Chapter 4

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THE DEPICTION OF MYTHICAL AND LEGENDARY ELEMENTS BY M.F. HUSAIN

The Indian contemporary art takes us to the virtual genesis by the legendary painting of M.F. Husain. Husain is the modern painter to interpret the religious thinking and to make them famous at the national and international level. The element of his paintings at the 20th century, his religious painting as portraits, theatrical compositions and his subjects from the ancient myth and legends have to acquire a flesh and blood reality fashioning to a new rational as called the modern art at that time. While borrowing from the Mughal, Buddha and Ajanta and tradition of mural paintings he chose to paint in the modern idiom simulating visual reality through naturalistic methods of depiction and often Western neo-classical in inspiration, to make them viable as Indian cultural symbols. He has in his paintings achieve to make the passage from western to India, from the 'real' to the ionic. He uses individual models and real ladies acquired in his paintings' the layers of other signification as religious, social, aesthetic, symbols and mythic, which transformed them in to feminine and national emblem in his paintings, Mahabharat, Ramayana Duldul, (Tazia). Marathi woman

Another themes inspired by him insist to karbala is 'Duldul Horse' (1967) which is the Imam Husain's horse. It has appeared in Husain's early works. Often Husain sketches this differently, almost like toy. In 'Horses' chasing the sun, in one corner, the spherical sun appears like a round football and it is being chased by the three or four black and white horse, the horses that looked back' has a novel theme. The unique structure bears Husain's insignia. The main figure has the outline feeling as a toy. The smaller horse suggests dark thoughts. The two together recreate the convention of the horses of the 'Tazias' with whose rendering Husian was so intimately associated in his youth. In addition to the symbolic use of form to emotional meaning, a new and inverse factor drived from folk art, appears to have entered into this painting. In using the abstract shape of a wooden toy. The horse as a multimedium essential symbolic motive was itself to create interest in Husain. The equine structure bears Husain's insignia on the other hand behind the horse is also a symbol from the Muharram ritual. The figure sketched to the right of the painting is abstract. It if one thinks of it as representing the total devastation on a
battle field'. then one can easily link it with Karbala. For Husain, the horse seem to stand for super human trees, with great power which is not only for its stampeding arrogance, but because of its greater sophistication Husain's many characteristic themes for many years has been his horse.

A number of mythical which link the past with the present assume symbolic significance for simple village folk, to the stories of the Ramayana Mahabharata with devotion and faith. The identify with Hanuman who supposed to have lifted an entire mountain to rescue Lakshmana and with the Mahabharata warrior Arjuna. In the Ramlila performances, in their sculptures books and even on the walls of their homes and temples these same symbols are seen to allaround and he was able to capture its drama is Mahabharata series.

Husain writes in his Ramayana series during 1968, "I decided to create the Ramayana series to find again the symbol and the roots those are the images of gods and goddesses which are familiar to the village people or the majority of people in India. To relate these symbols and images to the present situation that is my purpose in creating to make these symbols appear alive."  

Along with the Ramayana and Mahabharata series Husain has also painted a series on Hanuman. Hanuman's body is
shown in different poses in these pictures. Hanuman is originally a monkey so that his movements are like those of a mischievous animals, like Hanuman, he is also fascinated by Ganapati. Again, this elephant headed god takes up many forms. We are familiar with these forms in ancient Indian art, especially sculpture. But it carries an unknown sense of drama, Husain has used some of the strokes to create this image. “The Mahabharata paintings were exhibited at the Sao Paulo Biennial in 1971 where Husain participated as special invitee along with Picasso. The tide was against figurative work and his painting went unnoticed. But for Husain they were of a special significance intertwining the destiny of the characters from the past with the present.⁴

‘Ganesh Darwaza’ 1963 is Husain’s painting as the Mythical and exhibited at the Pundole Art Gallery. Husain says, “At that time, my brush was full of the vibrant colours of Rajasthan, violent and intense like a Rajput warrior madly in love with a Mughal maiden in marble. A union of gold and silver. A synthesis of two dynamic cultures. My travels through Rajasthan were replete with valuable image”

Husain’s paintings after his Haj Pilgrimage were exhibited. We have Husain’s explanation of the ‘Mecca’ pilgrimage. Husain’s Mecca’ series showed a new approach. In the first place, with the use of wax and others mixed media,
his paintings acquired a different texture. Secondly, in addition to depicting the typical monuments, towers minarets, etc. of ‘Mecca - Medina, he made extensive use of Arabic calligraphy and painted inscription from the ‘Holy Quran’. As a result each painting acquired a different, characteristic beauty, an easy natural symbolism. But as a matter of faith as legendry his inner religious. These paintings show how deeply Husain studies the theme on which he was working.

The painting of Husain on the these Myths of the traditions and an increasing tendency to generic symbolization, are exemplified in two of his paintings of this period, yellow kite painted by following his first visit to Europe, is a simplified and geometrical rendering of a female figure seated in a surrounding of rich red, with a small kite in the upper right corner, connected with the woman by a rectangle of yellow light, the arrangement of lines and colours makes this kite with a human face appear to fly straight out of the woman’s consciousness.

Husain’s old photographs, as well as his self-portraits, give us an idea of his appearance during the Bhulbhai days. The legendary Dutch artist, Rembrandt, painted many self-portraits, at different periods of his life. The clearly noticeable transformation in his face, in his expression, and in his attire are really thrilling. Artists have traditionally painted self-
portraits. Although Husain has painted only about four or five self-portraits, the changes in his appearance are very noticeable. His self-portrait, looking at the observer, stands a little at an angle, with his palette in hand. But he presents his full face, never a profile. A self-portrait done in profile is very rare. This is how Husain may be, the everything we see. A self-portrait, with a palette in his hand and a canvas on an easel. What could be be painting? Probably a self-portrait again. This process can continue and infinitum.

"Husain gave up his cap many years ago. His self portraits of the interim's period do not show there is obstacle. Those self portrait make him look like a Mullah or a Maulwi. In his 1957s self portrait, the cap is missing. This is one which shows the influence of Souza's style.

In the 1965 Husain painted three Religious leaders, the middle man look like Husain and so does the Mullah in Mullah and Miriam. Of course this likeness has been done to lease the viewers. That the Mullah should remind on of Husain is visual trick he plays. Yet Husain is not unaware that his face and beared suit a religious leaders appearance and he tease his viewers bases on this confidence. This painting belong to the category of paintings of monkary. The former has it beginnings in the painting of Three Monks, as well as the self important and rigid image of man as the initiator Mullah and Marriam is
ritualistic parody in series black and white the mullah in a seated black figure a grave shadow touched with active write around the face and on the hand. Marriam kneels beside him in the posture of a familant. 7

Husain’s religious temper and the orthodox religious education received from his grandparent in Siddhpur is well known. His long beard or the cap he used to wear are not just external manifestations. Instead they suggest the deeply religious and follower of Allah. This is exactly what Husain expresses naturally in his self-portraits and his paintings of Mullah and Maulavi.

Husain creates human characters that confront his emotive ideas; to reach further into the terrain’s of the human condition, he introduces with them, a dialogue of metaphorical characters. Thus his art is studied with symbolic images that are introduced naturally and in continual juxtaposition with the more explicitly images. These symbols are not to be read in any literal sense. They are to be comprehended as they are painted, intuitively, with their own fluid logic. Their untold element reveals itself in relation to other happenings within the context and seldom needs outside reference. The symbols are generally borrowed from traditional pictorial convention and mythology: a bird in cage, a lamp, a cactus, a spider, an outspread palm. Several times when they are not sufficiently transmuted or when they are mere
pictorial flourishes they dilute the deeper intentions of the statement. In his best painting however, they perform actively, change meanings, relate unexpectedly to each other and establish new relationship within a fully integrated formal structure. Then Husain is able to create personal myths that are provocative, intimate, incursions into the unconscious.

While Husain's paintings do have an immediate local context, the essential concern of his art is archetypal: it explores of life, love, and death. The figures in his paintings personally emotions not socio relationships. Each comes robed in its own solitary identity, the structure of the grouping accentuating the monumental character of the individual figure. Husain's paintings finally create a closed world, a picture which is the nature of culture that carries its interest with it wherever it goes.

Being Husain's first film it is native and this is one of the crucial factors of its success after his select medium there is an inevitable slight mistake into over sophistication. For Husain as painter it seems to have become difficult to recall a freshness of vision. The medium has known too long how to state it and permits more clichés than compositions. With a new medium he is again looking as it for the first time. The only regret is that he has interpolated pseudo-symbols. They demand to be understand extra pictorially yet if one conceives, the
despairing after a shoe or the lantern forgotten in the desert only provide banal messages. Which should also be mentioned as important catalyst of this change for his paintings which are not entirely abstract.

His art had recognized the thin balance of loving with differences, hoping they shall not become divisions or violent barriers, and yet aware of the imminent disintegration. As a result the sense of a cohesive multiplicity falls apart. The unifying threads of the diversity seem to slip away, and this tug of has creates the tension which motivates his work. These ideas would receive a jolt during the 1990’s especially with the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, temporarily dissolving his colourfull simultaneity into a brooding darkness.

Dutta writes about the people in Husain’s paintings: “Husain has given them a symbolic and Mythically expression of peace. Look at their fingers and hands. Husain has created for them a special choreography, more eloquent, more expressive than any naturalistic portrayal. They are the little man and woman caught in the little tension of their petty lives that often verge on the tragic”.

Husain’s allegiance, the Indian mythical and legendry and romance has no further import than as the choice of the subject matters for his art, a peg to hang in on, the criticism that, in a firm anchorage in national heritage, is wide of the mark; what
is important is there solution of his particular aesthetic problem, which is first and last. The organization of a personal iconography.

M.F. Husain, who belongs in fact to different context, to the Bombay progressives, is also engaged in the portrayed of India. He brings the villagers right into the present, rather like a mascot figure, playful, energetic, his villagers have the quality of great animate puppets meant as though to be carried adopt by the liberal vanguard of India. Husain straddles a transition point. He brings "forward" not only Amirata Sher-Gill and Mukherjee but Tagore's introspective dream pictures which had introduced the irresponsible courage that is the modern art as understood by Jamini Roy. "Jamini Roy the first expression of national idealism is than a rehabilitation of the past. We have turned from the imitation of European formulae to follow the historical development of our own beliefs, our architecture, sculpture, music and literature."

Maqbool Fida Husian who is virtually a national emblem was able to, with equal felicity, make paintings which were rooted in Indian tradition and yet were modern. Paintings like 'Marathi woman' or 'Balaram street' or 'women at work' had strong sturdy peasant figures transmuted into a magical space which was mythical and real at the same time. The inspiration for many of these forms came from the street life of his
neighborhood in Bombay inhabited as it was by prostitute stouts, and others. These were people who monumental in their struggle for a daily existence and Husain imbued then with an aural.

A brief review of is careers work yields its own analysis Husain's most significant work has been born of his tactile inter-play with the given circumstance. It is produced at the edge, when the supposed inevitability of the circumstance is already transcended while its powers linger and vibrate. And it is moot question whether the pressures of struggling involvement distilled through calculated aloofness, were not altogether more challenging for him, whether the clear emergence of recent years does not infect leave him a little adrift.

An awareness and continual assessment of his creative process as expressed in his more significant work, enables an artist to keep a grasp over his essential meatier, There is no rigidity aboty the creative process and a phase of reversal may at different points be an experimental necessity. But Husain's career is full of such tangents, where even the nucleus involvement is not maintained. He has often intended to ignore that his creative impulse relates to the human conditioning an expressionistic idiom and begun elements to paint as if his concern was with a purely pictorial structure. In manipulating the elements and emaciating the subject' he is cheating himself.
out of his own genius the painter lines. The direction of brush strokes, the treatment of colour transition, the thrust of the line can almost be predicted. The personal handwriting becomes a convention and what are ostensibly his infallible powers, become also his stumbling blocks. Husain approach with this reference was fundamental to Indian art. He painted a very significant pattern of assimilating Indianness.
REFERENCES


