



BIHAR:  
Smouldering Embers

# RASHTRIYA SAHARA

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# SADA-E-SARHAD

let us talk peace

## DESHBANDHU SINGH

It was like a burning lamp put behind several layers of curtain. As you start unveiling the layers of curtain one by one, the light behind it starts getting visible further and finally the moment comes when one can see the complete glow of the lamp. If one talks to S Krishan, the first impression he leaves is that of a philosopher discussing about the values of life, about nothingness and about the theory of complete predetermination. But as one peeps deep inside him, his artistic caliber predominates every other thing. Be it the art of painting or music, one finds that to be the part of his life, one complementary to another and yet independent of each other.

He started with singing and gradually adopted to instrument and painting. There was no one in the family with a background in creative art, but somewhere he was inspired by his mother who used to sing Rajasthani folk songs in the village gatherings. She was always encouraging towards Krishan since the very childhood. First Krishan picked up *bansuri*, the most natural instrument, but gradually he shifted to violin.

His first guru was Ramjilalji and then Gwalior Baba of Vrindavan. However, while still in Bharatpur he was so influenced by one violinist Durag Singh that he decided to learn violin. As he did not have enough money to purchase one violin he acquired one sarangi and given it the shape of violin. He started practicing on a single string. On one occasion a noted musician of the region, Raman Lalji saw a lad of hardly 12-13 years playing filmy tune on a single string. Ramanlal was so impressed by the dedication of this child artist that he gifted him an old violin and with that started Krishan's regular learning of violin under the tutelage of Durag Singh.

After playing violin for some time he felt that there is something missing



**Krishan's artistic journey has yielded many beautiful images on the canvas and has liberated music from its traditional bonds**



*Yakshini*, stone colour on paper

## A confident expression

in this instrument which fails to satisfy him. He always believed violin to be an improvised version of *raavanbattha*, the Indian folk instrument played since time immemorial. In the search of that sound he started improvising upon violin. The process continued for about fifteen years, he claims, before he could find the all encompassing sound from a violin-like instrument, which he named *Suvaramanjari*. In his effort one Rikhiram had helped him a lot for years together in developing this instrument.

*Suvaramanjari* is the combination of three instruments in its designing — *violin*, *sarod* and *sarangi* played on four strings with a bow. Says Krishna,

"most western instruments have cut notes and so has the violin. Though the tune of violin has shrillness it lacks the air in it which breaks the continuity of the tune. Sarangi, on the other hand, has continuity of the sound because of the leather used in the base of the string." In order to create the vibration of the sound another layer of string has been fitted under the playing strings. For the same purpose a sound post has also been added in the hollow space near the bridge. In the upper part of the instrument unlike the wood of violin he added brass sheet of *sarod* to feel the sound of *sarod* also. Even the shape of this instrument is somewhere like violin, *raavanbattha* and *sarod*.



Another work very close to Krishan's heart is the painting on which he claims to have been working for the last 20 years and is still not fully satisfied. He calls it *Yakshini*. It is painted in stone colours with painstaking wrist-stroke on paper washed with milk. Made in the Gujarati-Rajasthani style of miniature paintings it reaches out to a scale requiring different principles of composition and execution which ultimately makes the image speak of its beauty and depth by itself. It is just like an antique which has gone almost transparent. The most expressive aspect of this painting is the eyes. The

art through carefully creating deeper grounding in proportion, composition and anatomy that is required in a miniature art. And in doing so the imagery of his *nayika* remained the same in most of the works, both in content and in spirit. His *nayika* is the independent soul, carrying the ancient grandeur of motherhood, the repository of human race and the path finder, the nymph amidst the massive banyan. Inside the warmth of the colourful images of the Thar and the Kutch, there is layer of soothing transparency which has the capacity to transform a complex character in a very simple form.

deep sense of Indianness prompted him to do something unique which can promote many talents to come on the surface. It is with this intention he has conceived the idea of, the arts and crafts village expanded in an area of around four acres of land. Tulsidham is his dream project for which he is prepared to sacrifice every bit of his life. It is unique in its concept where arts and artistes of various hues could flourish within one campus. It will have an open air theatre which will stage dramas on every fine evening. It will have workshops of paintings and sculpture and other folk art forms and crafts. Every item



nudity in it is aesthetic without any sign of obscenity. Says Krishan, "nudity does not necessarily means obscenity. It is hard to find obscene elements on the panels of our ancient monuments of Ajanta, Ellora or Khajuraho. This is particularly due to intention and the belief behind its making."

To what is called the folio painting Krishan, added elements of modernity into it by expanding it into the full blown canvas meant to adorn the walls of those with aesthetic taste. While putting it into oil on canvas he has not tampered with the soul of the miniature

The artist who has made such beautiful images has never attempted to portray himself. He says, "self-portrait is the most difficult job. Only he can make self-portrait who has done a lot of meditation. I am still in the process of searching myself and until I am successful I am not going to make a self-portrait."

Travelled widely throughout the length and breadth of the country and abroad, the only thing that inspires him is the Indian culture. He says that he hardly finds anything in the West which really could inspire him. This



**Swaramanjari,**  
the unique  
musical  
instrument

Oil on canvas

produced in this workshop could either be sold directly or in the shopping complex in the same campus to be available on rent. It will help to produce artists in the manner that they could sustain their livelihood by themselves. Tulsidham will also encompass a school of arts and crafts where the upcoming artists could be trained in the nuances of art. While there is no confusion about the concept, the real hurdle is the arrangement of finance and acquiring land for it. Says its founder president Krishan, we will somehow complete this project even if we do not get financial help from any other sources. While the project is still in the conceptual stage, Krishan is doing his every bit to make it successful. And if this succeeds, it will certainly be an art and crafts village in its true sense. ■

## The art of Krishan

One of the most striking features of true contemporary Indian art is the fact that it is more than mere assimilation of western fashions and foibles. There is a veritable attempt in it to break away from the colonial academic straitjacket of representational art, and reforge new links with the folk and classical art traditions that the colonial authorities first abused and then shut up in museums, so that our living connexion with our past would be destroyed. Needless to say, they failed; and our contemporary art is proof of it.

The art of Krishan manifests itself as the self-confident expression of the post-independence art of India. It reflects, ofcourse, the artist's life as a peripatetic young man, his being steeped in our traditional artistic expression, having been a pupil of Ram Gopal Vijayvargiya and his elder brother S. Sunder, as well as being exposed to our most modern expression of the time, counting Sailoz Mukerjee among those who inspired him.

He represents a part of that stream, like the great artists of the Bengal School, Abanindranath Tagore and Nandal Bose, who drew their inspiration from the murals at Ajanta, Mughal miniature painting and the schools that evolved in

the feudatory states of the hills and Rajasthan under its influence. But in Krishan's work we find also the stylistic and color elements from Jain and Hindu devotional manuscripts of his home region, Rajasthan, and its neighbor, Gujarat. Krishan blends this influence or the intellectual stimulation provided by it with his own concrete experience of life that contributes its own forms, colours and textures to the work.

These particularities express themselves in different ways. If Abanindranath rejected the large format of Western paintings meant to adorn walls and replaced them with miniatures for wall-hanging, Krishan rejects the possibility of works that should be admired in folio being put up on walls and has expanded the nayika image to a full blown canvas. In doing so, it is natural that the image has gained something of modernity, for the expansion requires a deeper grounding in proportion, composition & anatomy than required for painting miniatures.

In his earlier works like Yakshini, Krishan transformed his genre paintings from folio-work into large works meant for walls. The Yakshini, painted in stone colours with painstaking wrist-strokes characteristic of our art tradition, reaches out to a scale not envisaged by it originally, requiring different principles of composition and execution. Eventually, Krishan moved on to a new medium - oil on canvas. It is evident that changed circumstances reflect in a change of medium as well.

It is not accidental that in this process of transformation, his imagery acquired a new content. Krishan's nayikas are not mere instruments dependent on male favors to survive; nor are they, like the Biblical Eve, temptresses responsible for the downfall of man. They carry with them the ancient grandeur of mother-goddesses, tree-nymphs, pathfinders for the human race and repositories of power. His is a vision of women coming into their own, but not as a mere travesty of male stereotypes that we see in western feminism. Rather, they are women finding themselves as part and parcel of the process of liberation of mankind as a whole from slavery.

Krishan's work though contemporary, reflects the tradition of his home state of Rajasthan, the warmth of whose yellows, ochres, browns, reds and orange is clearly visible even today, as are the colorful clothes they wear in some of his earlier works. What distinguishes his studies of women is their bearing and presence, something that feudal society never allowed beyond the ominous hand-print of the Sati. His women are not victims of fate, they are the makers of the future. And, he has a capacity to place complex concepts in a visual language that is easy to understand and not obscure. That is what gives his works the appeal they have today among a wide section of connoisseurs at home and in countries as far apart as Japan and the USA.

Suneet Chopra.