CHAPTER - V
ACTIVITIES OF THE INDIAN SOCIETY OF ORIENTAL ART (1907 - 1947)
The establishment of the Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta in 1907 by artists and connoisseurs of art to uphold the great cultural heritage of the Orient was a significant landmark in the evolution of a cultural identity among the Indians which ran parallel to the growing political identity as expressed by the Indian nationalist movement during the first half of the twentieth century. The founding fathers of the Society intended to create through the organization a new generation of artists who would look at art and life through an ideology of Indianness. In addition, the Society was to reform public taste, in order to arouse the Indian's pride in the artistic heritage of the country and in the country's capacity to produce something of its own in the realm of arts. However, the Society was not to restrict itself to the upholding of Indian art, it was also to create an awareness of the various trends in Oriental art. The Indian Society of Oriental Art thus undertook various activities such as organizing annual exhibitions, discussions, lectures and publishing an art journal 'Rupam' pioneering a trend in Oriental research, to uphold the Oriental art form and to create an initiated public proud in the artistic heritage of the country as well as of the Orient at large. The present chapter analyses the multifarious activities of the Society and its artists oriented towards the growth of an Indian cultural identity through the arts. As James H. Cousins commented, "It is certain that the painters, sculptures and writers of the Society are engaged in
no mere academic amusement but are busy on the inspiring work of expressing through the Arts, the Soul of India".1

A significant achievement of the Indian Society of Oriental Art in the sphere of the evolution of a cultural identity among the Indians was the establishment of a school for teaching Oriental art in its centre at 6, Samavaya Mansions, Hogg Street, Calcutta. Earlier Oriental art was taught at the Calcutta Art School located in the Government School of Art and Craft, Calcutta. In 1915 Abanindranath resigned as the Vice Principal of the Calcutta Art School which without his guiding spirit never recovered its lost glory. The locus of Oriental Art now shifted to the school of Oriental art set up by the Indian Society of Oriental Art. Under the general supervision of Abanindranath and Gaganendranath who visited the school regularly every afternoon, Nandalal Bose and Kshitindranath Majumdar gave instructions in Indian style painting to the students. The sculpture classes were conducted by Giridharilal, a talented sculptor from Orissa who executed several masterpieces in wood and plaster which were the outstanding exhibits in the Society's annual exhibitions. Toymakers from Krishnanagar came to the school to impart training in clay modelling. The art of 'Alpana' was revived. A South Indian carpenter Dhanaketi Achary was appointed to make furniture in the indigenous style. New

architectural designs were developed on the basis of old historical buildings. In 1930 a Ladies' Training class was opened.

Of the students who were trained in the school conducted by the Indian Society of Oriental Art and later became famous, one may recall the names of S. Venkatappa hailing from Mysore, Hakim Khan and Sami-uz-Zama who came from Lucknow, Roop Krishna from Lahore and several local talents like Promode Kumar Chattopadhyay, Deviprasad Roy Chaudhuri, Bireswar Sen, Sailendranath De, Surendranath Kar and Chanchalkumar Bandyopadhyay.2

The most important activity of the Indian Society of Oriental Art was to arrange annual exhibitions of Oriental art in the city during the winter season. The Calcutta public was familiar with art exhibitions since the nineteenth century, but exhibition going had not become a habit yet. It was the annual exhibitions organized the Indian Society of Oriental Art every year in December, showcasing the latest works of the artists of the new movement in Indian painting initiated by Abanindranath Tagore and other forms of Oriental art that generated public enthusiasm and interest. At the same time the exhibitions brought to the fore the works of a number of

2. See O. C. Gangoly, 'Bharater Shilpa O Amar Katha', p. 143
relatively unknown artists in search of an autonomous cultural idiom. The Forum, January 26, 1924 noted:

The work of these new painters of Bengal represents an earnest effort to build up a vital school of Indian Art on the basis of genuine Art traditions and genuine Indian inspiration.

The Englishman, December 24, 1926 also took note of the Indian style of paintings exhibited by the Indian Society of Oriental Art - "The Indian Society of Oriental Art is representative for the most part of what is now known as the Indian style of painting". The Illustrated Weekly of India, January 11, 1931 noted, "The standard of exhibits keeps up a level which is almost impossible to obtain in this country where Art has ceased to occupy a serious position. But the devotion of a band of enthusiasts keeps alive the flame".

Initially the exhibitions of the Indian Society of Oriental Art were held in the spacious hall of the Art School at Calcutta. Later the Society was able to hire an extensive flat at 6, Samavaya Mansions, Hogg Street, Calcutta. The Statesman, January 4, 1920 noted, ".....the exhibition room is a place where one may forget everything except the world of art".

The Statesman further noted:
A great charm of the exhibitions of the Indian Society of Oriental Art is the room in which they are held – the spaciousness of the light, the pictures, the sculptures, the few Oriental rugs on the floor, the scattered chairs inviting one to sit, with the beauty of their design, and the generally diffused quietness and aroma of peace.³

O. C. Gangoly also recollected thus:

The extensive floor and the large walls of its hall provided splendid exhibition space and conjured up an atmosphere of Indian culture which was mystic as well as fascinating.⁴

It was a great achievement on the part of the Indian Society of Oriental Art to help popularize exhibitions and wean the Indian public from Western Academic art to the rich art tradition of the Orient. The Illustrated Weekly of India, January 11, 1931 noted:

It is hardly possible for people who have never had a chance of visiting the Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art

3. The Statesman, December 26, 1925
in Calcutta during the Christmas week to realize its significance in modern Indian Art.

The Advance, December 29, 1934 noted:

The exhibition that the Indian Society of Oriental Art annually holds of the fruits of its efforts provides the art loving public of Calcutta with an opportunity of having a first hand knowledge of its progressive achievements. The exhibition not only popularizes Indian art but serves art connoisseurs and art lovers as a reminder for a periodical survey of the art movements in India so far as conservation of India's art traditions and new creations based on those traditions are concerned.

The Advance further commented,

As the Society's activities and membership grew steadily, it was thought fit to hold annual exhibitions of modern art in Calcutta and elsewhere. From the outset these annual exhibitions ...... created a genuine interest among the educated public of India and elsewhere.5

5. Ramesh Chandra Roy, 'Modern Indian Art and its Future', Advance, December 29, 1934
The Forward, December 25, 1928, thus reported on the annual exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art:

The exhibitions of the ISOA is a yearly event to which the entire art-loving population of the city look forward with eager wistfulness..... Not only were the exhibits perfectly fascinating but there was about them the true atmosphere of real India which called up glorious visions of the ancient centres of our culture and civilization.

The annual exhibitions of the Indian Society of Oriental Art attracted "....... considerable amount of attention in the art world of Calcutta".6 What was noticeable was a daily increasing interest on the part of the educated Indians in the works of the exponents of the new school of painting which upheld Oriental art norms. This was proved by "the larger and larger number of visitors that are being attracted by the Exhibitions of the Society year after year".7

In its initial years the Indian Society of Oriental Art organized a number of important exhibitions of artworks in the Oriental style at Calcutta (1908 – 1910), Allahabad (1911), Calcutta

---

6. The Englishman, December 26, 1928
7. The Forum, January 26, 1924
(1912 - 1919), Tokyo, Chicago, Darjeeling (1915), Calcutta, Madras, Chandannagar (1916), Calcutta, Sumatra (1917), Calcutta (1918), Calcutta, Madras, Bangalore (1919). The first exhibition of the Bengal School organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art outside India was at Paris in 1914. A series of exhibitions were also organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art in London, Berlin, Belgium, Holland and the United States.

Such exhibitions played a significant role in the evolution of modern Indian art during the first half of the twentieth century and this in turn reinforced and reinvigorated the Indian national movement by upholding a cultural identity that was distinctly national. Sir John Woodroffe commented, "This Society is doing good work by its endeavour to arouse in the India of to-day the beautiful spirit which inspired the artistry of her great past".8

One of the major achievements of the Indian Society of Oriental Art was to place the Bengal School on more secure foundations. Through its exhibitions, the Indian Society of Oriental Art attempted to represent the many phases of the tendencies of this modern group of Indian painters. The leaders of the new school of Indian painting occupied the pride of place

8. Sir John Woodroffe, 'A Modern School of Indian Painting', Kokka, 1908. Woodroffe further noted that Abanindranath's work was a sign of what may be given to the world "if the Indian people regain their artistic heritage and realize that their duty is not to borrow from others but to give their own".
in the annual exhibitions of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. Thus the works of the great masters of the Bengal School, Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar and others brought forth before public view a national cultural idiom reflecting many new 'notes'. The Statesman, December 24, 1922 thus recorded its view:

One of the tenets of this group has been to study, assimilate and extract from the lessons of the old Indian masterpieces all that is best and abiding in artistic ideas and to use and adapt them for forging a new artistic language, suited to express the longings and yearnings of the new generation on the threshold of a new era.

Yet, on the whole there was the desire for promoting that side of expression that could be termed as distinctly 'national'. "There is one point, on which public opinion seems unanimous namely that the productions of this school have been inspired by a genuine respect for Indian sentiments ....... The school has revived with great success the spirit of old Indian art".

9. The Englishman, December 22, 1921 recorded, "In the majority of the exhibits the old forms and formulae are less and less evident. It is no longer a reminiscence of Ajanta and Kangra, but a reflection of a new and developed mood in the artist".

10. Lord Ronaldshay, 'Oriental Art, A National Movement', The Empire, December 31, 1919
The Indian Society of Oriental Art offered a valuable platform to the leader of the Bengal School, Abanindranath Tagore, for the promotion of his 'new' art form. Tagore's works exhibited by the Society brought in public view the artist's experimentations in Oriental art forms, as well as his efforts at upholding an individualistic style. Especially remarkable was the artist's great respect for the Oriental art heritage. Abanindranath noted in his memoirs that a thought occurred to him during the Swadeshi period that the country had to be given something of its own and that thought found its expression in his art. "Art should henceforth be thought of from an Indian standpoint". Abanindranath thus attempted to recapture the "essentially national spirit" in his paintings - 'Abhisarika', 'Building of the Taj', 'Death of Shah Jahan', 'Bahadur Shah', 'Siddhas of the Upper Air'. The artist's 'Bharat Mata' became the new symbol which emerged as the visual image of India and it appeared as an example of that closely knit religious and artistic consciousness which had to be taken into account by the ruling class. Yet, at the same time Abanindranath was keen on evolving an individualistic style exhibiting a variety of form of expression. His 'Poet' displayed in the Society's annual exhibition reflected the artist's experimentations in Indo-Persian

11. See Abanindranath Tagore, Gharoa (Visva Bharati, 1941) p.23
12. The Statesman, February 1, 1908 in a review of the first annual exhibition organized by the I.S.O.A. in January 1908 referred to a number of Abanindranath's works in the Oriental style exhibited - the 'Radha Krishna' series, 'Siddhas of the Upper Air', 'The Banished Yaksha' and others.
manners whereas his 'Zebunnisa' was "a very original and individual method of presentation". His illustrations from the Omar Khayyam series reflected the delicate colourings of the old Japanese prints whereas the Persian style was marked in his 'A Moghul Prince'. Many of his exhibits at the Indian Society of Oriental Art were executed in the Japanese 'wash' technique. It was thus through the Society's annual exhibitions that Abanindranath's art in the Oriental style came before the public eye. For the first time the visual arts gained great importance in the Bengali middle class existence, playing a significant role in the moulding of a national identity during the colonial period.

The Indian Society of Oriental Art also helped Abanindranath's elder brother Gaganendranath Tagore, an artist working in the style of Oriental art norms, to chart out a new path in his creative pursuits, offering him an opportunity to exhibit his multifarious works in its annual exhibitions. The artist's varied experimentations in art were reflected in his works exhibited by the Society. His landscapes, his 'Chaitanya' series, his cartoons and his adventures in Cubism bear testimony to the artist's search for an individual identity in the realm of art during the colonial period. Rabindranath Tagore commenting on Gaganendranath's art, wrote in 1938, "Closely surrounded by

13. The Englishman, December 22, 1921
the atmosphere of a new art movement ..... he sought out his own untrodden path of adventure, attempted marvellous experiments in colouring and made fantastic trials in the magic of light and shade".14 The Indian Society of Oriental Art deserves credit for aiding the artist in his quest for an identity during the period under consideration.15

The Indian Society of Oriental Art rendered a signal service to the cause of modern Indian art by bringing to the fore the talent of Nandalal Bose, the able disciple of Abanindranath Tagore. His works inspired by the traditional Indian art and the art of the Far East attracted much attention in the Society's exhibitions. The artist's 'Satir Dehatyag', 'Sati Mounting the Pyre', 'Agni', 'Ahalya' earned much public acclaim. "There was about them the true atmosphere of real India which called up glorious visions of the ancient centres of our culture and civilization", noted the Forward, December 25, 1928. The Society by making Nandalal Bose's art public, helped in creating an awareness among the Indians of India's rich artistic and cultural heritage which in turn gave them a sense of identity in a colonial world.

The definitely Indian spirit was the most salient impression

15. The Advance, December 24, noted that Gaganendranath's "contributions have been the real backbone of the movement in their daring originality and universal quality".
conveyed by the works exhibited by the Society during the first half of the twentieth century. The Englishman, December 28, 1922 noted, "The Exhibition of modern Indian pictures at the Samavaya Mansion ..... is the revealation of a new point of view of a new generation of artists who are attempting to frame a form of expression from the Indian view of life". Lord Ronaldshay also noted, "The school has revived with great success the spirit of old Indian art".16

The exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art showcased the works of not only the great masters but also other artists reflecting a genuine respect for Indian sentiments. The Society aided Asit Kumar Haldar in his attempts at reviving the ancient art tradition of India. His 'Apsara', 'Sita', 'Raslila', 'Lotus' exhibited by the Society expressed the artist's indebtedness to the Oriental art heritage. Sailendranath Dey and Kshitindranath Majumdar's exhibits reminded one "of the best specimens of the Kangra school".17 Mukul Dey, another renowned student of Abanindranath, also utilized the Society's platform to display his works in the revived style of Indian art drawing inspiration from the Puranas, the indigenous literary sources and the ordinary commonplace life. Other artists whose works were exhibited by the Society were Surendranath Gangopadhyay, Samarendranath Gupta, Deviprosad Roy

17. The Englishman December 30, 1919
Chowdhury, Benode Behari Mukherjee and others. Their paintings seemed to conjure up the true atmosphere of real India and indicated clearly an attempt to revive the spirit of Indian art.

The Indian Society of Oriental Art through its annual exhibitions thus sought to uphold the Bengal School of art. The Statesman, December 24, 1922 noted, "..... much of the works shown demonstrate in no uncertain measure the vitality which is acting both as a cohesive urging force in what will no doubt be known to artistic historians as the "Bengal School" of Indian paintings".

At the same time the Society's annual exhibitions revealed several attempts to develop individual styles and experimentations in new method.18

The Englishman, December 22, 1921 further noted:

"It was suggested by many connoisseurs and critics .... that modern Indian Painting could not go back to the trammels of its old traditions and that salvation and new life lay in its assimilation of the best lesson from the West."

---

18. The Englishman, January 29, 1925 noted, "The impression one gets ..... is that the artists...... are not content with stereo-typed forms, but are seeking new outlets for their talents. This augurs well for the future of Indian Art".
There are many who still repudiate any line of demarcation between the art of the Asiatic and other nations. But others... feel the necessity of infusing new life into Indian pictorial Art. And this is what the leaders of the new movement have been conscientiously endeavouring to do for the last few years. Some of the members of this group have begun to think that their traditional style of painting has come to the end of the trail as it were and must find a new path in order to hold its own and work out its own salvation. In the majority of the exhibits, the old forms and formulae are less and less evident. It is no longer a reminiscence of Ajanta and Kangra, but a reflection of a new and developed mood in the artist.

The works of the great master Abanindranath Tagore displayed in the Society's annual exhibitions, reflected a variety of form of expression "from which it is difficult to gather a specially Indian point of view". In many of his works the artist seemed to devise a very original and individual style of presentation. In fact Abanindranath was personally opposed to strict adherence to any particular school.

19. The Englishman, December 22, 1921
E. B. Havell wrote in an essay published in The Studio in October 1902:

Mr. Tagore has happily been proof against the temptation to allow his artistic individuality to be cast in a common European mould. He has found in the work of the Mughal School exactly the material to help forward his artistic development. At the same time he is not a mere imitator of an extinct style of art.

The Statesman, February 1, 1908 noted, "Mr. Tagore has weaned his pupils gradually, however, and the results as a whole are quite successful from an artistic point of view". The successive annual exhibitions of the Indian Society of Oriental Art revealed many new 'notes' and seemed to convey the message that the artists "feel the necessity of infusing new life into Indian pictorial Art". The artists tried "to tread away from slavish imitation of any school and find original means so far as possible of self expression". The Forward, January 6, 1924 noted, "While there are repetitions of well-worn themes and reflections of established techniques, there is a preponderance of independent personal vision and style". Thus Abanindranath's paintings exhibited by the Society conveyed a variety of form of

21. 'Indian Art Revival', The Englishman, December 26, 1928
expressions inspired by Mughal, Chinese, Japanese and Western styles. Thus his 'The Beauty Spot', an illustration from the Omar Khayyam, had "the fine lines and delicate colouring of an old Japanese print" while his 'A Ruined Temple' and 'Kalidasa' were "reminiscent of both Chinese and Mogul art". Gaganendranath Tagore's exhibits ".... stand on a very unique pedestal. They ..... cannot be traced to any models in the East or the West". Gaganendranath's experimentations in Cubism were heavily indebted to modern European art. The artist's 'The Golden Sands of Puri', 'A Bengali Folk Song' reflected strong Japanese influence. Asit Kumar Haldar's Omar Khayyam series also seemed to be quite Persian in style and feeling. Thus other forms of Oriental art also had a marked influence on the evolution of the artists' individualistic style.

On the whole, the leaders of the new art movement were very well represented in the annual exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art during the first half of the twentieth century. Spectators and art lovers of Calcutta thus got a unique opportunity to view the works of the great masters reflecting their search for an autonomous identity under the colonial rule. This search for a self identity seemed to convey a

22. See The Statesman, December 28, 1920
23. The Englishman, December 28, 1922
24. The Statesman, December 28, 1920 noted, ".... at one time the art of Japan comes before the spectator", while reviewing Gaganendranath's exhibits
special message in the context of the growing nationalism in the country during the pre-independence period.

At the same time the annual exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art during the period 1907-1947 also aided the relatively unknown artists in their quest for an identity through the upholding of an autonomous vocabulary for art, by offering them a platform to showcase their works and by helping them to earn public recognition. The school of the Indian Society of Oriental Art steadily grew attracting to its ranks an increasing variety of talents and temperament, artists who regularly exhibited their works in the Society's exhibitions. As The Englishman, January 29, 1925 recorded, "There are several attempts to develop individual style and new methods are being tried". Thus, the public became acquainted with a new generation of artists whose works conveyed not only an unmistakably Indian feeling but also reflected "... a more determined attempt to explore new varieties of art traditions and to attempt a more comprehensive and many sided interpretation of the beautiful in nature and humanity".  

In their quest for an identity, the lesser known artists adopted varied techniques and styles. But all of them attempted to uphold a national art form. Sister Nivedita commented,

"Never had the continuity of the new school with the old been so convincingly demonstrated ..... In the interesting Exhibition of Indian art, new and old, which was held by this Society .... the imaginative character of old Indian art was well vindicated".26 Priyanath Sinha's 'Chaitanya' exhibited by the Society in 1910 attracted Sister Nivedita's attention as being "part and parcel of the national art".27 Sister Nivedita noted that the exhibits of the young painters "could be seen in its true light as a natural outcome and development of the old".28

The Indian Society of Oriental Art during the pre-independence period helped the public to become acquainted with a new generation of artists of great talent and promise through its exhibitions - Pulin Behari Dutta, Arabinda Dutt and Anil Proshad Sarbadhikari's works were interesting examples of the modern Indian School, being "unmistakably Indian in style, technique and feeling".29 A. K. Ganguly's 'Jhulan', 'The Swing', 'Krishna and Arjuna', the works of Nobendranath and Brotindranath Tagore as well as the exhibits of Surendra Nath Kar and Sailendranath Dey attracted much attention. Other artists like A. D. Chatterjee, Nirmal Guha, Uma Prasad Mukherjee,

---
27. Ibid
28. Ibid
29. The Statesman, December 28, 1920
K. P. Ghoshal, B. C. Dey, Aswini Kumar Roy, Aradhya Ganguly searched for an identity through the adoption of individual styles and methods and earned recognition through the Society's platform.

Other artists who achieved fame through the Indian Society of Oriental Art were Durga Shankar Bhattacharjee whose 'Ekalavya', 'Arjuna and Urvashi', 'Uma', 'Parthasarathi', 'Pardanashin', 'The Household Lamp' drawing inspiration from the Oriental traditions "made a very good impression".30 In the Society's annual exhibition of 1921, a young artist of fourteen years of age, Bishnupada Chowdhury made his mark felt by drawing inspiration from the traditional Indian art and adopting an individualistic style as well. His 'Hara Parvati' and 'Dhruva' were highly appreciated.31

Nalinikanta Majumdar struggled for self-expression and originality in his works 'Meghaduta', 'Advent of the Rainy Season', 'Uma's Penace', 'Usha', 'Srikrishna' displayed in the Society's exhibitions. Dhirendra Krishna Deb Burman's works, 'Raja Dilip', 'Devadasi', 'Autumn Sky', 'The Hailstorm', 'Rudratapa' exhibited by the Society and executed in the Oriental style were characterized by originality and conviction. Promode

30. The Englishman, December 28, 1920
31. The Statesman, December 22, 1921 reported that the artist's works displayed "....... a perfect mastery of the lessons that the old Indian paintings can teach him" and at the same time stood "....... for a modern and novel method of presentation".
Kumar Chatterjee's works reflecting his individualistic style were influenced by his spiritual inclinations. His 'Gayatri', 'Meghaduta', 'Rasila', 'Chandra Sekhar', 'Manasarovar', 'Kailasha Range in Tibet' and others occupied a pride of place in the Society's exhibitions. The Indian Daily News, January 1924 noted, "P. K. Chatterjee's Tibetanism is carefully studied and assimilated". Utilising the Society's platform, the artist Chaitanyadev Chattopadhyay came into prominence with his works drawing inspiration from various Oriental art forms – the Mughal style, the Tibetan 'tanka' style as well as the typical Bengali style. "Yet his novel portrayal of the Bengali women was his own creation in the modern art of Bengal".32

The Society's exhibitions also brought into public view the works of Chanchalkumar Bandyopadhyay who gave " ...... a sufficient jerk of his Indian soul". His woodcuts won much public praise. He was also a renowned cartoonist and his cartoons reflecting upon contemporary political, social and cultural issues, brought to the fore an artist who dared to ridicule the colonial regime. His cartoons ridiculing the Simon Commission attracted the attention of the spectators thronging the Society's exhibition hall.33

32. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, 'An Exhibition of Contemporary Indian Painting in Calcutta', (The) Modern Review, April, 1943
33. See The Advance, November 13, 1931
Sanskrit classics and his woodcuts also highly impressed the public. At the same time the artist deviated from established conventions and adopted an individualistic style. Especially impressive was his painting of the Sabarmati Ashrama which acquired significance in the context of the maturing of the Indian nationalist movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.


Amongst the Society's artists Pran Krishna Pal, N芥de Majumdar, Kumar Pronobendendra Tagore have distinguished themselves by their clever works. Pran Krishna Pal's 'Dol-Lila' ......

34. The Advance, January 14, 1938 noted, "Mr. Gupta who had been to Mahatmaji's Ashram at Sabarmati has drawn a life-like picture of Sabarmati, minutely depicting the natural surroundings of the Ashram"
Nirode Majumder's 'Radha - Krishna', .... the works of Satyen Majumdar, Kalipada Ghosal are really commendable.

An interesting contribution to the Society's annual exhibitions was Sris Chandra Chatterjee's exhibits - drawing of facades of residential buildings in Indian style. Olindra Ganguly's 'Kali' and 'Bride' on silk were bold and daring. Other artists who earned public recognition through the Society were Sudhansu Chowdhury, Pashupati Banerjee, Nirmal Guha and others.

On the whole the works of these lesser known artists revealed a refreshing note of originality and individuality of design which contributed to the development of modern Indian art.

A feature of the exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art was the inter-provincial character of many of the exhibits. 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". Thus artists from other provinces searching for an identity in a colonial world, found the Society's platform of great help in upholding an autonomous art form drawing inspiration from the rich artistic tradition of the Orient.

Roopkrishna, an artist from Lahore, also utilized the Society's platform to uphold his art form, influenced by the style of the Moghuls and the Persians. The Statesman, December 28, 1920 noted that in the Society's annual exhibition of December, 1920, 'The Recitation of the Koran' by Roopkrishna ".......is in the Mughal style, while 'Melody' by the same artist recalls the school of Riza Abbasi, the artist at the court of the Shah of Persia in the 17th century". The artist's 'Omar Khayyam' and 'Passing Clouds' exhibited by the Indian Society of Oriental Art in its annual exhibition held in December 1921, were specially mentioned by The Englishman, December 22, 1921. His 'Bhil Girl' exhibited in December 1922 ".....stands out by the boldness and the originality of the treatment and looks very like a fragment of an old fresco put into a new frame".35

Other artists who earned recognition through the Indian

35. The Statesman, December 24, 1922
Society of Oriental Art were K. R. M. Shastry, T. Kessava Rao, Sonalal Shah, H. L. Merh and others. Another interesting contributor was a talented Goanese artist, Mr. A. D. Fonseca whose portrait studies, 'Krishna and Radha', 'Omar Khayyam', attracted the attention of the art loving public of Calcutta. Also "Mr. Ishwar Das of the Lucknow School shows some delightfully decorative studies ....." Of special mention is the South Indian artist Hariharan's 'To the River'.

The Illustrated Weekly of India, January 11, 1931 took a special note of the exhibits at the Indian Society of Oriental Art's annual exhibition:

They have been contributed by artists from distant places as Agra, Lucknow and Masulipatam. These contributions are testimony to the influences of the Bengal School outside its own province. Many of them display vitality and sincerity. The works of H. L. Merh, K. N. Dhar, M. N. Takroo (Masulipatam) deserve special mention.

The Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 31, 1933 also noted the presence of artists from other provinces in the Society's exhibition:

36. Advance, December 24, 1930
The exhibitions this year has been highly representative in character ...... Madras, Bombay, the Punjab, U. P., Delhi, Berar, Jaipur, Goa and other parts of India have participated in the exhibition and have given ample evidence of their artistic quality.

Sj. Bhuwan of Delhi has displayed his mastery over brush and colour. His 'Sri Krishna Leela' is a masterpiece. His 'Buddha and Sujata', 'Aurangazeb and Zebunissa' are striking. Sj. Girindra is original in style and conception. His bold and sure strokes reveal an idea of solidity. His artistic tendency seeks to create unity in variety ...... Sj. Ramgopal V. Wargiya of Jaipur is a talented artist ...... he has a mastery over modern technique. His 'India's Great Politician', 'Zebunissa' and 'Pandavas in Exile' are highly impressive. Sj. Jijja and Dhar of Lucknow deserve notice ......

Thus, the exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art showcased the works of not only the artists of Bengal, but artists from other provinces as well. The artists secured the much needed support in their search for an identity from the Indian Society of Oriental Art and this constituted a
valuable aspect in the growth of cultural nationalism during the pre-independence period.

The exhibitions organized by the Society also brought to the fore a number of women artists who had come out of the secluded domain of their household to uphold their art forms. In their search for an identity, the Society's platform proved to be valuable and several women sent in their works to the Society's exhibitions.37

The Advance, December 24, 1930 reported:

For the last few years the contributions of the lady artists of Bengal have more and more come to the front and one is happy in recording his tribute to the many feminine wielders of the brush.

In the Society's annual exhibition of December 1919, the works of Sunayani Devi, the sister of Gaganendranath and Abanindranath Tagore, attracted public attention for their typical Indian feeling.38 The Englishman, December 28, 1920 noted, "There are some exhibitions by women artists. Noticeable amongst them is a picture of two figures entitled 'Strolling

37. The Statesman, December 27, 1927, noted, "Several women painters have sent in exhibits"
38. The Englishman, December 30, 1919, reported, "The works of Shrimati Shunayani Devi are typically Indian in feeling"
Home' by Srimati Gouri Devi". The exhibition brought into focus Sunayani Devi's search for an autonomous art idiom independent of the influence of the leaders of the Bengal School. Her 'Toilet', 'The Child Krishna' and 'Sati' claimed attention for their original outlook. 'The Two Alpanas' by an unknown lady artist reminded one "that in Bengal, atleast the ladies have been the inheritors of a great school of decorative designs".39 Shanta Devi's 'Cloud', Gouri Devi's 'Ashoka Flowers' earned praise in the Society's exhibition of December 1921.40 The press reported that in the same exhibition, "..... the very best picture by a woman exhibitor is undoubtedly 'Harvest Time' by Basanti Devi whose daring colour scheme is worthy of emulation".41 Gouri Devi's 'Day When the Flowers Bloomed' exhibited by the Indian Society of Oriental Art was also highly praised. That it was the product of the brush of a lady artist raised much hope "which the coming generation of Indian ladies should help to realise".

Sunayani Devi's works exhibited regularly in the Society's annual exhibitions fully maintained the quality of originality and vision. Her works displayed in the Society's exhibition of December 1923 were the most distinctive and impressive. Gouri Devi's 'Bibdia Hill' revealed a mature and distinctive style. Sukumari Devi's 'First Cloud' was an attractive execution of a

39. The Englishman, January, 1921 (date not obtained)
40. The Statesman, December 22, 1921
41. Ibid
decorative panel. Yamuna Devi's 'Nirvana' was a promising exercise in the Indian art style.

In the Society's annual exhibition held in December, 1927, Yamuna Devi's 'Hara Parvati', Indira Devi's 'Siva' and Prakriti Devi's 'Flower Gathering' earned public praise, while in the exhibition of December 1928, Sunayani Devi's 'Call of the Flute', the works of Gouri Devi, Sabita Devi, Prakriti Devi, Anukana Das Gupta were full of promise. The Society's annual exhibition of December 1930 exhibited the works of Sunayani Devi, Sheeta Devi, Miss S.B. Das, Anukana Das Gupta, N. Das and Monika Gupta, characterized by a marked individuality. The Statesman, December 22, 1931 noted, "Of the lady exhibitors, Miss Sheila Bonnerjee, a pupil of Debi Prasad Ray Chaudhuri ..... won the prize for the best exhibit by a lady with her picture 'Meditation'......" Other women artists who earned fame and recognition through the Society's exhibitions were Sabitri Devi, Ashima Devi, Jamuna Bose, Nivedita Ghosh, Nirupama Devi, Nilima Devi, Sudha Das Gupta and Miss. P.N. Banerjee.

Thus the annual exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art played a commendable role in offering a valuable platform to a number of women artists in search of an autonomous vocabulary for Indian art inspired by national sentiments.

42' See Advance, December 24, 1930
In its attempts at upholding the art heritage of India, the Indian Society of Oriental Art sent specimens of Indian art to the principal European exhibitions to keep the foreign schools in touch with the artistic movements of this country. In 1914, the Society was invited to hold an exhibition of Indian art at Paris by 'La societe des peintres Orientalists Francais'. About a hundred works of Indian art by artists like Abanindranath, Nandalal Bose, Gaganendranath Tagore, Suren Ganguly, Asit Haldar, Samarendra Nath Gupta, Shailen De, Kshitindranath Majumdar, O. C. Ganguly, Venkatappa, Promode Chatterjee, Durga Shankar Bhattacharya and others were exhibited. The exhibition inaugurated by the French President Poincare was a grand success. Andree Karpeles wrote in a letter to Abanindranath Tagore, "The opening of your exhibition yesterday was a real success, dear Mr. Tagore". The exhibition was well attended by artists and art critics of Europe and was highly praised by the newspapers and art journals of Paris. The news of the grand success of the Paris exhibition reached Calcutta. The Statesman, March 21, 1914 noted:

Indian Art Exhibition in Paris:

Triumph of Mr. A. N. Tagore.

The invitation of the Societe des Peintres

43. The initiative was taken by two sisters - Susan and Andree Karpeles
44. Letter by Andree Karpeles to Abanindranath Tagore, February 9, 1914
Orientalists Francais to the Calcutta School of Fine Arts which was founded and for many years directed by Mr. E. B. Havell to fill a room at their annual exhibition in the grand Palais in Paris, has resulted in an exhibition pronounced by experts to be a great triumph for Indian Art.

The Statesman further recorded the observation of the representative of the 'Times':

It is observed in conclusion that since so many and so admirable works of the Calcutta School have travelled so far from their home, it is greatly to be hoped that England will make amends for her previous neglect, and that they may be seen in London before they return to India.45

After Paris, the exhibition of Indian art travelled to London, Belgium and Holland. The fame of the new Indian art reached far and wide. In 1923 an exhibition was organized at Berlin in the palace of the German Crown-Prince. The German art-critic Dr. Max Osborne wrote:

To the European it is exceedingly instructive and enjoyable to pursue how the conscious

45. The Statesman, March 21, 1914
endeavours of the Indian Artists for a revival of their national art forms have to struggle against many an outside influence .... We felt how everything in these works is directed towards the aim of interpreting the peculiar mind and the essential characteristics of the Indian people and to bring them nearer and nearer to the consciousness of the people.46

Thus the West was beginning to realize and appreciate the search for an identity on the part of the Indian artists through the platform and space offered by the Indian Society of Oriental Art.

Further invitations to exhibit specimens of Indian art were received by the Society from England and the United States. In 1924 an exhibition was held at Wembley at the outskirts of London. In this exhibition prominent artists like Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, K.N. Majumder, A.K. Haldar sent in their works. In 1927 the exhibition reached the United States and showcased the works of the Indian artists in fifty-two American cities.

The Indian Society of Oriental Art also held exhibitions of the works of the Indian artists in search of a distinct identity in some Eastern countries. In 1913 two exhibitions were held at

46. Dr. Max Osborne, "Rupam", July - December, 1923
Java through the 'Nedarlandch Indiasch Kunstring Ti Batavia'. In 1914 an exhibition was held at Semarang. A certificate preserved at the Indian Society of Oriental Art thus reads:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KOLONIALE TENTOONSTELLING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEMARANG 1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILVEREN MEDAILLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEGEKEND AAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIAN SOCIETY OF ORIENTAL ART</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALCUTTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOOZ INZENDING SCHILDER-EN KUNS TORNHWORK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEMARANG, DEN, 3rd OCTOBER, 1914</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

De Algemeene Vourzitter Van de Jury

Exhibitions of Indian art were also organized at Rangoon (1939), Burma and Colombo. The exhibition held at Rangoon exhibited the works of not only the stalwarts of the Bengal School like Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose and others, but also of lesser known artists like Chaitanyadev Chattopadhyay whose 'Bathing Ghat' earned much praise for reflecting the genius of the artist.

The Indian Society of Oriental Art by organizing exhibitions of Indian art in foreign countries brought them in close contact with India's artistic movements which attempted to seek inspiration in the rich art tradition of the country and
sought to uphold an autonomous art form as well. These exhibitions brought praise and recognition to the Indian artists and contributed to the growing awareness of self among the Indians during the period of colonial domination.

During the period 1907 – 1947, the Indian Society of Oriental Art arranged exhibitions not only of paintings by Indian artists but also of products of the traditional craftsmen of the country who struggled to keep alive their crafts in the face of colonial challenge. Abanindranath Tagore thus recollected:

From Delhi came lovely specimens of pottery, from Kashmir shawls of various kinds and samples of handicrafts - among them an old inkstand of papier mache exquisitely designed ....... Then there were big carpets, clay dolls from Krishnanagar, terrific pictures from Bombay, playing cards from Lucknow with miniature paintings of the nawabs and begums for whom they were made, and pats from Orissa. From Ganjam came three ivory figures – one of the Kurma - avatar, another of Radha and Krishna embracing, and the third of Krishna alone, holding his flute near his mouth, a figure about nine inches high, with a posture and expression so beautiful that I was struck dumb
with admiration. It was a wonderful piece of work, and the old ivory of which it was made looked like pure gold.47

In 1922 an exhibition of sculpture was organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art. The Englishman, December 28, 1922 reported, "There is a number of small pieces of stone carvings of which those contributed by Mahapatra, a hereditary craftsman from Orissa deserve special mention. The Forum, January 26, 1924 reported "......the examples of stone sculpture turned out by Srijut Alokendra Nath Tagore, Srijut Mahapatra and others show remarkable signs of promise and they serve to show that the leaders of the movement are also trying to lay the foundation of a new Bengal School of sculpture". The Englishman, January 29, 1925 while reviewing the sixteenth Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art thus noted its observations:

The section of sculpture is represented by carvings in wood and stone by Giridhari Mahapatra and his son, hereditary craftsmen from Orissa. A masterly technique bestowed from father to son for many generations meets


In the succeeding annual exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art works of sculpture by Indian artists attracted much attention.\textsuperscript{48} In the Twentieth Annual Exhibition held in December, 1928, "'Repose' by Mr. Dasa Mahapatra of Puri showed undoubted superiority of the southern school in the field of carving".\textsuperscript{49} The Forward, December 25, 1928, also took note of the sculptures of Sridhar Mahapatra, which, following the tradition of the Mathura and Sarnath schools, reflected the Indian sculptor's search for an identity in the Great Art Tradition of the country.

Handicrafts also constituted a significant aspect of the annual exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art. In this respect the artists seemed to draw inspiration from the traditional craftsmanship of the country. Some specimens of lacquer work exhibited by the Society earned much praise. In

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{48} The Englishman, January 8, 1926 noted, "A matter to call attention to is the growth in activity of the Bengal school of sculpture"
\textsuperscript{49} The Statesman, December 25, 1928
\end{flushleft}
the Twentieth Annual Exhibition of the Society, held in 1928, "The handmade quilt by Sm. Suniti Bhaduri of Faridpur deserves special mention as a rare specimen of the famous needlework of old Bengal".\textsuperscript{50} The Society's exhibition of December, 1934 displayed enamel ornaments by V. R. Chitra.\textsuperscript{51} Pottery works were also exhibited and such works by P. Hariharan won the praise of the spectators in the exhibition of December, 1928. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, January 29, 1937 took a special note of the potteries exhibited -

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

Of special interest in the Twenty-Second Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art held in December 1930 was a display of furniture in the indigenous style by Asit Kumar

\textsuperscript{50} Forward, December 25, 1928
\textsuperscript{51} The Advance, December 25, 1934, reported, "..... a number of enamel ornaments by V. R. Chitra of Madras were greatly appreciated by the ladies present"
Thus, the exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art reflected the Indian artists' search for an identity in the sphere of the visual arts as well as of the crafts. In the process the Society was able to make significant impression on the public which became aware of the art heritage of the Orient and this contributed to the growth of self-esteem among them.

In addition to the annual exhibitions, a number of special exhibitions upholding Oriental art were organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta, generating much enthusiasm among the public.

In 1932 the Society arranged an exhibition of selected patua paintings of rural Bengal. The Statesman, March 23, 1932 reported:

An exhibition of the folk art of Bengal illustrated by items from the collection of Mr. G. S. Dutt, I. C. S., is now being held in the rooms of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Samavaya Mansions, Calcutta. The exhibition was opened by Rabindranath Tagore ........ Mr.

52. The Advance, December 24, 1930 reported, "Mr. Asit Kumar Haldar, head of the Government School of Art, exhibits a novel form of decoration for furniture"
Dutt in a lecture illustrated by slides which he delivered at the opening of the exhibition dwelt on the artistic quality of this school of painting and brought out its characteristics.

The lecture was followed by a demonstration by the patuas or village artists. They form an important caste in Bengal who rejoice in the classic name of Chitrakar and still remain the custodians of Bengal's traditions in art.

The Amrita Bazar Patrika, March 26, 1932 was all praise for the exhibition:

We have recently had a number of art exhibitions in Calcutta each important in its way. But the most significant and most important in many respects is an exhibition of the Folk Art of Bengal, illustrated by valuable items from the collection of Mr. G. S. Datta. A visit to the exhibition now on will indeed be a revelation to people who have heard of a strong school of popular art but have never had occasion to stand face to face with it.
Gurusaday Dutt called upon the Indians to know properly their own national heritage in art and obtain whatever inspiration they can from the unsophisticated artists in the villages who have never lost touch with the tradition of the past.

This exhibition displayed long scroll paintings depicting scenes from the Ramayana and Krishnaleela, specimens of mural painting in the traditional style, brass images and vessels, painted pottery, decorative brick-work, kanthas and other stuffs, "all of which go to make a most instructive display of the very robust school of popular art which has brightened Bengali life through the centuries". The Society deserves credit for organizing this exhibition as it made the public aware of their national art and aroused their confidence.

In 1930 the Indian Society of Oriental Art organized an exhibition of Jamini Roy's works based on the folk art of Bengal. In this exhibition the artist presented his interpretation of the medieval Bengali art traditions of the painter craftsmen of Bankura in West Bengal. The most obvious quality of Jamini Roy's figures is their crude vigour, a primitive and naïve

53. Liberty, March 23, 1932
54. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, March 26, 1932, noted, " ...... Mr. Dutt deserves the thanks of all patriotic Bengalis for having brought before them the wealth of their national art which is pining away through neglect and we hope that this exhibition will serve to infuse some of Mr. Dutt's enthusiasm among his countrymen"
character. The artist also made a close study of medieval Bengali paintings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and exhibited about twenty large tempera studies based on the story of Radha and Krishna.

Another show of Jamini Roy's works executed in the folk style was held by the Society in 1937. The exhibition was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister of Bengal who paid tribute to the Society's role in the propagation of Indian art. The wider public of the Society got an opportunity to witness and appreciate the works of Jamini Roy who derived inspiration from both Oriental and European techniques to develop an individualistic style.

The Amrita Bazar Patrika, February 1, 1937 thus recorded its views on the exhibition:

Here one may feast his eyes on paintings done purely in European technique to Mr. Roy's last phase, that is the indigenous style of Bengal. 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.
The Indian Society of Oriental Art also attempted to create an awareness among the public of the varied trends in Oriental art. In 1931 an exhibition of Chinese paintings was organized. Most of them were the works of Mr. Ien Foo Kau, but some old paintings of the Ming and the Ching dynasty were also displayed. The Statesman, February 7, 1931 reported:

There is no doubt that the collection will be much appreciated by lovers of Oriental paintings in Calcutta who will have a unique opportunity of studying the beauty and the peculiar merits of Chinese pictorial art.

In December 1936 a Japanese Colour Prints Exhibition was organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art. All daily newspapers carried the news of the exhibition being held at the Indian Society of Oriental Art at 11, Samavaya Mansions. The collection consisted of more than 600 prints dating back from the seventeenth century to the modern times depicting a wide range of subject. A feature of the exhibition was the excellent wood block process of reproduction of Japan. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, November 30, 1936 and The Advance, December 2, 1936 noted that the exhibition ".......may be termed as an event in the artistic circle of Calcutta". Further, the newspapers noted:

55. The Statesman, February 7, 1931 reported, "An exhibition of Chinese paintings was opened by Mr. Abanindranath Tagore at the I.S.O.A., Calcutta, yesterday afternoon"
such exhibitions of graphic art are really needed in this country to put a new impetus to the printing trade in general. The wood-block process of reproduction which happens to be a speciality of Japan is a very interesting thing.

The contemporary newspapers reported that the exhibition attracted a large number of people everyday.

It is a most hopeful sign ...... that if really artistic productions could be placed in the market the public would not hesitate to show their appreciation of the same.56

The exhibition was crowded by the Chinese and the Japanese inhabitants of Calcutta who came to the show as a mark of honour to this remarkable display of Far Eastern art. According to a report in a local daily " ...... every man and woman and child in China town came including babies in arms, and decrepit and lame old men on their crutches".57

In April 1938 the Indian Society of Oriental Art organized an exhibition of reconstruction of Iranian frescoes by Sarkis Katchadourian.

56. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 8, 1936
The Indian Society of Oriental Art also deserves credit for bringing before the public eye not merely the Oriental style but the latest phase in the movements in modern European art as well. In this respect the fourteenth Annual Exhibition of 1922 showcasing the works of the Bauhaus artists - Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger, Johannes Itten, Gerhard Marcks and George Muche deserve special mention. The Englishman, December 15, 1922, reported:

The latter phase of modern European paintings form another feature of the Society's exhibition which has devoted a section to the works of modern Continental artists chiefly led by the great Russian artist Kandinsky and his followers ..... the Society may be congratulated for its enterprise in putting together examples of these latest movements in the West.

The Statesman, December 15, 1922 also noted:

An opportunity to make acquaintance with the original works of modern European artists

58. The German school of design in Weimar, the Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius in 1919, had attracted the radical artists, theoreticians and pedagogues to the institution. The teachers and students of Bauhaus were able to turn out designs which had a decisive influence on industrial production as well as on the daily life. For Bauhaus artists, see Partha Mitter, The Triumph of Modernism, India's Artists and the Avant garde (1922 -1947), (New Delhi, 2008) pp.16-17
is such a rare occurrence in Calcutta that it is hoped that very few people interested in art and the future development of art in this country will miss the exhibition. It affords a very interesting occasion to compare the tendencies and inclinations of the indigenous school with the new development of art in the West.

An exhibition of paintings and drawings by Anagarika Brahmachari Govinda from Germany was inaugurated at the hall of the Indian Society of Oriental Art in January, 1934. The Advance also recorded the "opening of the exhibition of works of art by Anagarika Brahmachari Govinda, the well known German Buddhist monk".59

Apart from organizing exhibitions of paintings and handicrafts, the Indian Society of Oriental Art also organized an exhibition of posters in 1932.60

The exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art during the period 1907 – 1947 thus attempted to uphold the cultural supremacy of the country, by showcasing the works of the Indian artists who searched for an identity in the nationalist

59. Advance, February 1, 1934
60. The Statesman, July 21, 1932 reported, "A Poster Exhibition was organized by the I.S.O.A."
as well as the Oriental art heritage. Thereby the Society tried to popularize Oriental art and wean the public away from Western Academic art. At the same time the Society attempted to pursue new visual explorations by bringing into public view the works of the contemporary artists of the West which would in turn contribute to the development of modern Indian art.

The Indian Society of Oriental Art also adopted a policy of encouragement of the Indian artists by awarding prizes and scholarships. The Advance, December 24, 1930 noted, "...... Sri R. N. Mookherjee's prize of Rs.200 was awarded to Sj. Nalini K. Majumdar and Mr. O. C. Gangoly's prize of Rs.50 was presented to Miss S. B. Das, an art student of the Society". In the Twenty-Third Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art held in December 1931, D. S. Bhattacharya secured the Government Prize for his 'Age of Rishis'. In the Twenty-Seventh Annual Exhibition of December 1935, Pran Krishna Pal's 'Dol-Lila' was awarded the Society's Norman Blount Memorial medal for its merit.

In its attempts to uphold the Oriental art form the Indian Society of Oriental Art introduced authentic reproductions of the specimens of Bengal School and adopted measures for their circulation. The available prints being of poor quality, the Society arranged to publish the best works of Abanindranath and Nandalal Bose in the process of the colour wood block
prints of Japan in collaboration with the Kokka press. Later the Society appointed London firms of engineers like Carl Henstchel and Emery Walker for obtaining quality reproductions. This process helped to popularize Oriental art among the art loving public, especially women who were unable to personally visit the exhibitions or who lived outside.

The Society also published excellent photographs of the best examples of the Bengal School for circulation among its members. In fact from 1911 members received free copies of reproductions. The prints proved to be very popular and in the exhibition of 1912 prints worth Rs.500 were sold. In this way the artists became household names. Hironmoy Roy Chaudhury and Asit Haldar produced plaster casts for four bronze panels based on works by Nandalal Bose. These and some copies of ancient sculpture were sent to London to be cast in bronze.

The Society also upheld the cause of the nationalist art form by actively cooperating with the London India Society in a project of copying Ajanta murals under the guidance of Lady Herringham. A group of painters including Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, Mukul Dey left for Ajanta, the Society bearing the cost for the project. The copies of the Ajanta frescoes thus

61. Kokka, the Japanese art magazine
prepared were printed by the London India Society and were highly appreciated for reflecting the glory of Indian art.

Art journals from different parts of the world were subscribed by the Society for circulation among the members in order to make them aware of the contemporary art trends.

Not only painters, sculptors and craftsmen, but exponents of the performing arts also found the Society's platform valuable in their quest for an identity under the colonial regime.

The legendary dancer of India, Uday Shankar delivered an exquisite interpretation of Indian dancing at the Samavaya Mansions, under the auspices of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. The Advance, December 29, 1934 noted, "It is the Society which first introduced to the Calcutta public the well known Indian dancer Uday Shankar who gave a demonstration of his art before a large and distinguished gathering". The congratulatory address which was read out by Abinandra Nath Tagore was presented to Uday Shankar in truly Oriental style. The Society rendered a commendable service in bringing to the fore Uday Shankar's interpretation of Indian dancing which was acclaimed "as a new revelation of a very ancient art of India".63

In January 1937, a dance recited by Enakshi Rama Rau

63. The Statesman, April 24, 1921
was organized under the auspices of the Indian Society of Oriental Art at 37, Ballygunj Park, Calcutta.64

Further, the Society arranged a number of lectures and talks on Oriental Art, Literature, Music, History, Archaeology by eminent scholars in order to create an awareness of self among the public. The Advance, July 5, 1936, wrote, "The aim of the Society is to create a common platform from where the artists, musicians and literary people could voice their own opinions before the public".

In April 1921, Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, delivered a very interesting lecture on Javanese Theatre. The speaker dwelt on the influence of Indian art and religion that he had noticed in many countries of the East. His description of the shadow theatre of Java was very interesting and he noted the representations being taken from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. It was evident from Coomaraswamy's lecture that the art and culture of Asia had drawn its origin from the art and culture of India.65

In February 1926, Reverend Dr. J. N. Farquhar, Chief Secretary of the Y. M. C. A. delivered an interesting lecture on

---

64. The Statesman, January 12, 1937 reported, "Enakshi Rama Rau of Madras gave a delightful interpretation of classical and folk dancing"  
65. The Statesman, April 24, 1921
'The Heritage of India'. In June 1930, an illustrated talk on Mughal painting (in two parts) was delivered by Abanindranath Tagore in the studio of the Indian Society of Oriental Art.66

In Much 1932, Guru Saday Dutt delivered an illustrated talk on Bengal's folk art and its characteristics. He particularly dwelt on the folk art of the Birbhum district of Bengal and tried to make the assembled audience aware of the country's popular art. The Liberty, March 23, 1932 noted that Mr. Guru Saday Dutt "....... has taken upon himself a good work and he gives an impetus to the neo-Bengal School of Art ....."

In 1936 the Indian Society of Oriental Art arranged a series of lectures on varied topics related to art, Oriental history, literature by eminent scholars like Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar, Mr. Percy Brown, Dr. Kalidas Nag, Sm. Indira Devi Chowdhurani, Mr. Humayun Kabir, Mr. Sajani Kanta Das, Mr. O. C. Gangoly, Mr. Mukul De, Dr. Stella Kramrisch and others.67 The first of the lectures was delivered by Mr. Tapan Mohan Chatterjee who dwelt on the merits of Vaishnava Literature.

In August 1936, Dr. James Cousins delivered a lecture on the revival of Indian painting under the auspices of the Bengal School. Cousins agreed that though the declared object of the

66. The Statesman, June 10, 1930
67. See Advance, July 5, 1936
School was the restoration of painting in the Indian manner, its members could not escape "from their own personal endowment of imagination, feeling and touch". Cousins pointed out that he was witnessing "the reawakening of a gifted nation to recognition of its artistic past ... ."  

The Indian Society of Oriental Art arranged a lecture on 'Art of Nepal' delivered by Mr. Percy Brown, Secretary and Curator of the Victoria Memorial Hall. Mr. Brown gave an illuminating lecture on the subject with a number of photographs showing the importance of art in the lives of the people of Nepal.

In December 1936, a talk on Japanese art was delivered by Dr. Johan Van Manen in the hall of the Indian Society of Oriental Art.

The periodic lectures arranged by the Indian Society of Oriental Art created a deep impression upon the public and furthered the cause of Indian and Oriental art within the framework of colonial domination.

The Indian Society of Oriental Art also attempted to reform public taste by the publication of an art journal 'Rupam'.

68. See Amrita Bazar Patrika, August 17, 1936
70. See Amrita Bazar Patrika, August 18, 1936
which pioneered a trend in Orientalist research. 'Rupam', first published in January 1920 and edited by the noted artist and art critic O. C. Gangoly, tried to reaffirm the strength and prestige of Oriental art, chiefly Indian, serving as a channel through which hopes and aspirations of the upholders of Oriental art and of the Great Art Tradition of the country, tried to find expression. The journal proved to be an excellent publication with beautifully executed illustrations, bearing on its title page an explanatory note in the following words:

The object of the journal is to represent the traditions of India as expressed through art and to expound the concepts which underlie its form.71

The Advance, December 29, 1934, noted:

Another definite step taken by the Society towards diffusing the knowledge of art was the publication of the quarterly art journal 'Rupam'.

'Rupam' significantly aided in the development of a new language of art journalism. One of the noted art critics of the time, Akshay Kumar Maitreya, while analysing the aesthetic qualities of Abanindranath and his school agreed that the new

71. O. C. Gangoly Ed. 'Rupam' No. 1, January 1920
school of painting could not be accepted as genuinely Indian. Akshay Maitreya located the greatest defect of the new school of painting led by Abanindranath in its antipathy to the Shilpa Shastras.\textsuperscript{72} He also criticized the school for its lack of historicity. In an essay entitled 'Bharat Chitra – Charcha',\textsuperscript{73} Akshay Maitreya forcefully agreed that the aesthetic ideas of Abanindranath and his school were opposed to Indian tradition and characterized by the presence of alien influences.

Art journalism was still in a rudimentary stage in the country. Hitherto the study of Indian Art had been represented by a quarterly published from England under the name of the 'Journal of Indian Art and Industry' and by a meagre attempt made in Madras under the name of 'A Magazine of Indian Art'.\textsuperscript{74} But they failed to arouse public interest and ceased publication. However, the growing interest in Indian Art and the surprising discovery of its many varied phases required space. Besides,

…… the claims of Indian Art – and the rich and valuable aesthetics and spiritual assets that it represents – are much too great and the demand for the preservation of its interests has

\textsuperscript{72} See Akshay Kumar Maitreya, Bharatshilper Katha (Calcutta, 1982), pp.10-14
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid
\textsuperscript{74} See ‘Ourselves’ in Rupam No. 4 (October, 1920) pp.29-30
been too much clamouring during recent years.....75

It was in this context that 'Rupam' came forward in its defence of Oriental art, chiefly Indian.

Hence Rupam was born under new auspices and new conditions and it was destined to chalk out a career of its own. Rupam was to pick up and study the older traditions of the country in relation to its history. Yet it was also to estimate the tendencies and inclinations of modern movements in art. Both the past and the present achievements in Indian and Oriental Art was to be studied by Rupam in its attempts at upholding the cause of Indian art and the artists in their quest for an identity.

In the successive volumes of Rupam the rich tradition of Oriental art was held out by eminent art historians and scholars in enlightening articles accompanied by magnificent reproductions of illustrations. In an essay entitled "The Continuity of Pictorial Tradition in the Art of India", E. Vredenburg drew attention to the flourishing condition of Indian pictorial art from the 8th or 9th century till the end of the Middle Ages, establishing the continued survival of the Ajanta tradition.76 The author looked upon Mughal art as representing

75. Op.Cit
76. See Rupam No. 1, January, 1920, p.9
the continuation of an 'indigenous Indian tradition'.

In another article entitled 'Problems of Indian Art' by William Cohn it was pointed out "... Indian Art may be considered to be a united organism ... the development of Indian Art is sufficiently rich and replete with life and vitality."

In its successive volumes also Rupam upheld the traditional arts of the country. The richness of the Kangra School was brought out by M. N. Sett in 'A Miniature From Kangra' dealing with one of the most absorbing topics of the Kangra school of painting – the Krishna Lila. The essays on Rajput Painting by Dr. Goetz and Dr. Coomaraswamy published in Rupam, Numbers 15 and 16, aroused great enthusiasm in this traditional art style. In this respect a review by Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee of 'Masterpieces of Rajput Painting' and 'Relation Between Rajput and Moghul Painting: A New Document' by Lawrence Binyon, published in Rupam No. 29, January 1927, deserve attention. 'The Basholi School of Rajput Painting' by Ajit Ghose in Rupam No. 37, January 1929 also proved to be an important document on this traditional art form of India.

77. William Cohn, 'Problems of Indian Art', Rupam, No. 3, July 1920
78. M. N. Sett, 'A Miniature From Kangra', Rupam No. 3, July 1920
79. See 'Dr. Goetz on Rajput Painting' and 'Notes on Rajput Painting' by Coomaraswamy, Rupam Number 15 - 16, July - December, 1923
Samarendra Nath Gupta's essay on 'The Sikh School of Painting', 80 Asit Kumar Haldar's 'The Paintings of the Bagh Caves' 81 were indepth studies of the rich art heritage of the country by artists in search of an identity in a colonial world and contributed significantly to the growth of awareness among the public of the same. The Mughal School also attracted the attention of 'Rupam' as is evident from 'A Historical Miniature of the Jahangir School'. 82 These articles were accompanied by magnificent reproductions of paintings in the traditional style.

Of special mention is an article on the old Bengali 'patas' entitled 'Old Bengal Paintings' by Ajit Ghose. In this article the author pointed out, ".....the paintings and drawings which formed the traditional art of the country - are now forgotten. Yet this art was .... a living force in the cultural life of the peoples during the course of many centuries".

'Rupam' also attempted to uphold the art of the Bengal School. It published an article by James H. Cousins who noted, ".....I believe the modern Bengal painters have lifted the art of India to a level higher than that of Ajanta". 83 In another article Andree Karpeles noted:

80. See Rupam, No. 11, July 1922
81. See Rupam, No. 8, October 1921
82. See Rupam, No. 4, October 1920
83. James H. Cousins, 'The Four Degrees of Art', 'Rupam' No. 5, January 1921, p.11
It will be the glory of that school of .... having contributed greatly to the Renaissance of India and of belying the prediction of Maurice Maindron who stated ..... "This art will never be resuscitated".84

The Frontispiece of 'Rupam' No. 5, January 1921 was contributed by the renowned artist and art critic O. C. Gangoly - "A New Contribution to Shaivite Art" analysing Nandalal Bose's work on Shiva. The author noted thus:

In Bose's supremely introspective image of Shiva, all the essence and spirituality of the theme have been incarnated ..... He has, indeed given us a vivid and intimate interpretation in the rich spirit of the best traditions of the theme, fit to take its place with the old masterpieces of Shaivite Art.

'In the Temple of Mahakala' by Abanindranath Tagore,85 the artist set forth to study the value and significance of the traditions of Indian art and to use them for the revelation of the true Indian spirit. In bringing out the spirit and flavour of Indianness he depended on his visions and intuitions.

84. Andree Karpeles, 'The Calcutta School of Painting', 'Rupam', January - June 1923, Nos. 13 and 14, p.3
85. See 'Rupam', No. 5, January 1921
In 'On Some Recent Illustrations of Meghadutam', 'Rupam' noted that the clear grasp of the psychology of the poem by the artists – Abanindranath Tagore, Sailendra Nath Dey – added many qualities to their versions in colour and form.

In addition to publishing highly enlightening articles on art of the Bengal School, 'Rupam' also published reproductions of the specimens of the School to create a better public appreciation of it.

'Rupam' thus attempted to uphold the pictorial tradition of India. It also attempted to bring into focus the rich craftsmanship and the sculptural and architectural heritage of the country. The first issue of 'Rupam' contained an analysis of a panel from Arjuna's Ratha, Mamallapuram:

......... the magnificent productions of the epochs of the Pallavas carry down the history of Indian sculpture in an unbroken continuity from its earliest days ....

'A Brass Statuette from Mathura' published in 'Rupam' No. 2, April, 1920 noted "... the wide extension and the long continuity of the Mathura School of Sculpture...." 'A Brass

86. See 'Rupam', No. 9, January 1922
87. See 'A Panel from Arjuna's Ratha, Mamallapuram' in 'Rupam' No. 1, January 1920, p.1
Lamp from Conjeeveram' by O. C. Gangoly, published in 'Rupam' No. 4, October 1920, highlighted the richness and variety in the designs of temple lamps of South India. An analysis of 'A Statuette of a Shaiva Devotee' constituted the frontispiece of Rupam No. 7, July 1921. Other articles upholding the country's rich sculptural tradition, were 'A Stone Image of the Buddha in the Sarnath Museum' by Nandalal Bose (Rupam No. 24, October 1924), 'A Bronze Buddha from the Birmingham Museum' by Arun Sen (Rupam' No. 25, January 1925), 'A Panel of Gangadhara from Mahavalipuram' by O. C. Gangoly (Rupam' No. 26, April 1926),'A Stone Image of Avalokiteswara in the Nalanda Museum' by O. C. Gangoly (Rupam' No. 30, April 1927) was an excellent study of a typical sculpture of the Pala period. 'A Collection of Indian Brasses and Bronzes' by O. C. Gangoly (Rupam' No. 31, July 1927), 'Some Old Indian Ivories' by Ajit Ghosh (Rupam' No. 32, October 1927), 'Some Images of the Brahma of the Chola Period' by O. C. Gangoly and 'Wood Sculpture from Gujerat' by B. N. Treasurywala (Rupam' Nos. 35 - 36, July - October, 1928) were praiseworthy attempts to prove India's rich art heritage.

The legacy that Indian architecture has left to posterity is indeed rich and of extraordinary value and magnificence and

88. ".. no doubt that this branch of craftsmanship was regarded as one of the most important parts of the works of metal workers", O.C. Gangoly noted.
89. The Frontispiece was reproduced from a photograph specially taken for 'Rupam' in 1920.
the 'Rupam' published articles, accompanied by excellent photographs highlighting the magnificent architectural heritage of the country. 'Notes on the History of the Shikhara Temple' by Gurudas Sarkar (Rupam, April 1922), 'Indian Columns' by P. K. Acharya (Rupam, July 1922), 'The Baranagar Temples in Murshidabad' by Gurudas Sarkar (Rupam, July - December, 1924), 'Ancient and Medieval Architecture of Kashmir' by Ram Chandra Kar (Rupam, October 1924), 'A Few Makara Toranas from South India' by A. S. Ramanatha Ayyar (Rupam, April 1926) drew attention to the country's splendid architectural traditions. Rupam thus performed a creditable function in drawing public attention to the spiritual and aesthetic claims of Indian civilization.

Not only the country's rich art heritage, but the vitally rich art traditions of the other Asian countries were also upheld by Rupam in its attempts to challenge the cultural supremacy so long claimed by the Occident. Thus Rupam published essays and articles by eminent artists and art historians who sought to make the readers aware of the richness of the Oriental art forms. The articles were accompanied by splendid photographs and illustrations which succeeded in conveying the magnificence of the Oriental art heritage.

Rupam, April 1920 published an article 'A Copper Figure from Nepal' by the eminent artist and art critic O. C. Gangoly
who analysed the development of a rich school of Nepalese sculpture. The Frontispiece entitled 'A Buddhist Image From Burma' referred to the development of Burmese sculpture principally represented in wood. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's 'A Nepalese Tara' (Rupam, April 1921), O. C. Gangoly's 'An Image of Ardhanarishwara from Nepal (Rupam, July - December 1924), 'Tibetan Art' by Nicholas Roerich (Rupam, January 1924), 'On Some Nepalese Incense Burners (Rupam, July 1921), 'A Tibeto-Nepalese Image of Maitreya' (Frontispiece, Rupam, July 1922) were sincere attempts at upholding of the Asiatic art forms. Infact Rupam went as far as to declare, "The day is not far when Asiatic art in its different varieties will have gained a complete victory in the West".

Rupam upheld a pan-Asian Oriental art tradition emphasizing the cultural relationships of areas once united by the closest ties. The influence of Indian culture and civilization on other centres of culture has been the subject of special study undertaken by Rupam. In 'Indian Influence on Far Eastern Art', H. F. E. Visser noted, "Indian influence on Far Eastern art concerns only one category of that art namely Buddhist art in China, Japan and Corea". The article 'A Buddhist Image from Burma' noted, "The multiplication of images of the Buddha very

90. See Rupam, April 1920
91. H. F. E. Visser, "Asiatic Art : Its Nomenclature and Present Appreciation in Western Countries", Rupam, October 1920, p.8
92. See Rupam, July - December 1923
soon became the principal phase in all forms of Buddhist religion in and outside India". In Problems of Indian Art, William Cohn pointed out that Indian art had "..... left its fingermarks on the Chinese Buddhist art .... and .... Japanese art ....". In a series of articles - 'A Chinese Bodhisattva in the British Museum' by Lawrence Binyon (Rupam, October 1921), 'A Fragment of Chinese Buddhist Sculpture' (Rupam, January - April 1928) and 'A So-called Chinese Image of Avalokiteswara (Rupam, January 1927) both by O. C. Gangoly, 'A Chinese Bodhisattva in Berlin' by Dr. Max Osborne (Rupam, July - December 1923), 'Buddhist Paintings from Chinese Turkestan' by Agastya (Rupam, October 1922) attempted to analyse the influence of Buddhism on Far Eastern art. An interesting article was 'Indo - Japanese Painting', published in Rupam, April 1922. It noted, "Ever since the conversion of Japan into Buddhism .... Japan has wistfully looked forward to India for cultural inspiration ...... since the days of the artistic activity of the Nara temples, the Japanese have been building a new and indigenous style on the basis of the traditions of Indian Buddhist painting". The article was all the more impressive, being accompanied by illustrations - 'Saraswati' by Shunso Hisida, 'Rasalila' by Taikan, 'The Temptation of the Buddha' by Katsuta reflecting the fusion

93. See Rupam, April 1920
94. See Rupam, July 1920
of Indian and Japanese styles.

Rupam also attempted to draw attention to the impact of Indian art on that of Indo-China. The article 'India and the Art of Indo-China'\(^\text{95}\) noted:

At one time the whole peninsula of Indo-China with the exception of Tonkin adhered to the culture of India.... The art of Cambodia reveals profound Hindu influence ....... A large number of Khmer works of art dating from the ninth and tenth centuries recall the monumental styles of the Gupta and Pallava periods ....... At the time of its political supremacy Champa represented Hindu culture on the Pacific coast.

In 'Indian Art in Siam', E. A. Voretzsch noted, "One finds indeed in Siamese Art a beautiful concord with Asokan age and interesting connections with the Greaco Buddhist art".\(^\text{96}\)

Rupam also drew attention to the connection between the art of India and Java. 'Garuda, The Career of Vishnu: In Bengal and Java' by Akshay Kumar Maitreya studies the Garuda of Brahmanic iconography and notes a similarity in the art of

---

95. M. Victor Goloubew, 'India and the Art of Indo-China', Rupam, January - June, 1923
96. See Rupam, July 1920
Bengal and of Java - "The art aspiration in both discloses a fundamental similarity". The Frontispiece in Rupam, January 1920, entitled 'A Note on Kirtimukha' noted a similarity in all Asiatic art forms:

It is possible that this form as an inevitable component in decorative designs of religious and ritual accessories was a persistent and ever present element in all forms of Asiatic art.

It further noted, "this ornament has practically dominated the designs of Indo-Javanese art for several centuries".

Other articles published by the Rupam emphasizing the close cultural relationship between Indian and Java were 'A Hypothesis As to the Origin of Indo-Javanese Art' by Dr. F. D. K. Bosch (Rupam, January 1924), 'The Features of Indo-Javanese Images' by Martha A. Muusses (Rupam, April 1924) and 'Some Ramayana Reliefs from Prambanan, Java' by Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (Rupam, January - April, 1928). In 'Notes on the Javanese Theatre' (Rupam, July 1921), Ananda Coomaraswamy undertakes a comparative survey of the forms of theatre surviving in India, Indonesia and the Far East noting a similarity in the theatre forms of the areas concerned.

97. See Rupam, January 1920
Rupam also undertook a special study of the art of Nepal. In 'A Nepalese Tara', Ananda Coomaraswamy noted that Nepalese painting "...... is strongly reminiscent of Ajanta and closely related to the contemporary painting of Bengal". The article further noted:

In sculpture it is rather the art of the Gupta period than that of Ellora that we recognize ..... In the older Nepalese figures, the Indian character is altogether predominant.98

Other significant articles on the great art heritage of the Orient published by the Rupam were 'The Genesis of Shikhara' by N. C. Mehta (Rupam, January - June 1923)99 and "Some General Observations on the Temples of Angkor" by H. Marchal (Rupam, October 1922)

Thus Rupam, while affirming the strength and prestige of Indian art, upheld a pan-Asian Oriental art tradition.

It was in Rupam that the noted art critic Benoy Kumar Sarkar opened a discourse going as far as to refer to a universal language of art in his essay 'The Aesthetics of Young India'.100

---

98. Ananda Coomaraswamy, 'A Nepalese Tara', Rupam, April 1921
100. See 'Rupam', January 1922
Challenging the current methodology of art appreciation, he argued:

Pursuing the current logic of art appreciation, we should have to dictate that Indians must by all means avoid the contact of Lavoisier and his disciples, of Humboldt, Pasteur, Agassiz, Maxwell and Einstein, because in order to be true to Hindu 'heritage' it is necessary to boycott everything that has appeared in the world......

However, Benoy Sarkar noted:

Should we still have to suspect a difference in life's attitudes between the East and the West as exhibited in art structures .... Such differences have never existed in the mentality of which history furnishes the objective evidence.

For young India to-day to appreciate and assimilate the new achievements of mankind in aesthetics as in the utilitarian sciences and arts is not tantamount to inviting an alleged denationalization. That is on the contrary, one of the chief means of acquiring strength in
order that Indians may push forward the
creative urge of life and contribute to the
expansion of the human spirit.

In 'The Aesthetics of Young India : Rejoinder'\textsuperscript{101} 'Agastya'
puts forth his arguments. He agrees with Benoy Kumar Sarkar
that in the development of the heritage the lessons from the
West are destined to play an inevitable part. But, he argues :

.....before the lessons can be imported the
racial and the national heritage have to be
claimed, possessed, appropriated and used as
our own ....... if East is to profit by her
intercourse with the West ..... she must recover
her own self before she is fit to enrich and
develop herself by exchanging thoughts with her
Western mate.

Benoy Kumar Sarkar futher noted :

Before there can be an exchange of ideals
of Eastern and Western art each must stand on
its own pedestal and in complete possession of
its own spiritual and technical heritage.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{101} Op.Cit.
\textsuperscript{102} Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Op.Cit
Such observations made in the 'Rupam' played a crucial role in the development of Indian art criticism and in arousing the Indian's pride in the artistic heritage of his own country.

The influence of the Indian Society of Oriental Art spread far and wide with a number of Abanindranath's disciples going on to become Principals of art colleges in different parts of the country. Asit Kumar Haldar in Lucknow, Devi Prosad Roy Chowdhury in Madras, Sailendra Nath De in Jaipur, Samarendranath Gupta in Lahore continued their search for an identity in the realm of Oriental art.

The multifarious activities of the Indian Society of Oriental Art and its artists during the period 1907–1947 thus played a pivotal role in promoting the cause of Oriental Art. The Society succeeded in making the public acquainted with the rich art heritage of their own country as well as of the other Asian countries, thus moulding public taste. This in turn created an awareness of 'self' among the Indians which proved to be crucial in their struggle against colonial subjugation.