

Brain International School

Subject: Painting(049)

Class: 12

Month: October

CH-6 The Bengal School of paintings

Q.1 Mention the role of Abanindranath Tagore in development of the Bengal school of paintings.

Ans. Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951) played a pivotal role in the development of the Bengal School of Art, a movement that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in India. He was a leading figure in this artistic revolution, which sought to revive traditional Indian art forms and break away from the Western academic style imposed by colonial rule.

Abanindranath Tagore was deeply influenced by India's rich cultural and artistic heritage, especially the miniatures of Mughal and Rajput traditions, as well as Indian temple art. He aimed to reinvigorate these indigenous styles, integrating them with modern sensibilities. His works drew upon these sources, combining the spiritual and decorative elements of Indian art with a refined aesthetic vision.

Abanindranath Tagore also contributed to the intellectual discourse around Indian art through his writings and lectures. He espoused the philosophy that art should express the spiritual essence of Indian culture, rather than mere realism. He emphasized the importance of imagination, lyrical beauty, and a connection to the inner world, rather than external reality.

Q.2 When and how did the Bengal school of painting come into existence?

Ans. The Bengal School of Painting emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, primarily during the 1890s, as a response to both colonialism and the influence of Western art styles in India. It was a movement that sought to reclaim India's rich artistic heritage and develop a distinctly Indian art style, rejecting the academic realism that had been introduced by British colonial rule. The development of the Bengal School was deeply intertwined with the socio-political and cultural atmosphere of colonial India, especially in Bengal, which was the epicenter of intellectual and artistic activity during this time.

During British rule, Western-style art schools were established across India. The most significant among these was the Calcutta School of Art (founded in 1854), which taught European academic techniques and emphasized realistic depiction in painting. However, this style was seen by many Indian artists as an imposition of colonial values and foreign aesthetics, disconnected from India's traditional artistic traditions.

Artists were trained in these Western styles, which led to a decline in the practice of indigenous art forms. But there was a growing resentment toward this colonial art education, and many intellectuals and artists began to seek a return to India's own artistic heritage.

Q.3 Describe the main specialities of the Bengal school of painting ?

Ans. The Bengal School of Painting is recognized for its distinctive style and approach, which developed in response to both colonial influence and the desire to revive India's rich artistic heritage. It emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, largely under the guidance of Abanindranath Tagore and his followers, as part of the larger Indian Nationalist movement.

One of the most significant aspects of the Bengal School was its emphasis on reviving traditional Indian painting styles, especially those of Indian miniature painting (Mughal, Rajput, Pahari, and Deccan).

The artists sought inspiration from these ancient forms, incorporating their distinctive features such as bold, fluid lines, decorative patterns, and emphasis on stylization over realism.

There was a conscious attempt to bring back Indian heritage by rejecting Western realism and academic art introduced during British colonial rule.

- The Bengal School is known for its subtle color palette. Instead of bright, garish colors, artists favored muted and earthy tones like soft browns, ochres, reds, and pale greens. This was in stark contrast to the vibrant, contrasting colors used in Western academic art.
- The use of color in Bengal School paintings often evoked a sense of delicate beauty, in harmony with the spiritual and mythical themes that the paintings explored.

Q.4 Elucidate the contribution of prof. E.B Havell in the development of the Indian modern art.

Ans. E. B. Havell was a key figure in the effort to reject the imposition of Western academic styles in India, particularly the European realist techniques introduced during colonial rule. He recognized the decline of traditional Indian art under British colonialism and was determined to revive the country's indigenous art forms.

Havell believed that Western art's focus on realism and materialism was antithetical to the spiritual and cultural values of Indian art. In contrast, he saw traditional Indian art—such as miniature painting, sculpture, and decorative arts—as deeply rooted in spirituality, philosophy, and cultural identity.

Havell's support for the Bengal School of Art (a movement led by Abanindranath Tagore) was crucial to its success. He actively championed the Bengal School, which sought to revive traditional Indian art forms and was influenced by the miniature painting of Mughal, Rajput, and Pahari styles.

He recognized the importance of Abanindranath Tagore's work and the efforts of his contemporaries like Nandalal Bose, Asit Haldar, and Gaganendranath Tagore to reconnect with India's cultural roots. Havell believed that the Bengal School's fusion of Indian tradition with modern sensibilities was key to developing a distinctive Indian modern art.

His writings and speeches about Indian art helped legitimize the Bengal School in both India and abroad, providing an intellectual foundation for the nationalist movement in art.

