates the word Ornament as *alamkara* and discusses it in terms of aesthetics. According to him the semantics of 'Ornament 'is lost in being the categorized as marginalized in the discourse of modernity which distinguishes between the decorative arts and Fine arts. The symbolic act of communication is being evoked in his discussion on *alamkara* . *Alamkarashatsra* is being referred by him, *alamkara shastra* which means the science of poetic ornament' which relates to the 'rhetoric' or oratory, in which eloquence is thought of not as an end in itself or art for art's sake, or to display the artists skill, but as the art of effective communication.'[120] This element of symbolism and visual communication will become a very important aspect. He points out that the meaning of an adornment, viz. the furnishing of anything essential to the validity of whatever is adorned, or enhances its effect, empowering it. In regard to this he widens this argument to the realm of iconography and gives the example of a conch bracelet which is worn for long life. He also refers to dramatics and the role of *Aharya,* the costume and jewels of an actor which is responsible for the dramatic expression, he gives the example of sun and moon as the aharya of *Shiva*. Thus Coomaraswamy widens the idea of ornament and crafts and pitches it in a more intellectual tradition by discussing its etymological sense and extends it to aesthetics. He critiques the idea of exclusivity of the modernist art practice which separates arts and

120 A.K.Coomaraswamy,Ornament and symbolism,p.243

crafts. He points out the industrial encroachment of the west to the capitalistic intension which excludes the discourse of aesthetics and separates beauty from utility and catered to the needs of the body divorced from the mind. [121]

Another aspect to which he points out is that of distinction of Fine arts as a product of intellectual act and that of ornamentation as a product of physical labour which is being looked down upon in the bourgeoise discourse. This can be explained further by this statement of his-'…until still later what had once been essential to the nature of the object came to be regarded as an 'ornament' that could be added to it or omitted at will, until, in other words, the art by which the thing itself had been made whole began to mean only a sort of, millinery or upholstery that covered over a body that had not been made by 'art' but rather by 'labour'-a point of view bound up with our peculiar distinction of a fine or useful art, and of the artist from the workman and with our substitution of ceremonies for rites.'[122]

Along with the intellectual discourse on framing of Indian aesthetics the question of revival of crafts and the discourse on design also got importance. These became a counter discourse to the Occidental orientalism through which the colonized reclaimed their consciousness. The other factor which surfaced through these discussions were the destruction of indigenous craftsmanship and hence a systematic economic dependence of the colonized on the colonizers. So the idea of independent India also meant the economic independence from the colonizers. Indigenous manufacturing takes an important position, a step towards economic independence. Nivedita's writings venture on these issues on the development of crafts and independence. In her prospectus for her school named 'Project of the Ramakrishna Mission School for girls', 1900, she talks about the teaching of handicrafts which is related to the revival of ancient

121 Larry D Lutchman Singh,Ananda Coomaraswamy and William Morris,p.37
122 A.K.Coomaraswamy,Ornament,p.242

Indian *kutirshilpa*. She also brings in the question of independence of women with the discourse of craft and this makes her arguments different from the others of her time. Though one will also observe the faint traces of this in Rabindranath Tagore and Nandlalal Bose.

She like Coomaraswamy and Havell is anxious about the loss of old industries but also talks about the vanishing occupations of the women. She asks-'Are the old industries dead? Then, with the craft-dexterity and wisdom which they bred in us, let us invent new industries. The women's occupations are vanishing curiously. The old incised clay for dishes, the old modellings for worship, the nice floor- ornaments for the threshold, are less and less needed.'[123]

She suggested nature and the ancient monuments as sources of new designs. She criticizes the pattern books or specimens from abroad. It is being mentioned-'It would be better to postpone indefinitely the imitation of such European patterns as we can get. In almost every case, the specimens of European taste, that have yet reached the East are of the most low and degraded kind, and nothing can be more painful than the roses, forget-me-nots, coloured alphabets, in Berlin wool work and aniline-dyed crewel silks, on which Bengali women, of judgement and dignity in other respects, can be content to waste their time.'[124] She urges to look for indigenous inspirations on some brass vessel, a pattern suggesting a border or decorative panel.Further she also talks about the hybrid character which can give them a novelty also if one looks at the 'Chinese or Mohameddan workmanship.'[125]

Unlike her contemporary art ideologues she emphasized on women, their empowerment and through them that of nation's but the singularity or the agency of the women as a craftsperson is being continuously stressed rather than being appropriated as one sees such apparent traces in Abanindranath

123 Sister Nivedta,Women and the arts,Vol.3p.37

124 Sister Nivedita,On Education, vol.3, p.38

125 Sister Nivedita,Women and arts,p.40

and Nandalal's discourse of crafts. A certain form of handicrafts made by the women were also criticized by Nivedita when she puts forward the very notions of gender and sublation as is being reflected in the 'touching custom prevalent amongst Bengali women, of working on slippers for their husbands wearing. Unfortunately, at present the models imitated are generally atrocities of the rarest kind. But these would go out of fashion, if a larger knowledge came in, to feed a nobler imagination and sense of beauty.(Fig1) And why should slippers form the solitary offering? Why not an exquisite cover for some favourite book, or some article for the writing desk, or if the recipient be a woman, for the work-basket? Out of a worn-out sari or chadder, once precious, one might cut enough stuff to cover a blotting book, or make a bag, and work upon it with one's own needle a name or a date.'[126] Abanindranath goes on drawing similitude with women, also adapts elements from *striachar* i.e. ritualistic practices like *alpana ,bratakatha* or crafts like *kantha* .In the introduction to *Phulkari* by Nandalal, Abanindranath writes----'Who knows the value of brushwork also knows the beauty of needlework easily .He knows whether I draw with a brush or weave with a needle both the values are same for art !the walls of the room are decorated with painting, curtains of the room, bed and carpet even the people of the room deck themselves up with flowers and leaves woven by needle! The question of good or bad doesn't come up while practicing art in its different manifestations. '[127]

Though there are contradiction in his ideas on crafts too, there are notions of hierarchy which can be read in his statement-'Art has three stories-First floor, second floor and third floor. The servants live in the first floor and they prepare everything. They give service, they cook well, and they make good furniture. They are servers: craftsmen-they do everything from the first floor. Second floor

126 Sister Nivedita,Women and arts,p.37

127 Nanadalal Bose,Phulkari by,1st ,Volume,Published in Desh Binodan Sankhya 1982,Nandalal Bose Centenary Volume

is the *baithakkhana*. It has the chandeliers, good curtains, seats of *kinkhab*, all good things are there which comes from the first floor, with all these the second floor is furnished. The aesthetic judgment takes place there, enlightened rasikas come. There the danseuse performs, ustad sings *kaloyati(classical songs)*, and there is *rasa* everywhere. That is the special durbar of the god of arts. Third floor is the *andarmahal* that is the *antarmaha*l. The artists are mesmerized, there he becomes the mother, is free, there he nurtures the infant art and dresses it. Thus art has three stories. All the three stories are needed….Now one has to see in which floor one lives in. Presence of a genius is possible in all the three floors. If one sees like this then everything will be simple.' [128]

Fig.1.The embroidery pattern imported from abroad

Abanindranath created a counter ethnography or rather a search for the nationalist self. This lead him to document the '*Vratakathas*'. He records the shastric or Brahminic vratas and also which are marginalized non-Brahminic in nature and belonged may be to all the classes and to another marginalized terrain that of the women. He points out-'Once upon a time there was an inter-connectedness between *devamandir* and *natamandir* and the description of gods with puja rituals, various religious festivities, the *chandanyatra ,rashy-atra , Rukminiharana* , other performances and paintings . But now there is no

128 Abanindranath Tagore,Gharebaire,p.34

such relations there is a definite distinction in the temple, theatre space and exhibition.'[129] Thus he points to the inter relationship of arts and criticized the compartmentalization of the different art forms.

Fig.2. 2Banglar brata,Abanindranath Tagore

He discusses about the magic belief/narration of desire and the aesthetic desire while writing about *alpona* (floor painting) in his book *'Banglar vrata'* almost in a similar language as Coomaraswamy's when he talks about ornaments and its semantics. However Abanindranath takes it further to the formal realm beyond the metaphysical framework of Coomaraswamy .He gives the example of *maghamandala vrata* where different jewelleries are painted as they are desired by the painter. (Fig.2).They are to him pictograms like hieroglyphs. But there exits some forms which are imagined and are not part of any desire, but beautification is the only aim. There is transformation of nature, not making alike of some form in nature. The *vratas* refer to her own surroundings and creates the *alpona* like that of *kalalata,kalmilata,khuntilata,chalatalata ,champalata and sankhalata.* He gives the example of *Taravrata* where the stars-the sun and moon is not represented naturally but as the painter con-

129 Abanindranath Tagore,Banglar vrata,p.68

ceives them. Imagination plays a very important role and this process of imagination while working on the *Alpona* makes them akin to that of paintings by artists .He says- "A great artist doesn't paint what he sees. He saw, then stored it in his mind, recollected after many days and then expressed it .The most conducive time is that between looking and expressing. But if one looks, clicks and photographs then that is an imitation but art transcends imitation. The *alpona* of the *vratas* are also similiar Abanindranath further distinguishes between the utilitarian and the imagined. He cites the example of the golden comb which is desired and then drawn. But in the month of Ashwin when *Laxmi* appears amidst the paddy fields or the sun rises and flowers bloom in spring-then one sees lotus, climbers ,leaves and sunrise in many metaphors being present in the *alpanas* showing the awaiting of those seasons……" the girls learn and write and create more than the students of art colleges ..If a M,A student is being asked to draw a pen he will be worried, but may be his five years old sister will draw spoon, ornaments ,flowers and leaves without any mistake. The girls have difficulty only while drawing humans and animals. But where imagination is let loose they discover different climbers and borders confidently .'[130] Abanindranath's idea of crafts and aesthetics though appeares to be inclusive tending towards the appropriation of the feminine is based on distinction. He identifies the women and their skill in decorative patterns but points to their inability to render the drawing of humans and animals, in a way categorically denying them the role of an artist.

The narrativity of the *alpona* is being discussed by him and compared to any form of pictorial language without distinctions. Though one sees the formal and narrative aspect of alpona being discussed more by Abanindranath than the metaphysical but he does talk vividly about the symbolic aspect of alpona. He said-'The lotus pattern has very less relation to the desire of the *vrata*

130 Abanindranath Tagore,Banglar vrata,p.75

performer. In the first category they resemble the real and are bound by geometric structures. In some places when conch is added with Padma then it is indicated as the seat of Laxmi.'[131] His student Nandalal takes this further and included it in the curriculum but it is bound not to the ritualistic aspect belonging to the women's domain .Nandalal tried to relate between the concept of design as usually understood as part of the decorative art and that of the compositional/structural elements in painting. One can see an antithetical position to the occidental discourse on design. I would like to recall Ruskin's comment in this context , he mentioned-'Indian art never represents a natural fact…it will not draw a man ,but an eight-armed monster-it will not draw a flower ,but only a spiral or zigzag. It thus indicates that the people who practice it are cut off from all possible sources of healthy knowledge or natural delight; that they have willfully sealed up and put aside the entire volume of the world and have got nothing to dwell upon, but that imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, of which we are told that it is only evil continually…They lie bound in the dungeon of their own corruption encompassed only by doleful phantoms or by spectral vacancy.'[132]

These discussions also become vital for the understanding of forms in paintings. In 'mangora chad'(the imagined forms),from Shilpa charcha, he writes that to paint a picture one must learn from nature then only one understands the different structures and forms in the world and the other aspect being the mental forms or the imagined one or the mapping of rhythm, these forms from different times had developed from the interaction and exchange between different countries, different ages, natural environment and national character, this is the reason for the development of different painting styles of each nationality. The forms in the art practice of our country are imagined in the form of a flower or leaf-therefore the variety of structure, stance, grace and rhythm. [133]

131 Abanindranath Tagore,Banglar Vrata,p.77

132 The two paths,Lecture I,'Conventional art',Works,xvi,1905p.256

133 Nandalal Bose,Shilpachracha p.167

Fig.3,Shilpa Charcha, Nandalal Bose

Nandalal in his book Shilpa charcha discusses the structure of natural forms in relation to other natural forms like the sitting women and curves that forms her figure with the conch or the *kairi* motif or the conical patterns as in the *togor*(a flower).He even compares that the mountain peaks of India resembles the bud of the lotus, hence the spires of the temples resemble the lotus buds. Further there are studies of the ornamental aspect of Indian miniature painting where he talks about the abstraction of the natural to the imagined forms which are abstracted like he cites the example of the variation of arrangement of a leaf from the top[134] and he also points out to the mongora or imagined forms which are not only ornamental but sometimes become conventional as in the Jaina miniature painting.[135] (fig.5)

This reminds of Oscar Wilde's comments on the interaction between design and painting. Wilde mentions in his book 'The artist as critic'-'The art that is frankly decorative is the art to live with. It is, of all visible arts, the one art that creates in us both mood and temperament. Mere colour unspoiled by meaning and unallied with definite form can speak to the soul in a thousand different

134 Nandalal Bose,Mangora Chad,Shilpacharcha,p.159
135 Ibid.p.158

ways. The harmony that resides in the delicate proportions of lines and masses become mirrored in the mind. The repetitions of patterns give us rest. The marvels of design stir the imagination. In the mere loveliness of the materials employed there are latent elements of culture. Nor is this all. By its deliberate rejection of Nature as the ideal of beauty, as well as of the imitative method of the ordinary painter, decorative, art not merely prepares the soul for the reception of true imaginative work, but develops in it the sense of form which is the basis of creative no less than of critical achievement.'[136]

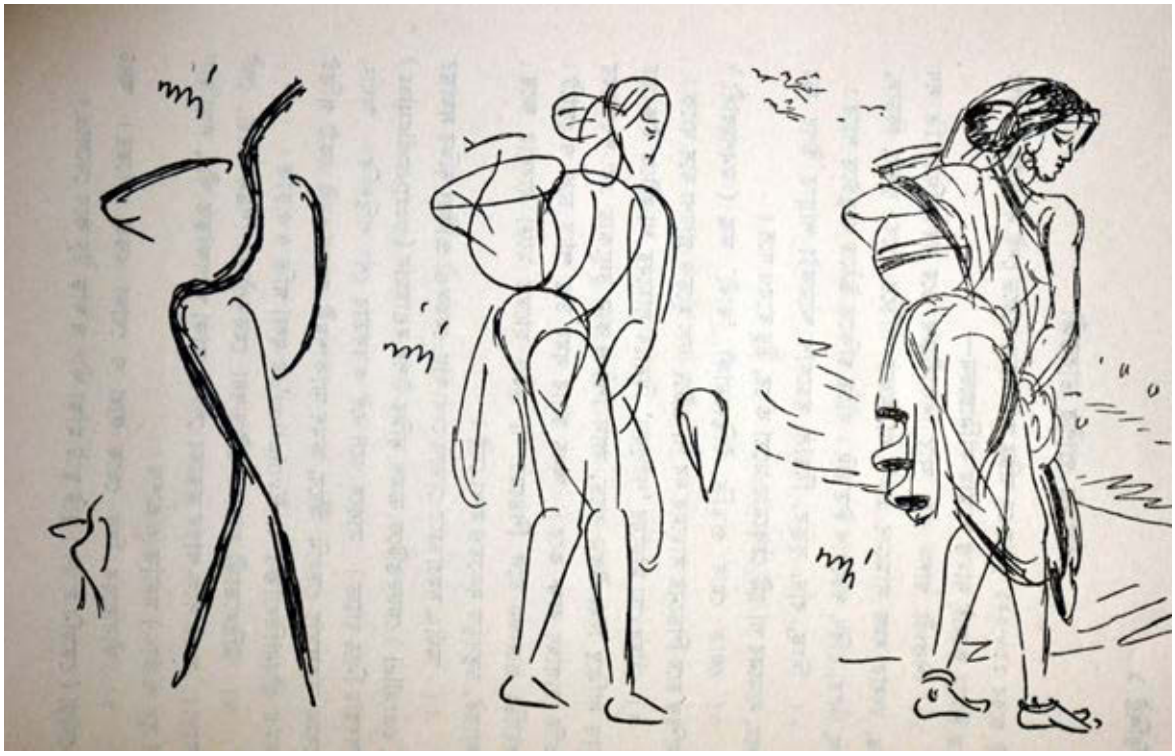

Fig.4, Shilpa Charcha, The rhythm of figures, Nandalal Bose

Another constituent of a design or decorative motif is line which Abanindranath had discussed in relation to femininity, and had been discussed in the earlier section. Nandalal wrote two important texts: *Shilpakatha* and *Shilpa charcha* which outlines his and his student's art practice. He discussed the method and materials as well as the conceptual part of art practice. Linearity was used as an argument to frame Indian art as sensuous and effeminate. He attempts to contextualize the importance of line within the contours of Indian

136 Quoted from Ornament as art, The new status of design,The Sense of Order,p.58

Aesthetics. According to him '*Dhvani* in Indian aesthetics is suggestion and is the life impulse. If life is there then suggestion exists without life suggestion is absent. The *alamkarikas* speak about different *Dhvani -alamkara,arthadhvani ,rasadhvani,* in *rasa dhvani* lies the excellence. In painting also line colour and form may have dhvani…..Where the line is lively it becomes a *dhvani* .The life of Oriental painting is line.'[137]

He tries to sum up his knowledge of ornamental art in this essay from his book Shilpa charcha-

'Ornamental art: The main principles'

Ornamental art makes its presence in ornaments, carpet, floor painting, and embroidery on textile. Precisely its aim is to decorate.The concern of this essay is to help the students to understand the pattern of ornamental art so that they can work properly. The sutras/formulas are based on different forms and movements. To explain this statement A and B symbols or diagrams are used.

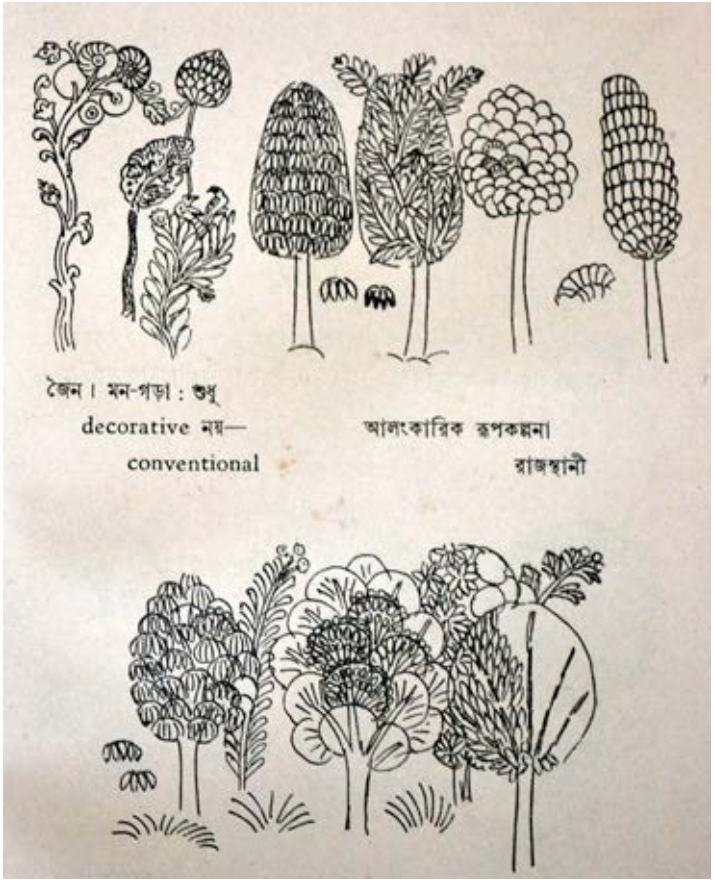

Fig.5, Forms imagined from Jain and Rajastan miniatures

137 Nandalal Bose, Shilpa Charcha,p.196

There are two aspects of any design or ornamentation: first, (A) the outer form. Second (B) the inner division or organisation. Each outer form is encircled by a particular contour, in the interior also it has its own organisation(c). An artist can according to his/her wish add the outer form of one to the inner organisation of the other :(D)Different forms and rhythms loose their diversity. While creating new ornamentation, nature should be observed for variety. (Fig.6) By using abstract form and rhythm only the creativity of the artist and understanding of different types of ornamentation takes place. The complexity of nature becomes simple and clear.

The abstract form of the betel leaf and *ashwath* leaf are the same, there lies some individual characteristic feature. (E)The artist gets indication of newer unique creativity from the fine distinctions. Otherwise if one plays with the types then it becomes dry.

In this essay the experimentation and application of form, rhythm and chiaroscuro is being discussed. Colour primarily suggests emotions, it should be discussed separately.

The creation of ornamental art is with form and rhythm. In relation to it there should be the knowledge of *tala* or pause and balance.

Proper distribution and control of chiaroscuro and rhythm indicates tala. (F)Otherwise creation of art is ostentatious and without variety, monotonous. The tala remains proper with space that is only made prominent when there is control of rhythm. Many a times pause takes place due to the density of light and darkness.

The gravity of the creation can only be maintained with symmetry and by repeating form and delineation of line. Proper delineation, chiaroscuro and rhythm is needed in both regular, symmetrical and irregular ornamentation .But, the gravity of irregular ornamentation is life force. (G)

When the outer shape of the ornamentation is known then the interior division becomes easier. Otherwise, one has to begin with the interior division or linear quality and then mix it with the outer contour for the necessity to complete the composition.

Ornamentation is simpler and abstract than the natural act of creation .In this act of creation one should not forget the particular character of certain art elements. The originality of those elements contributes to the independence of the artists and becomes a special quality of a creative piece.

It is a necessity to mention that, the artist has to remember about the main character of the object by which one gets inspired. There will be a problem if one takes the wrong path and busies oneself with minor details.

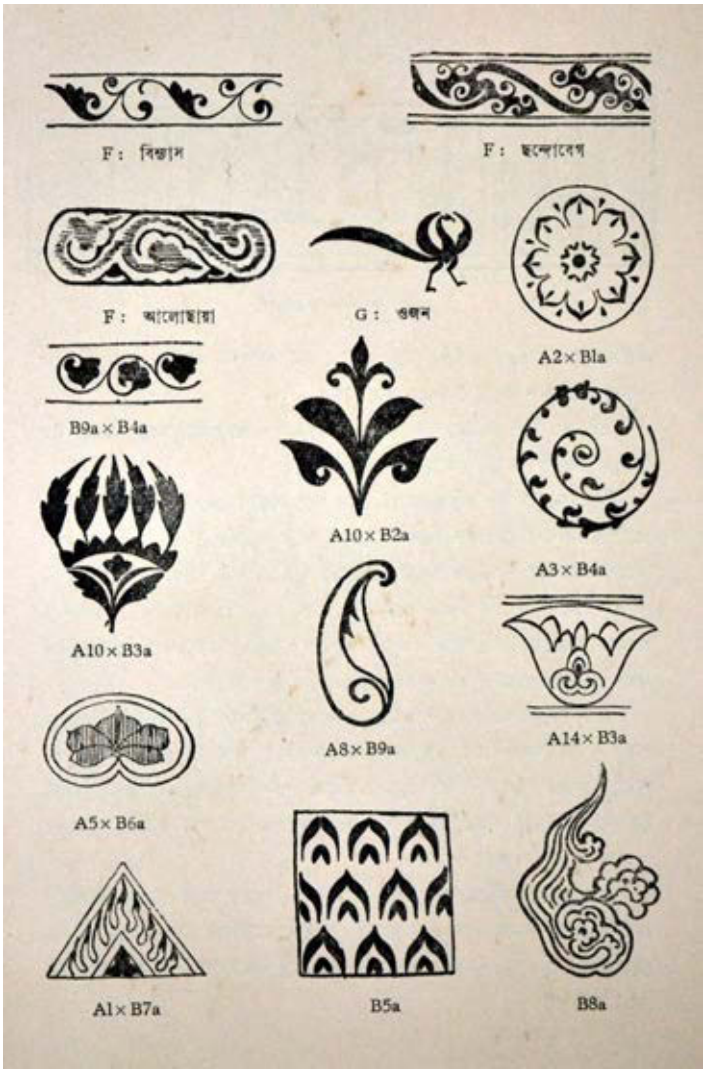

Fig.6, Illustrating the examples of the 'Ornamental Arts' an essay by Nandalal Bose

Different forms attract different people. Hence a particular nationalist character is observed in their work. These forms had been inspired from flower or fruits, animals or birds water or fire, the different panchabhutas.

The taste of different nations are being constructed by their peculiar flora and fauna, particular temperament of that country and their religion. For example it can be maintained that, there are different and diverse usage of the pomegranate fruit and flower in Persian art, Dragon and Botan in Chinese art .Cherry and chrysanthemums in Japanese art, lotus and papyrus in Egyptian art, and grapevine and grapefruit in Roman art. He also discusses about the lotus forms. Lotus takes the foremost place in Indian ornamentation, then mango leaves and fruit, *ashwath* leaves and coconut . He mentions about lotus as the most available form in this country. All the well-formed petals together contrib ute to the complete aesthetic form and evokes nationalist ideals in the mind and gains symbolic significance. In Indian ornamental art, imagination and crafts, the diverse forms of lotus had been used: underneath the feet of the idols, on the platform of worship and alter of offerings, social festivals, in fact in the composition of a military circle and primarily as the metaphor of purity and beauty.

Apart from the aesthetic discourse on Ornamental art or design he also tries to delve with the economic sustainability of the artists and their livelihood. He says- 'Some pose the question, 'Will art give us livelihood? 'Here we need to remember the two aspects of the art practice of literature, one concerned with the cultivation of knowledge and aesthetic pleasure and another with professional returns, there are two sides to art too, you may call one fine art and the other functional art .Fine art liberates our mind from the constraints of sorrows and conflicts of our daily lives into a world of aesthetic delight, while with its touch of magic, functional art brings beauty to the objects of our daily use, and to our lives and provides us with means of livelihood. In fact our country's

economic decline has followed closely the decay of its functional arts.'[138]

This particular statement of Nandalal is paradoxical to his view of erasure of distinction between Fine arts and crafts. But it has a semblance to what William Morris says-'You whose hands make those things should be works of art, you must be all artists, and good artists too, before the public at large can take real interest in such things, the handicraftsman, left behind by the artist when the arts sundered, must come up with him, must work side by side with him.'[139] One can thus see the influence of the once considered lesser art of *alpona* being incorporated in the pictorial language of painting in Santiniketan.

According to Gombrich-'The industrial Revolution with its mechanical advantages became a social leveler. It was not only the wealthy mill owner who could boast of a best parlour with heavy upholstered furniture, brim full of pictures and ornaments. The moderately successful tradesman could acquire slightly less expensive versions of these coveted items, even within my own memory the more humble dwelling would reflect this predilection.'[140] But what it did was to destroy craftsmanship and the aesthetics of the handmade. Victorian taste which was a part of this industrial project seeped into the Indian daily life from clothing, furniture and even ornaments put the question of identity of the colonized into question. In the reclaiming of the consciousness the colonized also revived their crafts touching upon everything in their day to day life. Hence with the establishment of Kalabhavana, Santiniketan, the discourse on design takes a new turn. Rabindranath from the beginning only gave a lot of importance to individual creativity and cultivation of manual skills and laid special stress on art and crafts activity, something very rare in the early years of

138 Nandalal Bose,Shilpa katha(Speaking of art),p.24

139 William Morris,Lesser arts,as mentioned by E.H.Gombrich in Ornamental art, Sense of order,p.33

140 E.H.Gombrich, Ornament as art, Sense of Order,p.33

the 20th century. At least in this country.[141] The craft products which developed from this endeavor tried to break free the elitism of upper class in the discourse of art and reached the middle class with its affordability.

The attempt to frame indigenous modernism becomes a valuable part in the search of the self. The discourse of modernism in west depended on the idea of the avant-garde which again depended on the three concepts- difference, deference and reference. The further explanation of this would be reference that is to relate ones work to what was existing in one's own time, the contemporary stylistic tendencies, deference that is to defer to the existing leader and difference being the distinction of the artistic statement which is being both acknowledged and displaced. So in the context of the '*Swadeshi art'* movement one sees these three points being very prominent. The argument that the Occidental modernism puts forth in the derogation of Indian art was the position of illusionism in western paintings, this idea of marginalization is to be re-articulated in the discourse on modernity in India where Coomaraswamy with his peculiar metaphysical tone sees the western illusionism as 'maya' which is to be avoided. Even the unity of Fine arts and design is taken up by the discourse of defining modernism in its indigenous terms. Nandalal as a pedagogue includes the ornamental patterns while composing his paintings.

This initiative started in the Crafts department in Kala-Bhavana (The college of Fine arts) and Shilpa Bhavan(the hall of Industries)at Sriniketan .In the early phase the Vichitra studio was set up at Kala-Bhavana where various decorative arts and crafts like alpana, lacquer work, calico painting ,batik, book binding ,mural and wood engraving were learnt and practiced by teachers and students.

141 K.G.Subramanyan,The crafts movement in Santiniketan,Mahamaya,Crafts council of West Bengal,p.36

Abanindranath says-'In the past, the list of sixty four arts included all in the same compartment, be that fine arts or industrial arts. According to the past sensibilities the football ,billiards, child raising were all part of arts….The art forms which inspires the finer instincts of men are known as fine arts, industrial art is that form which make the everyday tools beautiful and functional. Thus humans created distinctions between arts just like humans created caste system in their social order. But for the artist these distinctions don't exist. In the realm of enjoyment and feelings everything is same, art for art's sake is only important.'[142]

This is reflected on Nandalal's pedagogic practices. He conceived an all-encompassing art movement inclusive of design and painting. He was supported by Rabindranath. The ceremonies which Rabindranath conceived like *Barshamangal, halakarshan, vriksharopan* or *maghotsav* was designed by Nandalal with his eclectic concept of design where the known forms from the ritual traditions transcended their original nature and were improvised. Like with the very traditional *alpona* of Bengal the fire pattern from Far East was added.

The discourse of going back to village which was unspoilt, the repository of all cultural values played an important role in both the colonial and anti-colonial writings. The formation of Sriniketan becomes a crucial moment in this context. Shilpa bhavana in Sriniketan was planned to train rural folk in various industries and crafts. It catered to the needs of the-school children, teacher-trainees, grown up men and women. The village men and women were trained in multiple disciplines so that they had a wider job opportunity .Rabindranath envisioned a crafts-based educational system in Sriniketan which was modelled on the 'Sloyd' system in Sweden. He sent Sri Lakshmiswar Sinha to Sweden to study the system in 1928 and 1932 to collect the necessary resources and equipment. In the years 1934 and 1935 two Swedish weavers came and taught in Santiniketan and Sriniketan.

142 Abanindranath Tagore,Shilpeer Kriyakanda,Bageshwari Shilpa Prabandhabali,p.109

From the inception of Shilpa Bhavana in 1922 it had well-organized weaving and carpentry sections. A catalogue published in 1933 mentions weaving, dhuri, carpet and asana making, dyeing and printing, batik work, embroidery, lacquer-work, leather work, book binding, goldsmithy and enameling, carpentary and metal work. Later pottery and paper making were added.

By the mid-thirties *Shilpa Bhavana* started production and marketing. It took orders and designed furniture, upholstery, carpets .By the end of the thirties it had about 150 selling outlets in India and had to extend its production from the workshops to the domestic space of the villagers. K.G.Subramanyan provides a list of goods that were made and marketed. There were textiles like sari, bedcovers, table covers ,tray cloths ,towels ,embroidered scarves ,blouses and pelmets, leather work like money-bags ,portfolios, book-covers, letter-pads, fancy boxes ,sharing-cases, sandals ,slippers ,modas (tool)and the like; lacquered work which included toys, flower vases ,ashtrays ,lamp-stands ,boxes ,tableware, picture-frames and trays; gold and enameled jewellery and ceramic ware. Thus this list shows how Sriniketan catered to the changed taste of the new middle class who were inspired by the 'Swadeshi aesthetics.' This is also being mentioned by Rathindranth in his memoir Pitr smriti (Memoirs of my father)-

'The artistic mind of Abanindranath and Gaganendranath were not bound within painting but their mind had a wider expansion. Then the furniture of the House no.5 in which they lived were of Victorian style. They started to redesign the house and the furniture. The two brothers prepared the design for different furniture and according to those patterns Achari (their family carpenter) made those things .The novelty in interior design which they introduced became a fashion for the Calcutta elites. Both the brothers brought an indigenous aesthetics in the interior designing through the furniture and drapes.'[143]

143 Rathindranath Tagore,Vichitra,p.111

The discourse on Pan Asianism in the reformulation of the swadeshi aesthetics was also reflected on the articulation of the discourse on crafts .Pratima devi travelled to Java and learnt the process of batik painting and dyeing and introduced it in Santiniketan. The technique was Javanese but the design patterns evolved in Santiiketan and were developed primarily from *alpona* .K.G.Subramanyan refers to Rathindranath where he mentions that even the leatherwork was introduced in Santiniketan by Protima Devi which she learnt in Europe. He further refers to two trends which were visible in such practices. One being the 'Art nouveau' which was visible in Abanindranath and Rabindranath's paintings with its attitude of bridging art with craft and linearity of forms. The other was that of Nandalal's endeavor of conceiving of traditional ornamental devices in craft.

Another important project of Nandalal reflected Rabindranath's ideals of an artist's colony about which Binode Behari Mukherjee talks in his essay *'Adhunik shilposhala'.Karusangha* was established in 1930. Sri Prabhat Mohan Banerjee was the instrumental force behind the founding of the sangha .It was basically established to provide economic support to the artist so that they can continue their art practice independently. The advertisement of Karusangha in the Journal of the Indian society of Oriental Art proclaims-'The artists of Santiniketan ,Kala bhavana have formed *Karusangha* the guild of artists, the object of which is to undertake at a moderate charge all kinds of artistic design and work viz.

1. Painting in water and oil colour
2. Illustrattion and cover design for the books and magazines
3. Poster design
4. Design for monograms, letterheads
5. Design for ornaments, furniture, utensils
6. Design and portrait in clay, terracotta and plaster of Paris

7. Embroidery

8. Batik Work for handkerchiefs, handbags and door curtain

9. Fresco and mural painting

10. Leather works

Woodcut prints done by known artists of Santinikten are for sale. Books published by *Karusangha* are available at Santiniketan, Kalabhavana.'[144]

The first work by Karusangha was probably *'Swadeshi sampad'* made for a mural competition.It was a mother and child made by Nandlalal and it only had the seal of Karusangha .It won hundred rupees and with it started the economic fund of Karusangha .With this money they bought-set square, t-square, drawing box and cloth etc. They earned regularly from book illustration. Ramkinkar, Sudhir Khastagir, Masoji, Prabhatmohan and Keshav Rao participated in such activities and earned money for the Karusangha .Ramkinkar made a relief of cement caste of two geese emulating those of Ajanta for O.C.Ganguly's house.

Shibani a book by Indusudha Ghosh was being published by Karusangha. The Karusangha acquired land and the members bought it .Karusangha functioned as artist's collective, nobody had a personal stake in it. Karusangha appears in the art scene in that interface where the ideas of indigenous modernism was being formulated .Pan-Asianism was part of the concept of internationalism which defined the features of modernism. Another important aspect was Santiniketan being never confined only to Far Eastern arts and aesthetics but also there took place lectures by Stella Kramrisch on the recent happenings in the contemporary western art .The founding principles of Bauhaus and Santiniketan Crafts movement are on a similar note. Walter Gropius is being rightly invoked by Pulak Dutta to establish this connection. Dutta quotes Gropius-'Art is not a 'profession'. There is no essential difference between the artist and the

144 Journal of the Indian society of Oriental Art,vol.1.no.1June,1933

craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, moments beyond the control of his will, the grace of heaven may cause his work to blossom in art .But proficiency in his craft is essential to every artist. Therein lies a source of creative imagination.' [145]

These deliberations on crafts and design opens up various areas like craftsmanship, its deliberate destruction and revival and how crafts became an important discourse which was not only anti-colonial but transcultural. These debates also helped to form the indigenous discourse of modernism in India and has traces of appropriation. It sublates the discourse on women as intellectual and creative forces and subsumes their spaces of agency within the larger narration of nation. 'The Arguments about the home, the unspoilt domain the repository of the spiritual bears the essential marks of cultural identity which preserves the distinctiveness of one's spiritual culture and the outside that is the *bahir* which is the material domain of science and colonial power thus becomes relevant.'[146] The women in an art institution becomes the cipher of cultural identity whose agency was manipulated to define the national modern though it also empowered them as professionals like crafts teacher or inspired them to form crafts associations and find their subjective position as an artist. But it categorically incorporated the hegemonic discourse of the nationalist art or the discourse of indigenous modernism which like any other discourse of modernism becomes an apparatus which tells the tale of a manipulative exclusion and becomes a master narrative.

Before I move onwards with the development of Kala bhavana as an institutional space,I would very briefly discuss the influence of indigenous design in the architectural environment of Santiniketan. Early Shantiniketan architecture adapted the colonial elements similar to the contemporary architectures

145 Pulak Dutta,Introduction to Karusangha,Santiniketan Shilpi Samabay

146 Partha Chatterjee,The Nation and its fragments,p.6

in Calcutta. Thus the doric, ionic columns seen in Calcutta were also there in Shantiniketan Bari. The 'Mandir' architecture which was built a little later than the Shantiniketan Bari incorporated the ionic columns. The base structure is similar to the column in a Calcutta pavement. But it is to be noticed that it was a transitional phase where one can observe the intricate geometric designs on the railings reminding the Mughal patterns. The tracery pattern reminds that of those in the roadside canopies or even in the church architecture. Stained glass was used. Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay mentions in his book 'Shantiniketan Sriniketan' that it was Rabindranath's wish to observe the play of light of different hues. But what naturally comes to mind is that this being the reflection of the colonial elements- as the usage of stained glass was already in vogue in Calcutta. The Carolingian crosses used as railing motif justify the Mandir's closeness to the architectural ornaments in church.

However, the *Uttarayana* complex was altogether different. It was syncretic in nature. If only the *Udayan* building is observed carefully it is seen how in a single building different shades of different cultures are reflected. The columns, the *chajjas*, the small balconies may reflect the architectural patterns of Gujarat. But they never became masterpieces of all false masterpieces.(Fig.8)

Rabindranath was never bound to a style constricted to singularity but favored for a style enriched with plurality. Along with the indigenous elements it is seen in *Udayan* that there are large wooden windows, simple in nature- it may be a round cut in the wall divided into four half circles, or a simple rectangle- framed by wooden framework, both the patterns remind of Japanese architecture .This again points to the Pan-Asian aesthetics which was prevalent during that time specially in the paintings of Abanindranth and Nandalal.

The intricate ornamentations of the other houses disappear in Punascha. (Fig.9) It's an open ended structure where 'less is more'. The verandah in front

is open with windows encircling along with the railings. The inside coexists with the outside. The broken roof planes- the ups and downs facilitate the interplay of light and shade. Even the interior of *Udayan, Konarak* and *Udichi* are not planned on the same level.(Fig.7) The elements in the ornamentation in architecture is reflected in the furniture designing too. Addition of ornamentation as well as its restrain is observed in the same furniture.(Fig.10) If the posts of the table are decorated, intricately carved, then the arms are left simple. The shapes resemble the chaitya arches. This brings harmony and fluidity of space in the entire pattern of designing. The designs are not always symmetrical and monotonous. The open spaces both in the interior and the outside weave the architecture in harmony as if it is an extension of his experimentations in music.

He, like the contemporary architects of our time adapted his architectural elements to the natural surroundings thus evolving the ecological architecture. *Shyamoli* is the best example. It resembles the local hut but again speaks of Tagore's idiosyncrasies in the usage of the mud roof. The opening resembles a chaitya arch.

Mukund Paranjape in his "Reworlding Homes" rightly shows the resolving dilemmas, which Tagore solved through negotiating with the "other", and evolving the new or the novel. He discusses the ghar and bahir-the title of Tagore's novel which invokes the inner and the outer, the private and the public, the personal and the political, psycho spiritual and the socio-economic, the native and the colonial, the Indian and the western- in a word, between the home and the world. The quest for conjugal happiness in Ghare Baire (1916), is thus directly linked to the struggle for a new India. Tagore searches the kind of reorientation, which will transform the most personal of relationships. For Tagore tradition is a "text" that becomes a stepping stone to future. A future which would open up institutional spaces for women.

Fig.7. Udichi,Uttarayan complex,Santiniketan

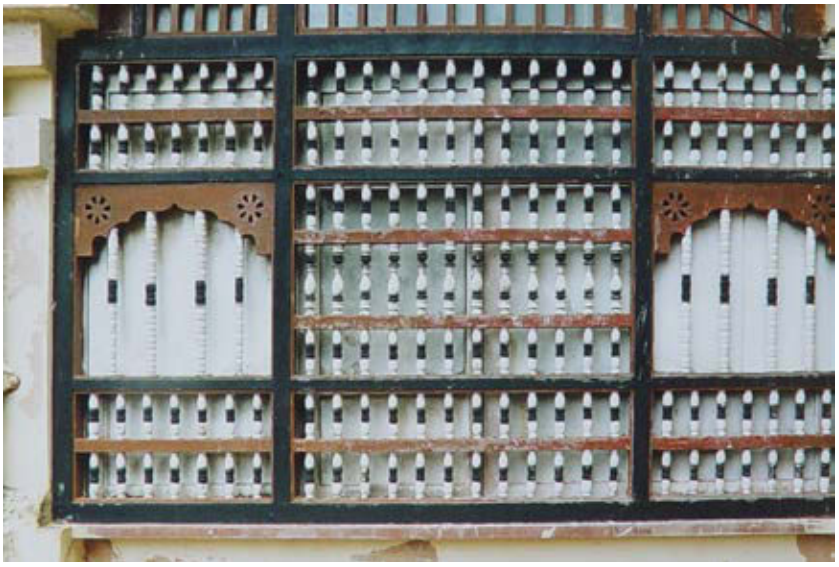

Fig.8. A window from the Udayan House,Uttarayan,Santiniketan

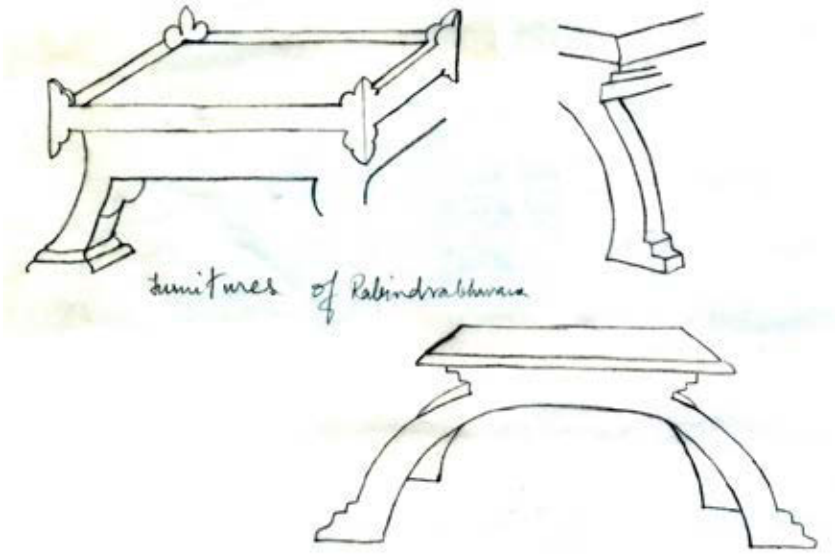

Fig.9. 9Furniture design of Rabindrabahavan,Santiniketan

Fig.10. Punascha,Uttarayan, Santiniketan