

A Visual Study on Metaphysical Art in Colonial India: Selected Artworks of Gaganendranath Tagore

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ABSTRACT

Gaganendranath Tagore is widely regarded as the beginning of cubism in Colonial India. The aim of this paper will be to detect Metaphysical art taste in Gaganendranath's paintings and find the comparisons of the Giorgio de Chirico's paintings. Gaganendranath was a unique artist who established a very distinct style with recognized aspects of Eastern and Western art. Gaganendranath Tagore established his own style of Cubism through many influences, but his political cartoons and social satires on Westernized Bengalis are what he is most known for. His fascination in the enigmatic play of light and shade, as well as patterns, may have sprung from his passion in photography. Cubism's central idea was to express one's experiences in terms of patterns that are frequently obscured by visual appearance.

Keywords: *Metaphysical, De Chirico, Nietzsche, Cubism, Indian art, Twentieth Century*

A Comparative Study of De Chirico and Gaganendranath Tagore art works

Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978), the renowned Italian painter who pioneered the distinctive form of 'metaphysical art,' the avant-garde of the early twentieth century, had a predominant feeling of isolation and haunted mystery. Although metaphysical art is representational, it also has an element of contradiction and hidden meaning underneath the surface structures. It has created an alarmingly wide city square in de Chirico's paintings, surrounded by arches and high walls. Work in this manner inspired him to create the short-lived Metaphysical Painting movement with Carlo Carrà, a painter.

De Chirico was well aware that Western culture was undergoing massive and irreversible changes. He opted to portray the sentiments of those who lived in that changing environment rather than painting objective images of it. When confronted with the unknown, he was interested by how individuals seek consolation in the mystical, strange, and extreme. As history was being devoured by a hungry future, De Chirico intended to depict what could not be seen: the lonely, befuddled lives of time's witnesses. Late fall afternoons in Turin, when the long shadows of the setting sun converted wide open squares and quiet public monuments into what de Chirico dubbed "metaphysical cities," exposed hidden truth through odd juxtapositions. Chirico himself stated that "meditations of Nietzschean origin" where he was influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy were the inspiration for his painting. De Chirico's Metaphysical paintings, which had previously harmonised modernist and classical components, served as inspiration for a slew of interwar attempts to reclaim "plastic values" without completely abandoning modernism. (Plate 1, Plate 2)

Gaganendranath's art represents modern Indian mindset and is firmly rooted in the 20th century. Gaganendranath's strong sense of humour and irony was represented in a series of stunning caricatures, which were primarily intended to comment on the degradation of social and moral standards under colonial authority. Gaganendranath was influenced by Japanese wash techniques, while on the other, he was influenced by European art styles such as cubism, futurism, and expressionism.

The paintings of Gaganendranath are classified into five periods. The Calcutta landscapes and portraits in the first phase (1905-1911). In second phase, commonly known as the Chaitanya series, was concerned with paintings of the spiritual leader Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his disciples and lasted from 1911 to 1915. His cubist explorations dominated his third phase (1915-1921), often known as the "Vichitra Period." Rupam published Gaganendranath's earliest known cubistic paintings, as well as an essay by Stella Kramrisch, who named her piece An Indian Cubist, in 1922. Gaganendranath's work in the 1920s was also described as cubist by the critics. Post-cubist paintings dominated the latter era (1925-1930). Through his modernist experimentation

with the form, Gaganendranath is credited with introducing cubism to India. Instead of rigidly adhering to the cubist painting style, he incorporated it into his own. Tagore, unlike his predecessors, employed light and space in his paintings, two notions that had never been used previously in Indian art. Combining this with cubism's emphasis on simplicity and structure, he tried to create a cohesive whole that included structure, stark simplicity of form, light, space, and surface design.

Gaganendranath's artworks reflected a probable vision of Visual Metaphysics similar to De Chirico's metaphysical paintings. Art works like (Plate 3) series of *House Mysterious* and (Plate 4) untitled (the structure of architectural elements through perspective).

In these paintings, Gaganendranath created a juxtaposition of artificially produced light and shadows. Gaganendranath's fascination with natural light, including daytime sunshine, evening sunsets, and midnight light. As a result, by the time he saw cubism, he had already established his unique approach to light and enigmatic shadows. As a result, the entire image is comprised of overlapping light and shadow planes. Instead of convex protrusions of volume, such a juxtaposition generates a spatial structure in which blacks become dark depths. Although there is no documentation that Gaganendranath Tagore's paintings were metaphysical or influenced by de Chirico, a visual thinking process of metaphysical art emerges when the two artists' works are compared.

Conclusion

Gaganendranath Tagore was a colonial India's Cubist artist. Stella Kramrisch, an art historian, claims that he is referred to as "An Indian Cubist." However, some of Gaganendranath's paintings bear a striking painterly similarity to the Metaphysical paintings of Giorgio de Chirico. In comparative study there are similarities of both artists' artworks (Plate 2) and (Plate 4). If visual features arise, philosophical aspects of metaphysics may unavoidably emerge as well.

Plates



Plate 1 Melancholia, 1912



Plate 2 The purity of a dream, 1915



Plate 3 House Mysterious. 1922-25



Plate 4 Untitled, 1921-25

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