Chapter VII

Some Abstracts From The World Over Opinions Regarding Painting Work Of The Artist

M.A.R. Chughtai
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M.A.R. CHUGHTAI

Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, Philosopher, Lahore 1920s

Congratulations on the inaugural issue of "Nairang-e-Khiyal". The painting of "Laila" by Abdur Rahman Chughtai is very appealing. Now let us see how Qais will appear?

Dr. Sir Mohammed Iqbal, Poet, Lahore, 1928

I welcome Murraqqa-i-Chughtai -- Ghalib's illustrated edition by Mr. M.A. Rahman Chughtai - a unique enterprize in modern Indian painting and printing. Some of the most recent paintings of Mr. Chughtai are indeed remarkable. Indications to show that the young artist of the Punjab is already on the way to feel his responsibility as an artist. He is only twenty-nine yet. What his art will become when he reaches the maturer age of forty, the future alone will disclose. Meanwhile all those who
are interested in his work will keenly watch his forward movement.

The Studio, London, 1928

The cultural renaissance of the last quarter of a century in India has disclosed a number of remarkable artists. Among these Mr. M.A. Rahman Chughtai of Lahore has, though only twenty-nine years old, taken a place of very special distinction. The accompanying reproductions are typical of Chughtai's works, with their suggestion of a world of feeling somewhat above or just beyond the borders of the world of sight. They are sentimental in the true sense of that much abused word, in that their essential impulse is feeling, towards the expression of which all this included in their mental phase is bent.

It is refreshing to find a body of work of this calibre in India at the present time. Mr. Chughtai carries on the Eastern tradition of impeccable
draught draughtsmanship which reaches its fines heights of simplification, perhaps in the great Chinese and Japanese Masters. Mr. Chughtai’s works show an advance over much of the insipid and backboneless output of his contemporaries, which ought to be welcome as a sign of the time.

Creative Art, New York, 1928

Chughtai’s paintings are poems set not to music but colour and line, and like poetry they assume a ritualistic mood and say something more than what is said. Chughtai is a poet as well as a painter. In all Chughtai’s pictures, there is an exquisite refinement of mood and method, a lyrical fervour in every line. Effects are economically achieved through concentration on the main theme of the picture.

La Renaissance, Paris, 1928

His paintings are a proof of his amazing imagination, splendid harmony of colours, richness of decoration and extraordinary master of brushes
and colours. Like all great artists he moves as a poet among the colours and scenes of today.


I have received the delightful volume of your paintings and cannot tell you how grateful I am for your gift. I have had a good deal to do with Indian Art during the last 25 years but do not recall any artist's pictures that have given me so much pleasure as your own. What I like about them so much is that, although they preserve the best Indian and Persian tradition, they are so patiently instinct with your own individuality, not merely mimetic like most Indian art of today. You have just that sense for the decorative coupled with the breath of style that is indispensable to the mural painter. With very many thanks for your welcome gift.

Your work appeals to me more than that of any other Indian Artist.
Dr Abindarnath Tagore, Artist, Calcutta, 1929

Accept my sincerest congratulations and best thanks for the book which you have so kindly sent to me, one of your earliest and oldest admirers. Your splendid and beautiful illustration and illumination have done justice to the memory of the departed poet. Your devoted labour for Modern Indian Art has awakened inexpressible pleasure in my mind and great hope for the future of our art.

Dr Zakir Hussain, Scholar, Delhi, 1930

Thank you very much for giving Jamia Millia Islamia a copy of your Muraqqa-i-Chughtai. You mention whether I like it. The question of like or dislike is far superceded by the heavenly perception. If there be true creativeness, there be true art, which sweeps man off his feet. And this state is far above mere happiness and personal inclinations. In this muraqqa, there are not one or two, but multiple things which awe oneself.
Sir Ross Masood, Vice-Chancellor, Alligarh, 1930

Although I never had the honour before of receiving your personal letter, I am fully acquainted with your achievements, and you are as such no stranger to me. Please accept my heartfelt thanks for the copy of your Murraqqa-i-Chughtai. Please believe me when I say that I will treasure it with some of those things of my existence which I hold more dear than my own life.

The world knows very little about the civilization of Islam and the contributions of Muslim scholars, a consequence to which I have decided to edit a collection of articles written by Muslims as to give a true picture from their own viewpoint. I invite you to write an article in this selection on Islamic Art. I make this offer for the reason that in these times there is no other Muslim artist better qualified than you. I look forward to that day when you will turn your attention to illustrating the verses of Allama Iqbal.
E.B. Havell, Scholar, London, 1932

Your book is a great achievement of which you have every reason to be proud of. Please accept my warmest congratulations and thanks. It marks a new and conspicuous step forward in the development of modern Indian Art and I most sincerely hope that you will find opportunities for developing your great powers in other directions than book illustration and thereby help to make public interest in art wider and deeper. In the meantime all who see your book will enjoy the beauty and imagination of it.

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, Poet, Calcutta, 1937

I am grateful to you for your kindness in sending me two of your latest publications which I have gone through with genuine pleasure. Your perfect command over lines and the delicate colouring of your pictures has a great appeal for me and I congratulate you on your achievement. The
books will be valued additions to the library of
the Kala-Bhavamia at Santiniketan.

**Pablo Picasso, Artist, Paris, 1937**

Gracias for the volume "Mumraqqa" of your
brother's work. Being a draughtsman myself, I
particularly like this quality in the work of
Rahman Chughtai. (*Comment given to Dr Abdullah
Chughtai*)

**Jawaharlal Nehru, Politician, Delhi, 1937**

It was a great pleasure for me to get your
letter and two volumes containing reproductions of
your paintings. I have long been an admirer of your
work. The volumes that you have sent me will be
treasured by me and I am grateful to you for them.
Some time back I got your Diwan-Ghalib and I gave
it as a birthday present to my sister.

**Nandalal Bose, Artist, Calcutta, 1951**

I have been very much glad to have received a
copy of the album of Indian Paintings of the famous
artist K.B. M.A. Rahman Chughtai. The author has been able to enrich the album with the application of his own original expression. An endeavour of placing together of all kinds of emotion has been successfully made in the book. He has attempted to express the material objects in his art through abstract realism and has skillfully avoided the material realism. The pictures seem to be made with lines as fine and delicate as the threads made of stalks of lotuses. The album as a whole, represents a container of the essence of jesmin, the fragrance of which fills in and overtakes one's mind and heart when the lid is opened.

His Imperial Majesty, Reza Pehlavi, Shahenshah, Tehran, 1960

Your letter was duly laid before the Shahenshah and I am commanded to express His Imperial Majesty's high appreciation of your good wishes on the occasion of his wedding.
Manohar Kaul, Critic, New Delhi, 1961

The pictorial art thus runs through the veins of Chuughtai, who out of some generic sentiments resuscitates the old Persian mannerism in a flat romantic style of his own devising. The figures are sometimes made slender or tapering or unusually longer. This distortion has added to the beauty of figures and not detracted anything from them. His self study in the art of drawing and etching has given him complete control over the plastic line, which under this touch has become instinctively plaint and fluid.

Dr Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General, United Nations, 1975 (Letter on Artist's death)

On behalf of the Secretary-General I wish to acknowledge the sad news of your father's death. His many talents will long be remembered and admired particularly at the United Nations Headquarters. I wish to extend my most sincere
condolences and sympathy. (Head of the Secretariat).

UNESCO, Paris, 1975

"I thank you for sending to us a magnificent album of Chughtai's works together with the poems of Allama Mohammed Iqbal. I do believe that your idea of preserving your father's work in an Art Gallery is the right step towards the enrichment of Pakistan's artistic heritage. We very much appreciate all that you are doing to preserve and strengthen the understanding of the great art of Chughtai...."

Ralph Pinder-Wilson, Scholar, London 1979

No artist or painter creates for himself. Always in the forefront of his mind is to communicate his vision to others. M.A. Rahman Chughtai's final goal is a complete personal style. His subjects are often illusive symbols and if we sometimes notice or view his works at other levels,
we can enjoy the immediacy of line and colour, which is in blend of striking compositions. In his paintings he developed a technique of water colour which he exploited to the full, with subtle tonal variations melding with the other. In his published books, he proves himself to be Master of the book; Master of the Illustrated book, but compared to his Mughal predecessors who worked for a limited royal circle, he created for the general humble public. If we see his books like the Murrāqqa and Amal, we see how beautifully the pictures and the printed word relate to each other. (Lahore)

Miao Hailing, Journalist, Beijing, 1981

Every painting of Mr. Chughtai is a poem. The artistic content is limitless. The master pieces of the great painter Chughtai is the common wealth of the human being.