CHAPTER – III
IN SEARCH OF AN IDENTITY: ARTISTS IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY OF ORIENTAL ART (1907 – 1947)
Since its inception in 1907, the Indian Society of Oriental Art offered a valuable platform to a large body of artists, known and unknown, engaged in a quest for an autonomous identity during the period of colonial subjugation. The identity of the artists sought to be redefined through the Society through an introduction to their lost heritage, which implied the upholding of not only the country's art tradition but also that of the Orient as an instrument for the artistic regeneration of India. The present chapter offers a detailed analysis of the attempts not only of the established artists like Abanindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar and others, but also of a host of relatively unknown artists who utilized the Society's space in their search for an autonomous vocabulary for Indian art and in their attempts to uphold the great heritage of the Orient and explore new varieties of art forms. They attempted to arrive at a specific definition of Oriental art, deriving inspiration not only from the ancient and medieval art of India, but also from the art of the Orient that was pan-Asian in its scope. Yet, once able to prove their Indian identity and having earned recognition and fame, they gradually evolved distinct styles of their own rooted in the culture of the country. The Society thus helped a new generation of artists to win recognition — "artists ....... who are attempting to frame a form of expression from the Indian view of life, aided no doubt by the conventions of the old masters, but also by conventions
which they are devising for themselves". This quest for a cultural identity eventually reinforcing the national identity proved to be significant in the context of the Indian nationalist movement during the first half of the twentieth century.

As a reaction against colonial cultural domination, an increasing awareness of the great art heritage of the country was much in evidence since the late colonial period. This in turn added to the self-esteem among the Indians. Orientalists like E. B. Havell, Coomaraswamy, Sister Nivedita sought to uphold the Great Art Tradition of the country, also drawing attention to the cultural heritage of the Orient which had so long been looked down upon by the colonial government. Okakura's (The) Ideals of the East attempted to reinforce such sentiments by promoting pan-Asian aesthetic. It was in such an environ that the Indian Society of Oriental Art was established in 1907 to promote the cause of Oriental art by offering the necessary platform and assistance to those involved.

Among the established artists who utilized the Society's platform for the presentation of their art form, mention may first be made of the Tagores of Jorasanko, notably Abanindranath and his elder brother Gaganendranath. Nurtured in the creative

1. The Englishman, December 28, 1922
environment of the Tagore household\textsuperscript{2}, the brothers played a crucial role in the Society's foundation upholding the cause of Oriental art in the process. "Infact the inaugural meeting of the Society was convened by Abanindranath himself at the Government School of Art and Craft at a time when he was the acting Principal of the School..."\textsuperscript{3} It was at Abanindranath's suggestion that the Society was named Indian Society of Oriental Art.\textsuperscript{4} Abanindranath Tagore's artistic genius emanated not only from the famed Southern Balcony of the illustrious Tagore household at Jorasanko, but also from the Indian Society of Oriental Art at the Samabaya Mansion.

Abanindranath's elder brother Gaganendranath was also one of the founder-members of the Society. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, February 1, 1937 noted:

He was a pioneer of the school of modern Bengali painting and founded the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, with which he was intimately connected for several decades .......

The Indian Society of Oriental Art and the

\textsuperscript{2} ".....the whole atmosphere of our home was permeated with the sprit of creation", noted Rabindranath Tagore in 'The Religion of an Artist', S. Radhakrishnan & J. H. Muirhead Ed. Contemporary Indian Philosophy (London, 1936), p.30
\textsuperscript{4} See Abanindranath Tagore and Rani Chanda, Jorasankor Dhare (Visva Bharati, 1944, 1955), p.96
school run by it was planned, organized and carried out by his untiring energy and enthusiasm.

With indefatigable energy, Gaganendranath built up the Society as "the great inspiring centre of a new national awakening in an understanding of the ideals and basic principles of Indian Art". Along with Abanindranath, Gaganendranath taught students at the Society's art school and organized exhibitions under the Society's banner to control public taste. Both Abanindranath and Gaganendranath thus engaged in the construction of a national identity in the realm of arts through the Indian Society of Oriental Art.

Abanindranath Tagore (1871 - 1951), a singular figure in modern Indian art, ushered in a movement for the revival of Indian art during the early twentieth century. Searching for an identity in the Great Art Tradition of the country, "Abanindranath was the first to perceive that the salvation of the country's art lay in picking up the broken threads of tradition, in recapturing the essentially national spirit, of form, as well as of sentiment". Inspired by the growing nationalism of the Swadeshi period, Abanindranath sought to give an

5. O. C. Gangoly, "Gaganendranath Tagore: The Great Indian Artist, (The) Modern Review, March 1938
ABANINDRANATH TAGORE, 'ABHISARIKA'
imaginative expression of the contemporary Swadeshi trend in his paintings. His works regularly displayed in the Society's annual exhibitions were "designed as an organized protest against foreign influences and as a passionate plea for the use of the old vernacular art of India as the medium of a truly national art". Abanindranath was aware that colonial rule had generated in the minds of the Indian youth a distrust of their tradition and inheritance and they considered it a symptom of superior culture to reject Oriental works of creation. In a letter to Havell Abanindranath noted, "It is time that the Indians should feel the magnitude and grandeur of their art heritage". Jamini Prakash Ganguli, Abanindranath's nephew, also noted, "Uncle Aban had started the movement for the revival of Indian art".

Abanindranath's respect for the heritage and tradition of the country was reflected in his works exhibited by the Indian Society of Oriental Art. His early works reveal his deep involvement with the Mughal style through which he attempted to uphold an Indianness. His 'Radha-Krishna' series seemed to emulate the Mughal miniatures in format, whereas 'Abhisarika', an experiment in Mughal miniature technique was accepted as
the standard for the whole Bengal School. The heads of some of his characters, his drawings of costumes of men, his use of colour reveal a distinct link with the Mughal court style. The Durbari Art of the Mughals inspired Abanindranath to produce 'Aurangzeb Copying Quran'. The artist's interest in animals as evident in his 'Dying Camel' also reflected the Mughal trend. Further, the definition of the Orient was merged with a sense of history which was distinctly Abanindranath's own. This was reflected in the artist's historical paintings like 'Building of the Taj', 'Bahadur Shah', 'Death of Shah Jahan'. However, Abanindranath realized that the Mughal style lacked emotion and he attempted rectification. Thus in the artist's 'Aurangzeb Copying the Quran', Aurangzeb is seen to bear the crude expression of a person intoxicated with power.\textsuperscript{10}

Some of Abanindranath's works, marked by an element of gender, were attempts at upholding the glorious ideal of Hindu womanhood characterized by the qualities of suffering, stoicism and self-sacrifice. Sister Nivedita, whose one of dearest dreams was the rebirth of Indian art, congratulated Abanindranath on the strength of his portrayal of Sita and hailed the artist's 'Bharat Mata' as the first great masterpiece of the new style of Indian art:

\textsuperscript{10} The Englishman dated December 22, 1921 noted, "There is a very shrewd suggestion of the character of the Great Emperor in whom the sword and the Koran got so inextricably mixed up".
i - 'SIDDHAS OF THE UPPER AIR'

ii - 'THE BANISHED YAKSHA'

iii - 'BUDDHA AND SUJATA'

PL. 14 - ABANINDRANATH TAGORE
We have here a picture which bids fair to prove the beginning of a new age in Indian art. The artist has here given expression ....... to a purely Indian idea, in Indian form. This is the first masterpiece in which an Indian artist has actually succeeded in disengaging ...... the spirit of the motherland ....... and portraying her as she appears to the eyes of her children.11

Sister Nivedita went further to argue:

How can a man be a painter of nationality? Can an abstract idea be given form and clothed with flesh and painted? Undoubtedly it can indeed, if we had questioned this Abanindranath Tagore's exquisite picture of 'Bharat Mata' would have proved its possibility.12

Abanindranath's works came to be looked upon as the perfect expression of Indian conceptions. The artist's 'Siddhas of the Upper Air', 'The Banished Yaksha' and the series based on the Rubbaiyats of Omar Khayyam seemed to be "...... the perfect flowering of the old tradition, a flower that speaks not only of the past loveliness, but is strong and vigorous with promise of

11. Sister Nivedita, 'Bharat Mata', Prabasi, August 1906
PL. 15 - ABANINDRANATH TAGORE, 'BHARAT MATA'
abundant fruit".\textsuperscript{13}

The artist's works came to be acknowledged as great expressions of nationalist sentiment. 'Bharat Mata' became the new symbol which emerged as the visual image of India and served as a banner in some Swadeshi demonstrations. In fact, the new art form visualizing the 'Bharat Mata' appeared as an example of that closely knit religious and artistic consciousness which had to be taken into account if the British still hoped to rule India.

An interesting picture of the artist, entitled 'Poet, Patriot and Peacemaker' was exhibited by the Society in its annual exhibition of 1921. The Englishman, December 22, 1921 gives a vivid description of the picture:

A picture of interest at the Art Exhibition which the Viceroy opened yesterday shows us the much discussed interview between Rabindranath Tagore and Mr. Gandhi. It is painted by Mr. Tagore, nephew of the poet who is said to have looked in through a key hole. In his picture entitled 'Poet, Patriot and Peace Maker' we see three figures seated on the floor: the Poet stroking his beard and looking very

\textsuperscript{13} A. K. Coomaraswamy 'The Present State of Indian Art', (The) Modern Review (July – December, 1907), p.107
disturbed and thoughtful; Mr. Gandhi is leaning towards him and seems persuasive while in the background, also upon the floor, clad in a loose vest and a pair of trousers is Mr. C. F. Andrews.

Yet, Abanindranath's quest for an identity did not constitute a mere revival of the ancient art form of the country. The artist's works were actually his own creation out of the fragrance of all art in Asia. According to R. Siva Kumar, the artist owes certain aspects of his "...... themes, styles and technique to older Indian and Oriental traditions". For instance, in 'The Poet' Abanindranath imitated Indo-Persian manners to perfection, while in the artist's 'A Mughal Prince' "the Persian line is also apparent". Some of Abanindranath's works exhibited by the Society also revealed his "excursions into Chinese manners". His 'Kalidasa', 'A Ruined Temple' were "reminiscent of both Chinese and Mughal art." The artist was also deeply influenced by the art of Japan. From the visiting Japanese artists he learnt the techniques of Japanese art. His adoption of the Japanese 'Wash' technique made his rejection of the European principles of painting more pronounced. The Statesman, December 28, 1920 noted, "'The Beauty Spot', an illustration from Omar Khayyam by Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore,

14. R. Siva Kumar, Paintings of Abanindranath Tagore (Calcutta, 2008), p.85
15. The Statesman, December 28, 1920
has the fine lines and delicate colourings of an old Japanese print. The artist's 'White Feather' was reminiscent of a Japanese wood-cut. Abanindranath Tagore was thus greatly indebted to Oriental art forms in executing many memorable works of art.

Abanindranath's elder brother Gaganendranath Tagore (1867–1938) too engaged in the construction of a national ideology in the realm of arts and the Indian Society of Oriental Art afforded the artist the valuable space and platform to prove his nationalist identity. A pioneer of the Indian art movement, Gaganendranath's artistic talent found diverse expressions as evident in his works exhibited by the Society. Although his works were varied in nature, his style remained within the bounds of Oriental art. He derived his subject matter from his own country. Indian landscapes constituted an important aspect of Gaganendranath's art. His 'Kalbaisakhi', 'Tiger Hill', 'Views of Ranchi', 'Sunset at Darjeeling', 'River Padma', 'Spirit of Night' were sincere attempts at portrayal of the beauty and spirit of India.\(^\text{17}\) The artist's Chaitanya series - 'The Victory of Chaitanya', 'Chaitanya O Ishwarpuri', 'Chaitanya's Jagannath Darshan', 'Konarak at Night', 'Bhuvaneshwar Temple' revealed the inherent beauty of rural Bengal.\(^\text{18}\) Other significant works of the artist

\(^{17}\) The Englishman, December 31, 1919 noted that Gaganendranath's "beautiful landscapes will appeal to every observer".

\(^{18}\) The Englishman, September 4, 1928 noted that the artist's Chaitanya series show how deeply he "..... understands the beauty that lies in rural Bengal".
exhibited by the Society were 'Rabindranath', 'Abanindranath' and 'Okakura'.

A number of Gaganendranath's exhibits at the Society's annual exhibitions were notable comments on the contemporary political situation. The artist's 'The Hartal Day in Calcutta' portrayed ".... the Hindus being for first time received into a Mahommedan mosque". Gaganendranath was also a renowned cartoonist portraying contemporary political and social issues. One of his cartoons, 'Peace Declared in the Punjab' reflecting the Jallianwalabagh tragedy was exhibited by the Society in one of its annual exhibitions and it shocked the then Viceroy Lord Chelmsford who had visited the exhibition.20

Like Abanindranath, Gaganendranath was also indebted to the Japanese style as is evident in his limited interest in colour, his use of the Japanese 'Wash' technique and his use of black ink on gold surface. Some of the artist's exhibits - 'The Golden Sands of Puri', 'The King and the Saint', 'A Bengali Folk Song', - indicate the significant influence of the Japanese style. The Statesman, December 28, 1920 while reviewing the artist's works noted, "...... at one time the art of Japan comes before the spectator". The artist used Japanese brush technique in his 'Jeevansmriti' series. The Englishman, December 28, 1920 also

19. The Empire, December 31, 1919
20. See O. C. Gangoly, Bharater Shilpa O Amar Katha (Calcutta, 1969),
noted, "....... it is perhaps in the use of gold that this artist is best seen. 'A Fantasy', a dull gold set with black is .... reminiscent of medieval Javanese art". The Orientalism of Gaganendranath's art was thus very much in evidence.

Gaganendranath Tagore was the backbone of the Indian Society of Oriental Art since its foundation and helped to spread its influence throughout the length and breadth of India.

Around the time of the foundation of the Indian Society of Oriental Art in 1907, Abanindranath recruited a few traditional artists and craftsmen to teach the traditional arts to the students at the Government Art School. Some of them imparted training in the Society's art school too. Among them the first mention may be made of Pandit Ishwari Prasad Varma (1870 - 1949), grandson of the artist Shivlal of the 'Patna Painter Group'. Appointed a teacher at the Government Art School at Calcutta, he became a close associate of Abanindranath in upholding the Mughal and Kangra styles of art. Abanindranath requested him to learn the process of silk painting from the Japanese. He instructed his students in the use of indigenous colours, brush and paper. Some of the artist's works, notably 'Pardanashin' in the Indian style exhibited in the Society's annual exhibition won critical acclaim. Sister Nivedita took a special note of the use of traditional colours by the artist.
A hereditary craftsman from Orissa, Giridhari Lal Mahapatra was appointed a teacher of sculpture at the Indian Society of Oriental Art. His works executed in the traditional Orissan and Southern styles of sculpture won special attention at the Society's exhibitions. The Forum, January 26, 1924 noted that the artist was "...... trying to lay the foundation of a new Bengal School of sculpture". After his death his son Sridhar Mahapatra, (1902 – 1990) was appointed a teacher of sculpture at the Indian Society of Oriental Art. Searching for an identity in the country's rich tradition of sculpture, the artist attempted to convince through the Society's platform the excellent standard attainable by the country in the sphere of sculpture. The influence of the Sarnath and the Mathura schools as well as the Southern school of sculpture was marked in his works.21 The Statesman, January 30, 1925 noted that the artist's sculptures reflected that a "masterly technique bestowed from father to son for many generations meets classical tradition and modern feeling with equal severity". There was also Dhanuskody Achary from Madras who helped Gaganendranath Tagore in designing and executing furniture at the Indian Society of Oriental Art.

A number of Abanindranath's disciples too utilized the Society's platform in their quest for a nationalist cultural identity, placing the Bengal School on firm foundations. Among

21. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 31, 1933, noted "Sridhar Mahapatra follows the tradition of the Mathura and the Sarnath
them the foremost was Nandalal Bose (1882 - 1966) who was appointed a teacher at the Society's art school in accordance with Abanindranath's wishes and who regularly showcased his works in the Society's exhibitions. Even after he had left the Society in 1920 to join the Kala Bhavan at Santiniketan, Nandalal used the Society's platform to uphold his art. In his search for an identity in the realm of arts, Nandalal attempted to go beyond the set boundaries, drawing inspiration from the traditional Indian art and Indian spiritualism on one hand and the art of the Far East on the other. The artist's great respect for the Oriental tradition marked him out among the artists of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. His 'Krishna and Arjuna', 'Hara and Gouri', 'Chaitanya', 'Kaikayee', 'Baisakhi Purnima', his series of illustrations of Rabindranath's 'Natir Puja' and 'Song of the Rainy Season' on the lines of the old Ragini pictures were superb executions in the Indian style of Indian themes.22 The artist's study of the Indian frescoes also greatly influenced his style. In 1907 with financial assistance from the Society and Sister Nivedita's encouragement, Nandalal went to Ajanta to study its frescoes and was overwhelmed by their beauty. He also visited the Bagh Caves to study its frescoes at the invitation of the Gwalior Durbar.23

22. See The Englishman, December 28, 1922
i - 'LAST JOURNEY OF YUDHISTIRA'
ii - 'PARTHASARATHI'
iii - 'SATI'
iv - 'KALI'

PL.20 - NANDALAL BOSE
The Amrita Bazar Patrika, March 31, 1933 took a special note of Nandalal's frescoes:

His fresco-sketches are unique in character, conception and composition ........ He surely gives a new impetus to the revival of a forgotten branch of Indian art.

The Statesman, December 26, 1928 too commended Nandalal's "...... masterful treatment ...... worthy of the best fresco painters of ancient India".

The artist was also drawn towards the pata paintings of Bengal and Orissa.

In his quest for an Indian identity, Nandalal also attempted to portray the glorious ideal of Hindu womanhood in his works 'Sati', 'Ahalya' which sought to uphold Indian women as the supreme embodiment of tradition. Sister Nivedita, while reviewing the artist's 'Sati' commented, "Nothing can be more significant of the distinctive character of Indian feeling than the way in which Nandalal Bose has set himself to approach the idea".24

Nandalal Bose was influenced by other forms of Oriental

art as well. He was attracted by the methods and techniques of Tibetan scroll painting. The Far Eastern art also had a marked impact on the artist. Nandalal had accompanied Tagore to China and Japan and had become familiar with the Far Eastern art, the style of which was reflected in his 'Japanese Dance' and his study of landscapes. The influence of Javanese art was evident in the artist's 'Brihannala', a panel painting on silk in the fresco style.

In his search for an identity Nandalal was motivated by a deep sense of patriotism which was reflected in his attempt to relate his art with the Indian nationalist movement. The renowned artist Benode Behari Mukherjee noted, "The way Nandalal has tried to express himself combining art with nationalism, hardly finds any parallel in the other followers of Abanindranath". He was deeply influenced by Sister Nivedita and Gandhiji and was also sympathetic towards the terrorists. Behind his decision to leave the Society was the consideration that it was financed mainly by the government and he disliked serving a government aided institution.

Another distinguished disciple of Abanindranath Tagore who attempted to uphold an Indian identity in his art, using

25. The Englishman, December 28, 1920 noted, "Nandalal Bose's 'Japanese Dance' shows much influence from Japan"
26. See The Statesman, December 26, 1928
27. Benode Behari Mukherjee, 'Nandalal Bose, Lalit Kala Contemporary
PL.21 - ASIT KUMAR HALDER, 'PIPE PLAYER'
the space and platform offered by the Society was Asit Kumar Haldar (1890 - 1964). Realizing that the European academic art suffered from considerable limitations, Asit Kumar set himself to evolve a distinct style drawing inspiration from the Oriental art heritage with great conviction and imagination. Abanindranath Tagore noted, "Haldar's art edifies the Oriental ideology ...."29

A possible explanation for this identity of vision and understanding of the canons of Oriental art is his meeting with Count Okakura at Ranchi in 1912. Some of the artist's masterpieces exhibited by the Society - 'Rai Raja', 'Lotus', 'Kunal and Asok', 'Ras-Lila', 'Damayanti at the Temple', 'Harshavardhana in Discourse with Hieun Tsang', 'Shah Jahan O Jahanara' were commendable executions in the Oriental style. In the opinion of Sister Nivedita, Asit Haldar's 'Sita' seemed to be "...... the most successful attempt yet made at that subject".30 Between 1909 and 1921 the artist visited the Ajanta, Bagh and the Jogimara caves to study the frescoes, which in turn inspired him to produce works like 'Apsara', 'Rasaleela', all superb executions in the fresco style. Coomaraswamy noted in the artist's 'Apsara' a distinct similarity with the style of Ajanta, while The Statesman, November 28, 1920 described the artist's 'Rasaleela' as a "......... a large fresco-like picture". In his quest for an identity Asit Kumar Haldar also turned to other Oriental

art forms. In the Society's twenty-first annual exhibition, he sent in twelve illustrations of Omar Khayyam which were "quite Persian in style and feeling".

Asit Kumar also authored a number of books through which he attempted to highlight the great art heritage of the country - Ajanta (Bangabda 1820), Bharater Karushilpa (1939), Bharater Shilpakatha (1939), Art and Tradition (1952). In the capacity of the Principal of the Lucknow School of Art as well, Asit Kumar sought to uphold the great art heritage of the Orient.

A pioneering artist working in the style of Abanindranath, Kshitindranath Majumdar (1891 - 1975) also considerably contributed to the evolution of a national cultural identity through the Indian Society of Oriental Art during the first half of the twentieth century. Initially Abanindranath appointed him a teacher of Indian art in the Society's art school. After Nandalal left the Society to join the Kala Bhavan in 1920, he became the Principal of the Society's art school and remained in that position for twenty years.31

Kshitindranath's works were a unique expression of the ideals established by Abanindranath and his quest for an identity was reflected in his works upholding the country's

tradition. Kshitindranath attempted to highlight the ideals as expressed in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The Radha-Krishna themes of Bhagavata Purana, the eternal representation of the Bhakti cult were the basic sources of the artist's inspiration. The influence of Indian spiritualism was evident in the artist's attempts at constructing a nationalist identity in the realm of arts.32 His 'Krishna' and 'Chaitanya' series of paintings exhibited by the Indian Society of Oriental Art - 'Rasa-Leela', 'Krishna and the Gopis', 'Radhakrishna', 'Kaliya Damana', 'Chaitanya Dancing', 'Chaitanya Leaving Home', reflected the influence of Vaishnavism on the artist. The Empire, December 31, 1919 took special note of the artist's 'The Tamala Tree' executed in the Oriental style. In the twenty-seventh annual exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, the 'Honey Bee' produced by the artist was "...... awarded the Maharaja of Kapurthala prize for the best painting in the Indian style".33 Traditional art forms of the country like the Kangra School of art deeply influenced the evolution of the artist's style. The Englishman, December 30, 1919, noted that some of the artist's works reminded one "...... of the best specimens of the Kangra School of painting". The artist's works attracted considerable attention in the Society's exhibitions for their Oriental style.34

32. Seven of the artist's paintings were reproduced in Sister Nivedita and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's 'Myths of the Hindus and the Buddhists (London, 1913)
33. The Tribune, Lahore, February 25, 1935
34. Lord Ronaldshay purchased the artist's 'Rasa-Leela', and 'The Lotus Pond'
In search of an autonomous cultural idiom through the Indian Society of Oriental Art was another renowned disciple of Abanindranath, Mukul Dey (1895 – 1989) whose works also reflected the influence of the rich art tradition of the Orient. The artist's water colours in the revived style of Indian art drew inspiration from the romantic themes of Sanskrit and Bengali poetry, from the Krishna legend and from the ancient fresco art of the country. The artist spent months at the Ajanta and the Bagh caves, copying the frescoes and assimilating the language of the great Indian art. The ordinary commonplace life particularly the lives of the primitive Santhals constituted the theme of many of his works, notably the 'Santhal Girl' and 'Sandhya Pradip'. The artist was also deeply influenced by the art of Japan. He accompanied the poet Rabindranath Tagore to Japan in 1916, being the first Bengali artist to travel to the island-country. He stayed there for about four months learning the nuances of Japanese art.

Other ardent disciples of Abanindranath too utilized the Society's platform to uphold an Indian and Oriental identity through their works. Shailendranath Dey, who joined the Society as an associate teacher of Nandalal Bose in 1915 and later joined the Jaipur Art School as the Vice Principal, drew inspiration from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas as evident in his works 'Shakuntala', 'Shiva in Meditation', 'Yaksha Addressing the Cloud', 'Holi Festival', 'Vishwamitra' and others.
The Empire, December 31, 1919 drew attention to the artist's 'Dancing Shiva' which it considered to be "an excellent specimen of Indian art". The artist was also influenced by the Kangra style and some of his works reminded one "..... of the best specimens of the Kangra School of painting".35

Surendranath Ganguly (1885 - 1909), another foremost painter of the Neo-Bengal School of Abanindranath, received a scholarship for studying art in the Society's school for a period of three years and earned fame and recognition for his works exhibited by the Society. His works based on Indian themes and executed in the Indian style, notably 'The Yaksha's Wife', 'The Dance of Mahadeva', 'The Child Krishna in Prison', 'Hara Parvati Sambad', 'Kartikeya', 'The Flight of Lakshman Sena' attracted public attention to the country's splendid art heritage. Sister Nivedita took a special note of the strong historic treatment that distinguished the artist's 'The Chariot of Nahusha', 'Kartikeya' and the 'Throne of Vikram'.36

Another distinguished artist and an able disciple of Abanindranath, Samarendranath Gupta also utilized the Society's platform to carry forth his guru's art tradition. Drawing inspiration from the artistic achievements of ancient and medieval India, the artist attempted to carve out a distinct identity of his own. As the Principal of the Mayo School of Art

35. The  Empire, December 31, 1919
PL.24 - DEVI PROSAD ROY CHOWDHURY, 'AFTER THE STORM'
at Lahore, Samarendranath helped to spread the nationalist art movement in the distant Punjab. He also wrote a number of articles on art and craft of the country, for instance on the art in the Punjab region. His essay 'With the Five Fingers' was an attempt to uphold the country's art heritage.

Deviprosad Roy Chowdhury (1904 – 1980) and Benode Behari Mukherjee (1904 – 1980) were two other descendants of the Bengal School who discovered the Society's platform to be of considerable importance in their attempts at establishing an autonomous identity of their own.

The art of Deviprosad Roy Chowdhury, a painter and sculptor alike, came up for public viewing in the Society's annual exhibitions and attracted much attention for its Oriental style. The Englishman, December 24, 1926 noted, "D. P. Roy Chowdhury shows that in the 'Oriental' style he is quite at home". The artist's 'Nirvana of Buddhadeva', 'The Mist', 'Temple Steps', 'Lepcha Maid' reflected the artist's search for an identity in the colonial world.37 Deviprosad was also awarded a prize by the Society for his 'Advent of Spring' executed in the Indian style. The Tribune, February 25, 1935 noted, "The second prize for the best picture in Indian style is awarded to Mr. Devi Prosad Roy Chowdhury for his 'Advent of Spring'". The artist was also a renowned sculptor deriving themes from the tired

37. See Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, "An Exhibition of Contemporary Indian Paintings in Calcutta", Modern Review, April, 1943
labouring class. He later went on to become the Principal of the Madras Art School propagating the modern style of Indian painting in South India.

Benode Behari Mukherjee, trained at Santiniketan and later a teacher there, started his quest for an identity by painting landscapes, particularly of Birbhum. The calligraphic quality of his early landscapes reveal the influence of the best of China and Japan. He also painted murals in the style of Mughal and Persian drawings, as well as of Japanese screen and scroll painting. He also exhibited his works in the Society's annual exhibitions and his 'Sunflowers', 'Banaras Ghats', 'Picture Dealer's Shop in Japan' attracted much attention for their execution in the Oriental style. Benode Behari was also one of the earliest art critics and through his books 'Chitrakatha' and 'Chitrakar', he attempted to uphold a national artistic identity.

Also utilizing the Society's platform in his quest for a distinct identity during the late colonial period was Jamini Roy (1887 - 1972). In a world of colonial domination, Jamini Roy searched for an Indian individuality in authentic Indian art. Jamini Roy was convinced that the "revival of Bengali art will not come from Ajanta, Rajput and Mughal art" and he realized that "unless one returned to his roots, his creativity could not find proper expression".38 He was the first Indian artist to draw

38. Amrita Bazar Patrika, February 1, 1937
PL. 26 - JAMINI ROY, 'THREE PUJARINS'
sustainable information from the living folk and the tribal art forms and traditions .....". Jamini Roy was inspired by the art of the painter-craftsmen of Bankura in West Bengal, who still preserved the traditions of the medieval Bengali art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Kalighat Pat with its bold sweeping brush strokes immensely attracted the artist. Significant works of the artist in the 'Pata' style exhibited by the Society were 'Valmiki and Lavkush', 'Sita and Lavkush', 'Sri Chaitanya', 'Santhal Dancers and Musicians', 'Two Vaishnavas', 'The Offering' and others. The Indian Society of Oriental Art brought the distinct art form of Jamini Roy before the public in a number of exhibitions held in 1930, 1937, 1941 and 1944.

Thus during the period 1907 to 1947, the Indian Society of Oriental Art offered a valuable platform to a number of pioneer artists whose search for an identity constituted of their rejection of Western art norms and their upholding of an indigenous idiom for art in a colonial world.

At the same time a large body of relatively unknown artists too utilized the Society's platform during the pre-independence period in their search for an identity in a world of colonial domination.

40. At the initiative of Abanindranath Tagore, the ISOA organized an exhibition of Jamini Roy's paintings on 19th September, 1937. It was inaugurated by the then Chief Minister of Bengal, Fazlul Haque
Promode Kumar Chattopadhyay (1885 -1979) was one such artist whose quest through the Indian Society of Oriental Art constituted of his upholding the Oriental art form. The artist was deeply influenced by the Swadeshi movement. He recollected in his memoirs, "We were greatly influenced by the Swadeshi movement ...... We realized the value of indigenous art". Consequently he decided to cultivate Indian art and met Abanindranath who was then directing the Indian Society of Oriental Art and its functions. Thus Promode Kumar became attracted towards the Neo-Bengal style of art initiated by Abanindranath. His works, Oriental in content and style, derived their subject matter from Indian mythology and history and mention may be made of his 'Hara Parvati', 'Durga' 'Ashoka', 'Rana Pratap', 'Usha O Arun'. He also derived inspiration from the ordinary commonplace life as reflected in his 'Santhal Family'. Promode Kumar was also attracted towards Indian spiritualism which influenced his search for a distinct identity. He came under the influence of the great Tantric saint Bāmakhyapa. The artist's spiritual inclination was evident in his works 'Vinapani', 'Krishnarjuniyam', Gajalakshmi', 'Agni-Swaha', 'Indra and Maruti' exhibited by the Society. Further, the artist's adventurous pilgrimage to the Upper Himalayas and Tibet left a marked imprint on his works 'Manasarovar'.

41. See Promode Kumar Chattopadhyay, Prankumarer Smriticharan (Calcutta, Bangabda, 1394), pp. 403 - 404
42. See Upendranath Gangopadhyay Ed. 'Shilpi Srijukta Promode Kumar Chattopadhyay', Vichitra (Sravan, Bangabda, 1338)
'Kailasha Range in Tibet', 'Ravana Lake' and 'Kailasha Peak'. The artist was greatly impressed with the Tibetan art style and some of his works showed a marked Tibetan influence. The Forum, January 26, 1924 took a special note of the artist's 'Tibetanism'.

Thus, Promode Kumar Chattopadhyay attempted to uphold an Oriental identity through the platform and space offered by the Indian Society of Oriental Art. He went to Andhra to set up an art centre there for the cultivation of Oriental art and helped in the revival of the old Andhra Kalashala. He also joined the Baroda Art School as a teacher of Oriental art.

Like Promode Kumar, Chaitanyadev Chattopadhyay also attempted to realize the spirit and mystery of the art heritage of the Orient in his quest for an autonomous cultural idiom in a colonial world. Receiving his early art training under Ishwari Prasad, Chaitanyadev joined the Indian Society of Oriental Art. Later during 1943 - 1945 he became the Principal of the Society's Fine Arts Department, upholding the cause of Oriental art. The artist's association with the Indian nationalist movement was direct as is evident from his association with the Dakshineshwar Bomb Case and his consequent imprisonment for one year at Kalimpong. The artist's 'Kali', 'Janani', 'Rathayatra', 'Sita',

43. Abanindranath nicknamed Promode Kumar 'Lama' for his loose clothing.
44. See Upendranath Gangopadhyay Ed. 'Shilpi Chaitanyadev Chattopadhyay', Vichitra, Sravan, Bangabda 1339
'Mahalaxmi' reveal a strong Indian flavour. He drew inspiration from the Mughal School as well as from the typical life of the Bengali countryside.

In his search for an identity the artist was influenced by other forms of Oriental art as well. During his one year imprisonment in Kalimpong, he came into contact with the local Tibetan artists from whom he learnt the Tibetan style of painting. The Tibetan influence is especially marked in his works 'Ardhanariswara' and 'Srishtitattwa'. Some of his works also bear the influence of the Tibetan 'tanka' style. Thus, the artist's talent blossomed within the limited space of the prison at Kalimpong. Further, his panel painting 'Buddha Going to Worship' show a good deal of Javanese influence. The Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art carried some of the artist's works so as to make the public aware of his art form.

Another lesser known artist, Chanchal Kumar Bandyopadhyay (1900 – 1931), in his quest for an identity utilized the Society's platform to uphold his art form in the Oriental style. As a student of the Society's Art School and later as its teacher of Commercial Art, Chanchalkumar came in close association with Abanindranath, Gaganendranath and Kshitindranath Majumdar and was greatly influenced by their

45. See O. C. Gangoly, 'Ekjan Antariner Chitracharcha', Prabasi, Paus, Bangabda 1352
46. See The Statesman, December 31, 1935
PL. 27 - CHANCHAL KUMAR BANDYOPADHYAY, CARTOON
style. The artist's works in the Oriental style exhibited by the Society appeared to give "...... a sufficient jerk of his Indian soul". Chanchalkumar's illustrations also appeared in Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay's 'Granthabali', Kantichandra Ghosh's 'Rubaiyat – i – Omar Khayyam' and Debendranath Basu's 'Chancharika'. Inspired by Gaganendranath Tagore, Chanchalkumar executed a number of cartoons, notably 'Bhav O Abhav', 'Uchyasiksha', 'Jamai Shasthi', 'Kumar Bahadur', 'Book Worm' and a host of others, which served as significant comments on the contemporary social practices and evils. The artist was courageous enough to criticize government actions through his cartoons. The Advance, November 13, 1931 reported that Chanchalkumar was "...... perhaps the first cartoonist who ridiculed the Simon Commission with his powerful works in pen and ink". Here was thus an artist whose attack on the colonial government was direct. The artist's untimely death in 1931 was a definite loss for the art movement that the Indian Society of Oriental Art sought to promote.

A host of other relatively lesser known artists also struggled for self-expression through the Society's platform during the period under review. Durga Shankar Bhattacharya and Nalinikanta Majumdar came in close association with the stalwart artists of the Bengal School like Abanindranath and

47. See (The) Modern Review, January 1927
48. See The Advance, November 13, 1931
Gaganendranath and worked in the neo-Bengal style upheld by them. The two artists derived inspiration from the classical themes. Durga Shankar's 'Ekalavya', 'Sree Chaitanya', 'Arjuna and Urvashi', 'Damayanti', 'Parthasarathi', 'Uma', 'The Age of Rishis' and Nalinikanta Majumdar's 'Usha', 'Srikrishna', 'Uma's Penace', 'Meghaduta' based on classical traditions and executed in the Oriental style attracted much public attention in the Society's exhibitions. Professor Benoy Sarkar noted that Durga Shankar Bhattacharya seemed to have followed "..... the so called mystic spirit". The Advance, December 24, 1930 recorded that the artist's 'Pardanashin' "had the depth, concentration and mysticism of the old religious paintings".

Nalinikanta Majumdar was inspired by the natural beauty of the country as is evident in his 'Advent of the Rainy Season', 'Spirit of the Sea', 'Lunar Eclipse', and 'Departing Autumn'. Nalinikanta's art in the Oriental style earned praise from the President of the College of Art, Canton, who expressed his desire to take the artist to China. The Society sanctioned the expenditure for the artist's China visit in 1931, but the plan failed to materialise.

49. Durga Shankar Bhattacharya's 'The Age of Rishis' received the Governor's Prize in the Society's exhibition of December 1931
50. Professor Benoy Sarkar, quoted in Forward, December 19, 1923
51. See The Statesman, December 27, 1927; Forward, February 25, 1928; The Statesman, December 22, 1931
52. See Upendranath Gangopadhyay 'Shilpi Nalinikanta Majumdar', Vichitra, Phalgun, Bangabda 1338
PL.28 - DHIREN德拉 KRISHNA DEB BURMAN, 'VILLAGE OF TRIPURA'
Artists like Dhirendra Krishna Deb Burman and Manindrabhusan Gupta (1898 - 1968) also attempted to uphold the Oriental art form in their works exhibited by the Society. Dhirendra Krishna turned to Puranic and religious themes for inspiration and his works 'The Return of the Pandavas', 'Raja Dilip', 'Santhal Dance', 'Devadasi', 'Rudratapa', bear testimony to the point. Similarly Manindrabhusan Gupta's 'Joydeva Festival', 'Kurukshetra', 'Kedarnath', 'Badrinath', 'Debatatma Nagadhiraj' as well as his interpretation of Sanskrit classics of Bhasa, Kalidasa, Sudraka, Bana were "..... representative of India's cultural expression".53

Indian fresco painting also influenced Dhirendra Krishna Deb Burman in his quest for an identity during the colonial period. He engaged in fresco and mural painting on the walls of the cinema houses and the library room of the Calcutta University where he tried to depict the whole chronological history of the Indian civilization. He was also invited to decorate the walls of the India House in London.54

The quest for an identity on the part of the two artists also had an interesting aspect to it. While Dhirendra Krishna derived themes from the life and culture of Calcutta as well, Manindrabhusan's life like portrayal of Gandhiji's Sabarmati

53. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, January 16, 1938
54. See Sudhansu Kumar Roy, 'Fresco and Mural Painting in Bengal'
Ashram was of considerable significance in the context of the Indian nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{55}

The art of the Far East also impressed the two artists. Dhirendra Krishna accompanied Tagore to Bali and Java in 1927 and acquired a direct experience of the ancient art and architecture of the region. He derived themes of many of his works from the life and culture of Bali and Java. His 'Burmese Dancer' exhibited by the Society also reflected the influence of Far Eastern art. Manindrabhushan Gupta's 'The Call of Java' also reflected the cultural contact between India and the Far East.

A renowned artist and art critic, O. C. Gangoly (1881 – 1974) working in the capacity of the Honorary Secretary and the Vice – President of the Indian Society of Oriental Art played a significant role in upholding the cause of Oriental Art through the Society's platform. Also in the capacity of the Rani Bageswari Professor of Indian Fine Art at the University of Calcutta, Fellow of the Asiatic Society and the Lalit Kala Akademi, O. C. Gangoly sought to proclaim the superiority of the art tradition of the Orient. The artist's 'Kali', 'Buddhadev and Sujata', 'In the Dark' were notable works in the Indian style on Indian themes. He was also a noted art critic and had a profound knowledge of the artistic and architectural heritage of
India as well as of South East Asia. As the founder-editor of the Society's art journal 'Rupam', O. C. Gangoly sought to bring the rich art heritage of the Orient to the fore. He was also a prolific writer on Oriental art and through his books South Indian Bronzes (1915), The Art of Java (1928), Orissan Art and Sculpture (1956), The Art of the Pallavas (1957), The Art of the Chandelas (1957), The Art of the Rastrakutas (1958), Roopa Shilpa (Bangabda, 1346), Shilpa Parichay (Bangabda 1346), Bharater Shilpa O Amar Katha (1969) and numerous essays on Indian art, O. C. Gangoly attempted to place Indian art on a high pedestal during a period of colonial subjugation.56

A number of artists received training in the Society's art school under the guidance of Abanindranath and their quest for an identity constituted their earnest attempts at upholding the art heritage of the country.

Bireswar Sen (1897 – 1974) tried to remain true to the ideals of Abanindranath. The Englishman, December 28, 1922, while reviewing the artist's works noted that the artist had chosen "a deliberate Indian point of view both in conception and treatment". The Englishman further noted that the artist's 'Sujata' was "sure to captivate many by its charm of Indian womanhood". The artist's historical paintings 'Aurangzeb' and

'Zebunnisa' exhibited by the Society were superb executions in the Oriental style. His miniatures were in tune with the miniature art of India. An interesting aspect of the artist's attempts at the upholding of Indian art was his rejuvenation of the ancient art of textile designing in the capacity of the Head Master of the Government Art School at Lucknow.  

Abanindranath's student, Bishnupada Roy Chowdhury's exhibits at the Indian Society of Oriental Art reflected the perfect mastery of lessons that the old Indian paintings could teach him. Pulinbehari Dutta's 'Asoka and Upagupta', 'Siddhartha and Yashodhara', 'Krishna and Jamuna', 'Padmini', 'Mirabai', 'Daughter of the Himalayas' were completely Indian in style, technique and feeling as noted by the Statesman, December 28, 1920. Kalipada Ghoshal, a student and later a teacher at the Indian Society of Oriental Art also depicted Indian themes in the Indian style in his works - 'Shiva's Penace', 'The Mahaprasthana of the Pandavas'. 'The Persian Night' reflected the artist's quest for an Oriental identity in a colonial world.

A direct disciple of Abanindranath, Surendra Nath Kar (1914 – 1976), also turned back to the rich art tradition of the

---

57. See Forward, December 25, 1928
58. The Statesman, December 22, 1921 refers to the artist's works notably 'The Waterfall', 'Hara Parvati', 'Dhruva', Arjuna and Ulupi', 'Puravi'
PL.29 - TRIBHANGA, 'PATA ABALOKAN'
country for inspiration in his search for an identity. His works 'Nanichor Sri Krishna', 'The Departure of Purandar', 'Earth and Sky', 'Nayandhara' in the style of the country's art tradition upheld the cause of Indian art during the pre-independence period. Another artist, whose intimate knowledge of the country's ancient art heritage was reflected in his works which were exhibited by the Society, was Priyanath Sinha, a childhood friend and classmate of Swami Vivekananda. He was associated with Sister Nivedita, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bhupendranath Datta. Such association influenced his works like 'Kali', 'Belur Math', 'Swami Vivekananda', 'Rabindranath'. His 'Chaitanya', 'Buddha and Sujata' in the tradition of Indian art were widely appreciated during the colonial period for advancing the cause of the country's art.60

There were other artists as well, attempting to carve out a distinct identity for themselves through the Society's platform during the first half of the twentieth century. The Statesman, December 28, 1920 took note of "The definitely Indian spirit ..... inherent in their works". According to Professor Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay, Bengal's own art tradition was reflected in the works of the artist who depicted the Bengali rural scene and Hindu gods and goddesses in the Bengali 'patachitra' style.61

Tribhanga (Murari) Roy (1906 – 1979) who earned recognition

60. See Kamal Kumar Sarkar, Op.Cit., p.56
61. See Ratanmani Chattopadhyay, 'Shilpi Mahitosh Biswaser Chitrakala', Prabasi, Jaistha, Bangabda 1363
PL. 30 - RANADA CHARAN UKIL, 'FETCHING WATER'
through the Indian Society of Oriental Art worked on Puranic themes. Charu Chandra Roy (1890 - 1971) also highlighted Indian themes in his works executed in the Oriental style, notably 'The Holy Temple', 'Radha-Krishna', Dance of Shiva', 'Chaitanya Leaving Home', 'Moonlight', 'Evening Glow', 'Sleepless Night', 'The Peacock' and others. Sudhir Khastagir, trained in the style of the Tagore School under Nandalal Bose, also participated in the Society's annual exhibitions. His 'Mirabai', 'Mother's Dream', 'Old and New' attracted much attention as ably representing an Oriental identity.62 The Society also exhibited the works of Indu Bhushan Gupta, which were suggestive of the typical Indian life. The artist's 'Journey of Shiva and Sati' 'Hara and Parvati', 'Moonlight Music Party' reminded one of the country's traditional art, whose cause was championed by Havell.63

Other students of the Indian Society of Oriental Art also searched for an autonomous identity, upholding the cause of Oriental art. Ranada Charan Ukil (1900 - 1970), a student of the Government School of Art, Calcutta and the Indian Society of Oriental Art worked in the style of Abanindranath's neo-Bengal School. He learnt the technique of mural painting and was commissioned for painting murals in the India House. The artist established the Ukil School of Art at Varanasi for the

62. See Sudhir Khas-tagir, 'Amar E Path', Prabasi, Baisakh 1373 - Phalgun 1373 Bangabda
63. See The Daily Post, July 31, 1934
dissemination of Indian art. His elder brother, Sarada Charan Ukil's exhibits at the Society's annual exhibitions were specifically inspired by the Ajanta frescoes. The Times of India, November 30, 1923 noted:

Ajanta tradition is perhaps the basic inspiration of the modern Indian School of Painting and we dare to say it, the latter is even more advanced in both its ideals and technique. An excellent proof of this statement is to be found in the fascinating water-colour exhibits of Sarada Ukil.

Also inspired by the tradition of Indian frescoes was Sudhansu Sekhar Chowdhury, another student of the Society's art school. His works in the Oriental style, notably 'Indrajit', 'Jayanta, 'Son of India', 'Siamese Actress' attracted much public attention in the Society's exhibitions. Also inspired by the tradition of Indian frescoes was Sudhansu Sekhar Chowdhury, another student of the Society's art school. His works in the Oriental style, notably 'Indrajit', 'Jayanta, 'Son of India', 'Siamese Actress' attracted much public attention in the Society's exhibitions. There was also Sudhangsu Kumar Roy (1910 - 1977) who acquired training in woodcut at the Indian Society of Oriental Art. The artist was greatly influenced by the folk art of Bengal and became an associate of Gurusaday Dutt in upholding its cause. In his attempt to uphold Indian and Oriental art the artist published a beautifully illustrated book on the folk art of Bengal entitled 'Banglar Bratakatha'. He also attempted to organize a movement.
of the 'patuas' of Calcutta and the neighbouring areas, realizing
the need to protect the community of artists.\textsuperscript{65} Ramendranath
Chakravarty's search for a distinct cultural idiom found
expression in his works which derived their subject matter from
Indian themes like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, the lives of
Krishna and Buddha.\textsuperscript{66} Other artists like Indu Bhushan Rakshit
and Manishi Dey, the brother of Mukul Dey, also utilized the
Society's platform to uphold their art forms in the Oriental style.
Indu Bhushan Rakshit also wrote articles in the Journal of the
Indian Society of Oriental Art. Jyotirindra Roy, a student of the
Society's art school depicted Indian rural life in his works and
excelled in batik art.

In upholding an art form that was unmistakably Oriental
in style, technique and feeling, a large number of other lesser
known artists too found the Society's space and platform
valuable. While Moni Dasgupta, Arabinda Dutt,\textsuperscript{67} Krishna
Kishore Ghosh, Aradhya Gangoly, A. P. Banerjee, Ramkanai
Samanta, Narendra Mullick, S. Sen Roy, Jatin Sen ably
maintained an Indian atmosphere in their works, B. K. Bose,
Atul Bose, N. C. Dhar, P. C. Singh, S. N. Gupta, Madhusudan
Sarkar, Anukul Banerjee, Prabhat Niyogi sought to establish an
autonomous idiom for Indian art by deriving inspiration from

\textsuperscript{65} O. C. Gangoly, Op.Cit., p.234
\textsuperscript{66} The artist was the first to arrange lectures on Art History and
Appreciation in the Government Art College
\textsuperscript{67} The Englishman, January 8, 1926 noted the influence of old Rajput
miniatures on Arabinda Dutt's 'Enchantment'
the art heritage of the Orient. Chintamoni Kar's 'Hermit Girl', 'Touch of Celestial Wreath', Pashupati Banerjee's 'Ulupi and Arjuna', Uma Prasad Mukherjee's 'Twilight', A. P. Banerjee's 'The Cottage', Asit Kumar Roy's 'The Home of the Dacca Muslin', Mukunda B. Gupta's 'Banished Yaksha', 'Gandharva Couple', 'Dipankar's Journey to Tibet' were notable exercises in Oriental art. Ramchandra Chakravarty's series of paintings based on the Ramayana were "as appealing as the most eloquent lines of Kalidasa", noted The Amrita Bazar Patrika, July 31, 1936. Other notable exhibits were Kalipada Ghoshal's 'The Persian Night' and Nirmal Guha's 'The Apsara Dance'. Other notable exhibits were Kalipada Ghoshal's 'The Persian Night' and Nirmal Guha's 'The Apsara Dance'. The craftwork of Santoshkumar Bandyopadhyay and the sculptures of Pramatha Nath Mullick and Chintamoni Kar also attracted the attention of the public for their execution in the Oriental style.

The quest for a distinct identity on the part of some relatively unknown artists of the Tagore household also needs to be analysed in this context. Through the platform and space offered by the Society, they too attempted to uphold an Oriental art form.

68. For a list of some of the lesser known artists whose works were exhibited by the Society, also see The Statesman, December 27, 1927; Advance, December 24, 1930; The Amritabazar Patrika, December 31, 1933

The eldest son of Abanindranath Tagore, Alokendranath Tagore (1896 - 1971) upheld the styles of his father as well as his uncle Gaganendranath in his exhibits 'Rabindranath', 'Kanchanjunga', 'Mahaprasathan', 'The Birth of Buddha', 'Monsoon', 'River Hooghly on a Moonlit Night', and 'Water Nymphs'. His sculptures - 'Abanindranath', 'Bandini', 'Pujarini' and his animal sculptures held out great promise for Indian sculpture. Like Alokendranath, Nabendranath Tagore (1910 - 1965), the youngest son of Gaganendranath Tagore, sincerely carried forth the art tradition of Abanindranath in his works - 'The Birth of Ganga', 'Meghia Mallar', 'Lakshmi', 'The Saint', 'Advent of Spring', 'Expectation', 'The Seven Steps' a charming study on silk. His 'Summer Night' showed a distinct Rajput influence.70 Bratindranath Tagore, the son of Samarendranath Tagore, received art instruction from Nandalal Bose. He also learnt painting and brushwork on textiles in the Japanese style and method. His works exhibited by the Society notably 'Message from India', 'Bathing', 'Miser's Den', 'Wayfarer of the Sky', 'Winter Evening', reflected the teaching of Abanindranath Tagore. Prabodhendunath Tagore (1907 - 1965) also searched for an identity through the Indian Society of Oriental Art where his exhibits 'Abanindranath', 'Mahashweta' stood out as striking exercises in Indian style. Related to the Tagore family, Jamini Prakash Ganguly (1876 - 1956), one of the founding members of

70. Along with Nandalal Bose and Surendra Nath Kar, Nabendranath Tagore illustrated Rabindranath Tagore's 'Gitanjali' and 'Fruit Gathering'. 
the Society and also one of the judges at its initial exhibitions, found the Society's platform helpful in the dissemination of his art form. Among his works 'River Teesta', 'Mist on Padma', 'Himalayan Brook', 'Radhashtami', 'Chandrody', 'Cauvery' executed in the Bengal School style were greatly admired in the Society's annual exhibitions.

A large number of artists, both renowned and comparatively lesser known, thus searched for an identity through the Indian Society of Oriental Art during the period 1907 - 1947, challenging the colonial repression of the country's cultural tradition by turning for inspiration to the country's art heritage and that of the Orient.

A group of artists that deserve mention here in the context of the quest for an autonomous art idiom was the Calcutta Group, constituted in 1943. Some of the members of the Group were among the students and teachers of the Society. For example, Gopal Ghosh (1913 - 1980) served as a teacher in the Society's Art School during the period 1940 - 45 imparting art training to the students on the lines of Abanindranath and the Bengal School. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee noted in Gopal Ghosh an artist of great promise.71 Trained in the style of the traditional Indian art, the mood of his works was distinctly Oriental as evident in his 'Pushpayan', 'Sarai', 'Riverside Boats'.

71. See Anandabazar Patrika, July 31, 1980
The influence of Chinese and Japanese calligraphy was also marked in some of his initial works.\textsuperscript{72} Nirode Majumdar (1916 - 1962), one of the founder-members of the Calcutta Group and a meritorious student of the Society's art school, initially searched for an identity in the traditional art heritage of the country and worked in the style of the Bengal School. The influence of Rajput art is also noted in some of his early works. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, January 29, 1937 noted "a fine blending of Rajput and Bengal School technique" in the artist's 'Radha - Krishna' exhibited by the Indian Society of Oriental Art. Another member of the Calcutta Group, Prankrishna Paul (1918 - 1988) received training in the Oriental style of art at the Society's art school and this considerably helped his evolution as an artist. A follower of the Bengal School style, he also derived inspiration from the Ajanta and the Bagh frescoes, from the folk art of Bengal and even from Japanese art. His works 'Vishnu', 'Holi', 'Footsteps' 'Kacha - Devjani' executed in the Oriental style were highly admired in the exhibitions organized by the Society.

Thus, a large number of artists, renowned as well as comparatively lesser known, searched for an identity during the first half of the twentieth century through the platform offered by the Indian Society of Oriental Art, turning for inspiration to the Oriental art tradition. The colonial government's suppression

\textsuperscript{72} See Prodosh Dasgupta, Smritikatha Shilpakatha (Calcutta, 1986) p.76
of the artistic and cultural heritage of the country thus stood challenged.

However, during the said period the Indian Society of Oriental Art provided a valuable platform for the dissemination of a new art form in the Oriental style not only to the artists from Bengal but to the artists from other Presidencies as well. Such artists who were either adherents of Abanindranath's neo-Bengali style or worked in independent capacity found the Society's platform valuable in upholding and securing recognition for their art form in the Oriental style.

K. Venkatappa (1887 - 1965) hailing from a family of hereditary court painters of Mysore was sent to Calcutta by the Maharaja of Mysore to receive instruction in Indian painting under the guidance of Abanindranath. The artist's 'Mahashweta', 'Damayanti', 'Siva Tandav', 'Siva Ratri', 'Ravana Fighting With Jatayu', 'Tipu Sultan' reflected his attempts to build up an Oriental identity by remaining true to his country's traditions and culture. Further, his portraiture of the Karnataka landscapes, his attempts to copy the Ajanta frescoes reveal that "all the idealism of the Revival Movement was in him".

Hakim Muhammad Khan, hailing from Lucknow was the

73. The Empire, December 31, 1919 noted, "It is a sign of the times that the Society also consisted of artists from other Presidencies as well".
74. Jaya Appasamy, K. Venkatappa, Lalit Kala Akademi (New Delhi, 1968) p.65
first Muslim student of Abanindranath to exhibit his works in the Oriental style in the Society's exhibitions. His works, notably 'The Durbar of Muhammad Shah', 'Nadir Shah Ordering a General Massacre', 'Laila Majnu' reflected the artist's attempt to uphold an Oriental art form in his quest for an identity in a colonial world. Sister Nivedita was all praise for the artist's exhibits:

The works of Hakim M. Khan deserve a word to themselves. The Durbar of Mohammad Shah was remarkable .... A portrait of the artist's father from memory was an excellent revival of the Mughal style of portraiture.\textsuperscript{75}

The Indian Society of Oriental Art by offering the opportunity to the artists from other presidencies to showcase their works in the Oriental style, thus sought to aid them in their quest for an identity. Roopkrishna, a student of the Society's art school, hailing from Lahore, derived inspiration from the country's art tradition as reflected in his 'Omar Khayyam', 'Passing Clouds', 'Kalakumbliwala Reciting the Koran' and 'Bhil Girl'. The Statesman, December 24, 1922 noted that the artist's 'Bhil Girl', "...... looks very like a fragment of an old fresco". Other Oriental art forms also influenced the artist. The Statesman, December 28, 1920 noted, 'His 'Melody' recalls the

\textsuperscript{75} Sister Nivedita, Op.Cit
school of Riza Abbasi, the artist at the court of the Shah of Persia in the 17th century.

Kanailal Desai from Gujarat also utilized the Society's platform to exhibit his works, deriving themes from the Ramayana, the life of Krishna and the Gujarat country-side. His association with the Indian nationalist movement was direct. A close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, he was imprisoned for participating in the Indian national movement. More than once he was commissioned to design and decorate the pandal and platform at the annual Congress session.

An artist from Cochin, C. K. K. Waryar's works based on Indian themes and style - 'The Birth of the Ganges', 'Chandragupta', 'Kalki Avatar', 'Under the Bodhi Tree', upheld the excellence of Indian art norms. M. A. R. Chugtai's works in the Oriental style, especially his 'Story Teller', 'In the Wood', 'The Princess of Sahara' exhibited by the Society earned him recognition and praise.76 H. Hariharan's works were "........characterized with the unsophisticated primitive life force of the folk art of Bengal and sometimes with the refinement of the Mughal mannerisms".77 Hirachand Dugar's works in the Oriental style also made a good impression in the Society's exhibitions. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 31, 1933 took

76. M. A. R. Chugtai later became the national artist of Pakistan
77. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, January 29, 1937
special note of the works of Jijja and Dhar from Lucknow - "Sj. Jijja and Dhar of Lucknow deserve notice ....... they carry the chain of light from Bengal". The creations of Bhuwan of Delhi, H. L. Merh, K. N. Dhar, M. N. Takroo, Lalit M. Sen, B. Sen, Iswar Das of Lucknow, Doraswamy, K. R. M. Shastry, T. Kesava Rao, R. N. Shastry, R. Hanumant Rao, Chitra B. Rao from the South and Sonalal Shah's 'Bride' were striking for their marked Oriental flavour in theme and style.

The Society's annual exhibitions were thus highly representative in character with participating artists from other provinces earning recognition for their works executed in the Oriental style.\textsuperscript{78}

It must be noted that the artists in the Indian Society of Oriental Art did not engage in a quest for identity through the medium of the visual arts only; they also attempted to uphold an Indianness in the other spheres of arts as well. Gaganendranath Tagore designed the sets and planned the stage lighting for the Tagore plays staged at Jorasanko. The artist was also a designer of furniture in the Indian style and as the pioneer of modern furniture making his contributions were unrivalled. All the furniture and the appliances of the school of the Indian Society of Oriental Art were designed by him. A

\textsuperscript{78} See The Statesman, January 30, 1925; December 27, 1927 Advance, December 24, 1930

The Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 31, 1933 also reported on the
The unique feature of the Society's exhibition of 1937 was the display of decorative pottery in the Oriental style by the artist H. Hariharan. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, January 29, 1937 thus reported:

The special feature of this year's exhibition is a collection of potteries by H. Hariharan who went to Japan to learn the art of decorative pottery. He has turned out glazed tiles with traditional Bengali decorations; he has modelled pots, plates, cups, the forms of which were present in this country since 3000 years B.C. He has jars and goblets in the Persian style.

In their quest for an autonomous art idiom the artists in the Indian Society of Oriental Art turned to the use of indigenous earth colours and brushes made of mongoose fur. Some of them like Abanindranath and Gaganendranath also used 24 carat gold dust to illuminate their paintings.

Thus, during the period 1907-1947, the Indian Society of Oriental Art considerably aided a large body of artists in their search for an identity by serving as an important platform for the upholding of Indian and Oriental art.

However, ".....change is central to creative activity" and "an active artist is constantly discarding and substituting his
PL.33 - ABANINDRANATH TAGORE'S ART IN THE STYLE OF FOLK ART
terms, constantly probing and reaching out .....". The artists in search of an autonomous cultural idiom through the Indian Society of Oriental Art did not remain confined to the Bengal School style that they initially upheld. They developed individual stylization and became individual artists, their works reflecting a variety of styles, approaches and themes. In this context the Indian Society of Oriental Art played a significant role in upholding the individuality of the artists which it realized needed to be recognized. Thus during the pre-independence period a trend of the modernist art movement was visible through the Indian Society of Oriental Art as its artists carried on experimentations with the modernist technique.

Abanindranath Tagore, the pioneer of the Bengal School, let his individualism triumph as he introduced new concepts, new traditions, new forms in the expression of his school of art, thus bringing about revolutionary changes in and giving a new dignity to Oriental art. Initially, Abanindranath was swayed by the 'sweeping tide of Swadeshi nationalism'. However, "...... as soon as he recovered from the initial euphoria of the Swadeshi movement, he returned to his personal quest as an artist".

80. See Indian Nation, April 15, 1962
81. R. Siva Kumar, Paintings of Abanindranath Tagore (Calcutta, 2008), p.85
Abanindranath's views on art were highly individual. He declared in his Bageshwari Lectures (1921-1929) that blind allegiance to tradition tended to impair his aesthetic experience and weaken art activity.\footnote{Abanindranath Tagore, 'Soundaryer Sandiran', Bageshwari Shilpa Prabandhabali (Calcutta, 1962), p.81} In a letter to W.S. Hadaway, Abanindranath put forth his views on art:

School is a thing which I hate .......... I have tried my best not to mar the individualism of my pupils by forming them into a school.\footnote{Abanindranath's Letter to W.S. Hadaway, quoted by Satyajit Chaudhuri in Abanidra Nandantattva (Calcutta, 1977)}

Abanindranath's synthesis of several styles resulted in the evolution of an individual style as reflected in his exhibits at the Society's annual exhibitions. The Englishman, December 22, 1921 noted, "Dr. Tagore's pictures exhibit a variety of form of expression from which it is difficult to gather a specially Indian point of view". In his 'Zebunnisa', the artist seemed to device "a very original and individual method of presentation".\footnote{The Englishman, December 22, 1921} Further the artist's 'Aurangzeb' seemed to give "ample evidence that the traditions of the old Mughal school are on the road to new development".\footnote{Ibid} His 'Kalidasa' was also reminiscent of both Chinese and Mughal art.\footnote{See The Statesman, December 28, 1920} Other Oriental art forms like those of China and Japan also influenced the evolution of the artist's

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Abanindranath Tagore, 'Soundaryer Sandiran', Bageshwari Shilpa Prabandhabali (Calcutta, 1962), p.81}
\item \footnote{Abanindranath's Letter to W.S. Hadaway, quoted by Satyajit Chaudhuri in Abanidra Nandantattva (Calcutta, 1977)}
\item \footnote{The Englishman, December 22, 1921}
\item \footnote{Ibid}
\item \footnote{See The Statesman, December 28, 1920}
\end{itemize}
individualistic style in which he sought to interpret age-old themes "in terms of contemporary fashions and fancies". Abanindranath's paintings on cloth, notably 'Alamgir' also reveal a novel experiment from the technical point of view. In his old age the artist created little toys out of pieces of wood. Abanindranath's works thus revealed a varied range and versatility. According to R. Siva Kumar, Abanindranath was an individualist in the modern sense.

Abanindranath's search for an identity did not constitute a mere revival of the ancient art form of the country. Dr. Stella Kramrisch too does not regard the work of Abanindranath Tagore as a mere revival. In his search for a national cultural idiom in the realm of arts, Abanindranath sought to create an art characterized not merely by its Indian or Bengali identity, but by values of the past art that matched well with modern sensibilities. Abanindranath declared in his Bageshwari lectures:

"...... it may be true that there can be no art without its yesterdays, but it is equally true that no art can survive out of contact with the present ...."
Sister Nivedita commented on Abanindranath's art:

"It may be said that modern Indian Art, at once genuinely Indian and genuinely modern is born at last."  

K. G. Subramanyan is of the opinion, "We may rightly call Abanindranath the father of modern Indian art if only because it was he who first spelt out for it a modern outlook and concept."  

Abanindranath was the first Indian artist to evolve an individual style and the Indian Society of Oriental Art by making Abanindranath's art form public, helped in the creation of public awareness of the capability of the Indian artist to create an autonomous idiom for art during the colonial period.  

Gaganendranath Tagore, also associated with the Society, was one of the foremost exponents of a superbly creative phase in Indian art. Utilizing the Society's platform for the pursuit of his creative experiments, Gaganendranath from the beginning attempted to chart out a new path.  

The Amrita Bazar Patrika, February 1, 1937 noted:  

93. Sister Nivedita, (The) Modern Review, October 1907  
95. The Englishman, September 4, 1928 noted, "Mr. Tagore is ....... an
PL.36 - GAGANENDRANATH TAGORE'S EXPERIMENTS WITH CUBISM
Mr. G. N. Tagore has from the beginning carefully avoided any repetitions of old traditions .... he has made a genuine contribution to a truly national art of remarkable originality and vitality ......... His works towered above those of his contemporaries as representing the Art of Today with premonitions for the Art of Tomorrow.

The noted art historian Partha Mitter too opined, "He was a non conformist ...." and "..... remained free from fetish of all kinds - Oriental or Occidental".96 The artist's recent adventures of spirit were discernible in the annual exhibitions of the Society".97 Gaganendranath made his first 'Cubist' debut in the fourteenth annual exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. The artist was inspired by the experimentalist art of modern Europe, particularly Cubism. Partha Mitter calls him the first Indian Cubist - "Gaganendranath Tagore was the only Indian painter before the 1940s who made use of the language and syntax of Cubism in his paintings".98 As The Englishman, December 28, 1922 noted, "His was indeed a valuable contribution to the principles of Cubism". The artist used his own brand of Cubism. His works seemed to have "a quality of their own and cannot be traced to any model in the East and West".99 The

96. Partha Mitter, The Triumph of Modernism, India's Artists and the Avant garde (New Delhi, 2008), p.18
97. Abany C. Banerjee, 'Mr. Gaganendranath Tagore's New Indian Art', (The) Modern Review, March, 1924
artist's 'House of Mystery', 'On the Sacred Steps', 'Song of the Dawn', 'Above the Clouds' seemed to be enriched with new beauties and through many faceted shapes Gaganendranath was able to evoke a mysterious world.

Some of the artist's cartoons exhibited in the annual exhibitions of the Indian Society of Oriental Art also displayed "...... marvellous resourcefulness and originality ......" He also showed a marked originality in the sphere of furniture designing". A number of furniture at the Indian Society of Oriental Art were designed by him.

Thus, Gaganendranath Tagore, closely surrounded by the atmosphere of the new art movement, sought out his untrodden path of adventure through the Indian Society of Oriental Art and "...... made a genuine contribution to a truly national art of remarkable originality and vitality".

Other artists of the Bengal School also attempted to move beyond the set boundaries. Nandalal Bose, for instance, carried out experimentations, as evident in his 'Song of the Rainy Season' describing which The Englishman, December 28, 1922 noted, "..... his subject and its treatment is quite original". It has been held that no single artist in India has made as many

101. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, February 1, 1937
revealing explorations into as many art forms as he did.

Another notable artist whose quest for an identity was reflected in his works exhibited by the Indian Society of Oriental Art was Asit Kumar Haldar. The artist never attempted to imitate the style and method of the ancient art tradition of India.\textsuperscript{102} His artistic genius did not remain restricted, it manifested itself in multifarious forms, into a wealth of styles and subject matter. Abanindranath thus declared, "Asit seems to have no limitations".\textsuperscript{103} He welcomed change and would never be a slave to mannerisms. Although the artist was a keen student of the Indian fresco style, yet his own style of work remained unaffected and instead he determined "his own method of work with greater conviction and imagination".\textsuperscript{104} The artist also earned praise for his novel form of furniture decoration.

Another ardent disciple of Abanindranath, Kshitindranath Majumdar too attempted to chart out a new path. Benodebehari Mukhopadhyay noted that the artist "created a new art style by dint of his own genius rather than by imitating Abanindranath".\textsuperscript{105}

\begin{footnotes}
102. See Benode Behari Mukhopadhyay, Vishwa Bharati Quarterly, Bangabda Kartik - Paus, 1372
103. Abanindranath Tagore, quoted by Miss Mukti Mitra in S. A. Krishnan Ed. Asit Kumar Haldar, Lalit Kala Akademi (India, 1961)
104. Ibid
\end{footnotes}
PL.38 - 'ABANINDRANATH TAGORE' BY MUKUL DEY
The artist Mukul Dey's works were "significant of a real advance of art among the Indians", noted Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee.106

Mukul Dey was not content to remain in the path which was already well beaten by the feet of too many pilgrims in the sacred land of Art in India, namely that of romantic poetising and idealising of the life around ..... His water colours showed a force and a tenderness which are entirely his own in the treatment of Indian subjects.107

Mukul Dey was the first Indian to receive training in the art of etching.108 The Statesman, August 5, 1928 noted:

From the beginning, Mr. Dey had nursed a burning desire to be an artist in sketching, a medium wholly foreign to the traditions of Indian Art. And it is indeed a marvel that an Indian artist should have mastered an art so truly Western. His great service in this, to India a novel medium, opens a new path for the development of modern Indian Art - hitherto confined to the somewhat narrow boundaries of water colours - a path in which his pioneer success

106. Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, 'An Indian Painter Engraver', (The) Modern Review, February, 1928
107. Ibid
108. See Sajanikanta Das, 'Chitrashilpi Mukul Chandra Dey', Prabasi, Phalgun Bangabda 1334
will no doubt lead many followers to experiment in moods of new and adventurous imagination.

Other artists associated with the Indian Society of Oriental Art too did not restrict themselves to the Bengal School style in their quest for an identity. They too evolved an individual stylization demonstrating the Indian artists' capability to think on their own terms. The artist Shailendranath Dey's works, for instance, showed marked individuality. The Englishman, December 28, 1922 noted, "Shailendranath Dey's work is chiefly attractive by reason of their freedom from any influence from the East and the West". Deviprosad Roy Chowdhury too, having begun as a pupil of Abanindranath Tagore "...... now has consolidated his vision".109 His works came to be characterized by a certain degree of individualism.110

The artist Benode Behari Mukherjee was also a silent rebel.111 The artist did not feel the need to be consciously 'Indian' as some of the others of the Bengal School did. "He took new directions which possessed the latent characteristics of future art".112 His works demonstrated his freedom of thought,

109. The Englishman, December 19, 1925
110. The Statesman, December 22, 1921 noted, "The remarkable self-portrait of Devi Prosad Roy Chowdhury holds the quality of Eastern and Western manners in subtle and accurate balance"
111. See Introduction, Benode Behari Mukhopadhyay, Chitrakatha (Calcutta, Bangabda 1390)
112. Jaya Appasamy, Abanindranath Tagore and the Art of His Times (New Delhi, 1968), p.72
free judgement and experimentation.\textsuperscript{113} His woodcuts, etchings, lithographs were characterized by originality and distinction. Able to internalize varied influences, Benode Behari evolved a distinct style of his own. The artist was inspired by French Post Impressionism and German Expressionism to produce his highly individual art. A new emphasis on analysis and structure, so characteristic of modern art was marked in his works. The artist's 'Sunflowers', 'Banaras Ghats', 'Picture Dealers' Shop in Japan' were fine studies in a style that was distinctly his own. He also experimented in different mural techniques. The artist was also one of the earliest critics to write objectively about contemporary Indian art and of special mention in this context are his books Chitrakar (Calcutta, 1978) and 'Chitrakatha' (Calcutta, 1984).

Another artist who sought to evolve a distinctly new style, creating an alternative vision of modern Indian identity was Jamini Roy who gained much recognition through the Indian Society of Oriental Art. In his quest for an identity Jamini Roy turned to his roots, finding in the folk and tribal art forms an "underlying unity the idiom shared with the modern".\textsuperscript{114} The artist adapted the qualities of folk art earning for himself the title of the father of the folk renaissance in India. Jamini Roy's art, robust, vibrant and primitive was also a rebellion against

\textsuperscript{113} See Ajit Kumar Datta, Rupashilpi Benode Behari (Calcutta, Bangabda 1394), p.25
\textsuperscript{114} Neville Tuli, Op.Cit., p.191
the delicate drawing of the Bengal School and its failure to reach out to the Society at large. He was in favour of the creation of an art for the collectivity and not for the elite. His depiction of women in a non-sentimental manner stood in sharp contrast to the upper class damsels and apsaras portrayed by the Bengal School. Inspired by folk art and experimenting with new styles, Jamini Roy thus gradually evolved his 'highly individual idiom of expression' that was reflected in his works exhibited by the Society during the pre-independence period.

The first exhibition of Roy's works was held by the Society on 9th July, 1930 marking the artist's transition to a "robust primitivist". Roy's 'Radha-Krishna' series demonstrated the artist's own interpretation of the medieval Bengali art of Bankura. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, February 1, 1937 took a special note of the artist's continuous experimentation:

For the last twenty-five years Mr. Roy had acquired a vast knowledge of various motifs applied to different styles of Indian as well as European paintings. In the present exhibition a glance will convince the observer of this fact....His impressionist studies of human figures had all the charms of Japanese colouring but fully maintains the Indian atmosphere. His other coloured sketches done in
European style also bear the individuality of this purely Indian artist.

Jamini Roy's reputation continued to grow with his exhibitions held by the Indian Society of Oriental Art in 1930, 1941 and 1944 being major successes. The exhibition of 1930 was hailed by Shahid Suhrawardy, art critic of The Statesman as an event of first rate importance in the world of modern Indian art.115

The resort to an individual stylization was also evident in the works of a host of other artists in search of an identity during the period 1907 -1947 and the Indian Society of Oriental Art rendered a valuable service in offering them the much needed platform and space. For instance, the artist Promode Kumar Chattopadhyay who worked in the Neo-Bengal style was not its mere blind imitator. "There seems to be a more determined attempt to explore new varieties of art traditions", noted The Forum, January 26, 1924. Some of his works showed a marked Tibetan influence.

The works of Chaitanyadev Chattopadhyay also showed a marked originality. The Advance, December 24, 1930 noted, "Mr. Chaitanya Dev Chatterjee makes original contributions in novel colour schemes and in a new sense of design ......" Professor

Suniti Kumar Chatterjee pointed out, "Chaitanyadev's sketches and paintings of Bengali women show a tall and rather aristocratic type which is his own creation in the modern art of Bengal".\(^{116}\)

Another lesser known artist associated with the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Chanchal Kumar Bandyopadhyay also did not blindly imitate tradition and instead attempted to chart out a new path. A noted cartoonist, his works were free from the influence of his master, Gaganendranath. The artist's woodblock prints exhibited by the Society also earned critical acclaim. The Englishman, December 22, 1921 reported, "A very interesting contrast is offered by a few woodblock prints contributed by Mr. Chanchal Kumar Banerjee who claims to have brought a new message to the modern Indian movement from his recent visit to Paris".

A mark of originality also characterized the works of Nalinikanta Majumdar who applied different forms or methods without letting his individuality being influenced by them. The Statesman, December 27, 1927 drew attention to the artist's 'The Dance' and 'Spirit of the Sea' as expressing "a struggle for self-expression and originality". In the works of Manindrabhushan Gupta too "..... there is a more deliberate intention, or rather

\(^{116}\) Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, 'An Exhibition of Contemporary Indian Painting in Calcutta', (The) Modern Review, April, 1943
urge, and a more sustained purpose in his break-away from the accepted tradition. Mr. Gupta makes a departure from the established convention. In evidence was also the originality of Bireswar Sen who as the Head Master of the Government Art School at Lucknow rejuvenated the ancient style of textile designing by introducing new styles and designs in the textile section. The artist’s individuality was also noticeable in the works of Jamini Prakash Ganguly whose method of contrasting white against white in the pictures of the river Padma is quite interesting.

A refreshing note of originality and individuality of design was noticeable in the exhibits of Bishnupada Roy Chowdhury who opted for "a modern and novel method of presentation." The Statesman, December 24, 1922 went as far as to record, "The works of Bishnupada Roy Chowdhury reveal no influence of the leaders of the group (i.e. the Bengal School)." Ranada Charan Ukil who established the Ukil School of Art at Varanasi also "... felt disgusted with the old trammels of traditional art practiced in the early days of our Indian renaissance." Ramendranath Chakravarty's water-colour paintings, etchings, woodcuts and prints "... speak highly of

118. O. C. Gangoly, Op.Cit., p.228
119. The Statesman, December 22, 1921
120. Prof. B. C. Bhattacharya, 'A Revival of Art in Benares', (The) Modern Review, February, 1938
this artist's capacity for assimilating a different medium and technique".\textsuperscript{121} Very striking in their originality were the series of 'Gayatri' pictures of the artist Bishnu Charan Chakravarty.\textsuperscript{122} The Statesman, December 22, 1921 noted that, Bireswar Sen in his 'The Toilet' ...... ".... exhibits a manner which he can call exclusively his own".

Sudhangsu Kumar Roy, who acquired training in woodcut in the Indian Society of Oriental Art and received gold medal for his work in the Society's exhibition of 1930, was also greatly influenced by the folk art of Bengal. He became an associate of Gurusaday Dutt, publishing 'Banglar Bratakatha', a beautifully illustrated book on Bengal's folk art.\textsuperscript{123} Bratindranath Tagore too attempted experimentations. The Statesman, December 27, 1927 reported that the artist's works "...... show how the teaching of Abanindranath Tagore can be made a suitable foundation for efforts in a different direction".

The evolution of an individual stylization was also evident in the works of Mahitosh Biswas who although influenced by the Bengali 'patachitra' style, developed his own style on the foundation of the ancient art tradition of Bengal.\textsuperscript{124} Manishi

\textsuperscript{121} The Statesman, December 31, 1935
\textsuperscript{122} See The Statesman, December 24, 1922
\textsuperscript{123} See Upendranath Gangopadhyay Ed. 'Shilpi Shri Sudhangsu Kumar Roy', Vichitra, Paus 1339 Bangabda. The artist tried to organize a movement of the 'patuas' of Calcutta and the neighbouring areas.
\textsuperscript{124} See Ratanmani Chattopadhyay, 'Shilpi Mahitosh Biswaser Chitrakala', Prabasi, Jaistha, 1363 Bangabda
Dey's exhibits reflected the artist's attempt to build up an independent style on the foundations laid by Abanindranath. The Statesman, December 27, 1927, noted that the "varied nature of the subjects treated and the free and unfettered command over their technique revealed the genius of this rising artist .... There is imagination ....... in every single picture that was exhibited".

In search of a distinctive style of their own were also some of the members of the Calcutta Group who were associated with the Indian Society of Oriental Art – artists like Gopal Ghosh, Nirode Mazumdar and Prankrishna Paul who initially worked in the style of the Bengal School but gradually sought to free themselves from its influence and strive for new ideals in art based on a synthesis of the East and the West. Gopal Ghosh, instead of blindly imitating the traditional style attempted to create an original style using bold colour and strokes. His use of pastel and water colour in his portrayal of nature added a new dimension to Indian art. Among his notable works in his distinctive style were 'Bamboo-bush', 'Riverside', 'Dreamland', 'Boats'. Nirode Majumdar too attempted to go beyond accepted norms, evolving an individual stylization. Some of his works even revealed French influence. The artist Prankrishna Paul too attempted to free himself from the Bengal School style, which he felt did not adequately portray

125. See Prodosh Das Gupta, Smritikatha, Shilpakatha (Calcutta, 1986), p.29
contemporary reality. His 'Mother and Child' and 'The Family' were stark portrayals of the famine of 1943 and the economic hardships inflicted by the Second World War.

Artists from other presidencies who utilized the Society's platform to uphold their art also displayed the evolution of an independent stylization. One of Abanindranath's disciples, K. Venkatappa went beyond the set boundaries of normal conventions and concentrated his attention on the exploration of nature creating "a magical vision of Karnataka landscape that transcended mere representation ......"126 Roop Krishna of Lahore also attempted to put the traditional style into a new frame. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 31, 1933 noted that in the Society's annual exhibition of 1933, "Sj. Girindra's works characterized by a cubistic tendency were original in style and conception". Ramgopal V. Wargiya of Jaipur also showed a mastery over modern techniques. Some of the works of H. Hariharan bore the imprint of the unsophisticated primitive life force of the folk art of Bengal. Lalit Mohan Sen from Lucknow seemed to open a new vista in the realm of modern Indian art. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 31, 1933 noted, "He dreams of Italian masters. The Christian symbolism is vitalized with Oriental touches". An Indian Christian, A. D. Thomas whose works were exhibited by the Indian Society of Oriental Art during its annual exhibition held in December 1930, applied the

principles of Indian painting to elevating incidents of the life of Christ. The Advance, December 24, 1930 noted that Thomas ".....makes a signal contribution to modern painting by an able and sincere application of the principles of Indian painting to sell worn motifs and subject from the life of Christ". The Illustrated Weekly of India, January 11, 1931 also took a special note of this Oriental vision of Christ which it felt was the most interesting development of the Society's current exhibition. It further noted:

The artist's most convincing presentations are 'Christ at the Well', 'Moses Watering the Sheep', 'The Fall' and 'Flight into Egypt'. One is tempted to compare these with Giotto's famous fresco in the Arena Chapel, Padua. It is quite original and seems to invest the much worn theme with the halo of Indian spirituality.

The Forward, December 25, 1928 also noted the artist's 'On the Way to Calvary', "a remarkable Biblical picture in the true Indian style".

Another interesting contributor to the Society's annual exhibition of 1930 was a talented Goanese artist A. D. Fonseca "who adds a new role by his portrait studies some of which recall the grace and depth of old Italian masters". His 'Omar

127. Advance, December 24, 1930
Khayyam', 'Krishna and Radha' executed in the style of the European renaissance art attracted much attention in the Society's exhibitions.

Utilizing the platform and space offered by the Indian Society of Oriental Art a large body of artists thus attempted to uphold Oriental art and aesthetics during the first half of the twentieth century. Indian art and Oriental art became synonymous in the artist's quest for an identity during the said period. However the artists did not always conform to the traditional canons of art and their works reflected a refreshing variety in the matter of ideal and style, evolving individual stylization in the process. Yet what was markedly noticeable was the definitely Oriental spirit upheld by the artists and this constituted an important aspect of the anti-colonial nationalist movement during the period under review. It had become increasingly evident that the Indian artists had developed the strength to reject colonial norms and uphold the country's traditional art as well as the art of the Orient. At the same time they had attained the maturity to go beyond and develop individual stylization which augured well for the development of modern Indian art.