Introduction
Symbolism is a form of expression used by man to express his ideas. It is through symbols that one expresses. The world 'symbol' means a sign and symbols are reality contained within the nature of things.

"Man as a self-conscious individual always created a language of symbols to express his identity. In pursuance of his inner need he had to invent not only conceptual symbols like God but a fantastic range of other plastic symbols archetypal, temporary and even personal (Paritosh).

The first recorded attempt of man to express himself was pictorial, images scratched or painted on the surface of the rock or on the walls and ceiling of the caves. This was the start of primitive art as the time progressed the structure of art slowly modified and widen. At that time men was facing different problems like food, shelter drastic climatic changes, casualty and influential events etc. At that time language was not invented so communication was one
of the biggest problem so the prehistoric art was considered as

"Prehistoric art must be understood as a response to valid needs. The symbols which were evolved for the economic or utilitarian purpose should be acquired in the process of their evolution" (Herbert).

Art for art sake hardly existed at that time. The structure of Indian traditional art was woven with in religion, myths, rituals, symbols and superstitions.

Regarding these early cave drawing there always existed a controversy of attitude among the scholars and anthropologist and sociologist. Some found it totally utilitarian others declared it purely aesthetic while others found it magical or religious. What may be the real purpose of these art forms but "Primitive art is full of decorative, geometrical designs and patterns that cannot be understood without reference to the symbolic meaning" (Mukerjee).

The sign came into existence to establish synchronicity, in the desire to make one event
correspond to another.

Paintings of hunting scenes showing men with hows, arrows, spears and staves, charging at bison, boars and other wild animals are found in the earliest known caves of Mirzapur, Bhimbetka and Hoshangabad. These paintings are strongly akin to the prehistoric cave paintings of Spain. Our knowledge however, of this earliest art remained embryonic. The art of Indus valley is more familiar. Here what we find for the first time is the clear concept of plastic art. This was the turning point in Indian art and with it began the Indian sculptures.

Art in Indus valley, therefore, was conceived on a large scale in which it could belong to the life of the people. The host of terracotta figurines symbolic of malriarchal culture with their freshness of primeval joy, are representative of a folk tradition and link most of the female figures centred around fertility.

The history of Indian culture may have started with the remarkable discoveries made at Mohanjodaro
near Larkhana in lower Sindh, in 1922, known by the name of Indus valley civilization. There are two main centres Harappa in North and Mohanjodaro in South. The excavation at Mohanjodaro have brought to light extensive city with well developed and planned society which is shown by its well planned several storied houses, wide streets, elaborate drainage system. The people of Indus valley were highly artistic. The most characteristic findings were a large number of seals or amulets of steatite with a pictographic writing on them. Pottery fine and varied in type ornamented with symbolic figures of birds animals and trees, miniature sculptures in marble, alabaster, terracotta, proclain and bronze were found. The Indus folks were skilled metal workers as shown by the recovery of metal objects like knives, spears and sword and a socketed bronze axe head. What brought about the fall of Indus valley civilization is still unknown. But what is left behind is a model of highly developed society with beautiful artistic culture.
In Iqbal Singh words "In the subtle comprehension of the dynamic expression which forms as it were an invisible background to her whole frame, plastic representation achieves a quality of perfection hardly surpassed even by the South Indian bronze".

In the process of searching the traces of symbols in our past and present, the next stage is of coins. The symbols on coins are of great significance. Ancient India has its own currency system which consists of the punch marked, the cast coins and the die struck coins.

The earliest coins are small flat pieces of silver either square or round found all over India and known as punch marked. According to cribb coins bear only punched symbols and no dates or names of datable rulers, nor any definite evidence regarding the specific date when they were first issued, and hence the date of their introduction in India is still a debatable manner."
The punch marked coins were gradually replaced by cast and diestruck coins. The earliest cast coins could be ascribed to the 5th century B.C. The symbols on the punch marked and the cast coins are numerous. These coins are the authoritative records of the symbolism religious, mythological and astronomical current throughout India for many centuries.

The symbols found on the punch marked coins are classified into different groups like human figures, Animal figures, Trees branches or fruits, implements arm, symbols related with planet, sun or siva worship, miscellaneous and unknown symbols and geometrical figures.

India, Greece and China are the three civilizations which contributed in the origin and development of coins. In Commaraswamy view the symbols and devices appearing on these indigenous coins amount to explicit iconography.

"Iconography is nothing but the interpretative aspect of the religious art of a country which manifest
in diverse ways" (Banerjea).

Invention of writing helped in systematize the description of spoken language. The early inscribed objects have been found at various archaeological sites and such inscriptions marked the beginning of the historic age. It was in the historic era that man began to depict single words. The invention of the alphabet took about one and a half millennium after the invention of writing. Language and writing are considered as the prime means of cultural expression. Ancient inscriptions and manuscripts are historical documents.

Invention of language helped us in communications and brought everyone close. India is such a vast country and the diversity of religion like Hindu, Buddh, Jain, Sikh and Muslims provided a rich symbolic pattern of life.

Except Hinduism, Buddhism and its impact on Indian art is tremendous. The various system of philosophy affected the life and work of the people
and gave them ethical basis. "Buddhism stimulated the expression of art to the height of achievement and glory that has seldom been surpassed in all its long story" (Philippe).

The numerous form of Buddhist symbolism in different part of India are Bharhut Sanchi, Sarnath, Bodhgaya, Mathura, Karla, Amravati, Jogayyapeta, Nagarjunikanda and Ajanta. Ashoka the Great Mauryan ruler declared Buddhism as a state religion. The art of Bharhut depicted the Jataka tales. The example of symbolism at Bharhut, Sanchi is that the figure of Buddha was never portrayed, it is only through symbol that his holy presence indicated.

The important feature of Mathura school was the creation of an iconography which evolved through the actual portrayal of Buddha and his saints.

One of the most noticeable feature of Buddhist art is the absence of representation of Buddha in human form. It was who himself decreed against his portrayal and for his anxious disciple the Buddha himself
declared that the Bodhi tree could represent him in his lifetime and thereafter, but Bodhi tree was not the only exclusive symbol. He has 32 major signs and 80 minor signs. His nativity and presence were indicated by footprints and lotus symbol.

The bright history of Indian painting started from the wall paintings of Ajanta. These paintings represent various aspects of the life of Buddha, the Jataka stories of his previous lives, the Buddhasatvas and a rich variety of animals, floral, geometrical and other motifs.

The art of Ajanta is the art of line. The art has shown the high standard artistic and technical skill of the artists. Elephants, lotuses, creepers have been painted in a symbolic way.

Contemporary to Ajanta caves are Bagh caves. They have resemblance with Ajanta in the depiction of women. Nature was beautifully depicted, animal represented are horses and elephants whereas a variety of birds were also seen in Bagh caves. One after the
other the discoveries of these caves brought to light an extensive traditional cultural heritage. Sittanvasal caves are mainly related with Jainism. In Ellora cave temples the paintings and sculptures have represented three Indian cultures viz. Buddhism, Jain and Hindu.

The next symbolic representation was traced in the Rajput or Pahari paintings there are symbolic manifestation of different ragas and ragini's, different seasons were depicted symbolically example baramasa and Ragamala. Others symbolic miniatures paintings were Nayak Nayika bhed. In these paintings hero is depicted as Krishna and heroine as Radha. We also find symbolic representation of birds like more and chakor priya. The inspiration of Pahari and Rajasthani school of paintings is found in the great Vaishnava renaissance of the 12th century A.D. The Vishnu cult of Bhakti has its seeds in the Bhagvata Gita which must be older than the 1st century A.D. and the inspirational expression of this Vaishnu cult was portrayed in the 18 & 19 centuries by the Rajput and Rajasthani artists.
There are some universal symbols, some auspicious symbols which are important and sacred by almost all religions like the symbol of chakra (wheel).

**Chakra:** Chakra is considered as one of the most popular symbols of Ancient Indian Art and tradition. The concept of chakra is employed by every system of Indian religion and philosophy whether it is Hinduism or Buddhism, Jainism or Tantra, Yoga or Samkhya.

In Vaishnavism, it is 'Sudarshan chakra" while in Buddhism and Jainism it is 'Dharma chakra' or wheel of law. The earliest representation of chakra is found on objects of Indus valley sites, on rock paintings on potteries of neolithic chalcolithic and megalithic and on seals and coins and stupas. The example of chakra's illustration is in the art of Sanchi, Bharhut, Amravati, Mathura and Taxila.

**Svastika:** Auspicious and sacred symbols of mankind. The svastika symbol has been interpreted variously. It was equally known to Brahmans, Buddhists and Jain.
Svastika has some mystic connotation. It is a sacred symbol of benediction, of good fortune and good luck, of blessing for long life.

Like chakra representation of Svastika is also found on rock shelters, Harappa seals, ancient potteries, seals and sealings punch marked coins, Tribal and local coins, Buddhist monuments.

**Srivatsa:** Another important and auspicious symbol of Indian art is Srivatsa. It was adopted by almost all principal creeds like Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. Srivatsa is described as a mark of Siva trident. This symbol is frequently represented on Indian temples, stupas, arched gateway sculptures, terracotta seals and on palms and soles of the Tirthankara Buddha figures.

"The most important artistic link between past and present existed in a number of decorative motifs, attributes and symbols motifs which regularly recur and remained unchanged throughout, although the message they carry may vary from epoch to epoch" (Havell).

Folk art has played a very important role in the
development of art or we can say that both have
developed side by side. The art has developed in
courts while folk art developed in villages and mostly
the folk artists are women. Its origin goes back to the
art of primitive society. The folk artists draw decorative
motifs, attributes and symbols motifs. The images of
Hindu deities and ritual objects, geometrical designs
including circle, triangles, rectangles birds and animals
representation. The material used by the folk artists is
easily available and easily destroyed. The usefulness of
these object expires once they have served their ritual
and religious purpose examples, are sculptures and
paintings produced for public festivals.

On different religious and ritual occasions folk
artists decorate their houses, courtyard walls and
entrance doors and the places of worship with beautiful
patterns of colours. They used rice, flour, turmeric
white chalk for these decorations. Folk art is full of
religious sentiments. Continuity in folk art is achieved
solely by means of constant repetition and
reproduction. "The continuity of this form of art has persisted through generations, passing from mother to daughter. In the amateur production of the Indian housewife today we see a reflection of the earliest type of India's prehistoric folk art" (Heinz).

As the folk artists celebrate each occasion and festival, they also perform puja on each occasion to ward off the evil effects, they also believe in auspicious and inauspicious. Superstition is a traditional belief that a certain event can foretell an apparently unrelated event. For example some people believe that rabbits foot will bring good luck for them. Others believe that if a cat crosses their path it brings bad luck for them. In each case whether it is the movement of can cat or the footprint of rabbit both as traditional connection.

These superstitions have existed in every society. The different activities are involved in superstitions are eating, sleeping, working, getting married having a baby, becoming ill and dying and many more. Uncertainly
and danger brought many superstitions concern animals, clothing, lake, mountain names, numbers, the planets and stars, the weather and different parts of the body.

Many superstitions deal with important events in a person's life, such as birth, marriage, pregnancy etc. such superstitions ensure that a person safely passes of from one stage of life to the next. For example a person born on Sunday will always have good luck.

Some superstitions involved in them magic. For example after a person dies off, the doors and windows of the room should be opened so the spirit can leave. Number 13 & 13th day of the month both are associated with bad luck.

All these believes and ritual practices have their roots in religion. Take the example of the 'Tantras', the sect of Durga is now recognized as the Sakti sect. In the literature of the Saktas we find a long list of Tantras. The content of Tantras will be divided into four classes.

(1) Theology (2) Yoga (3) Construction of temples
and images (4) Religious practices. The Sakta system is fundamentally an unlimited array of magic rites drawn from the practice of the most ignorant and superstitious classes.

The mystic side of the Yoga system play an important part in Saktism. There are two important points. The first is dependent of the analysis of the sacred syllable Om, Nada, Bindu and Bija are momenta in creation, the sakti is Sabda, sound the eternal world. The next is in the human system, there are numerous minute channels or threads of occult forces known as Nadi. The most important among them are Sushumna, that is the spinal cord which is connected with these channels. There are six great centres, or circles (Chakra) one above the other and each of these is described as a lotus. The lowest and most important is Muladhara contains Brahman in the form of a linga and the Devi lies asleep coiled around the linga like a serpent. In this posture she is called the kundaline sakti or the coiled one and by sakti yoga she may be
awakened.

Different Tantric symbols are used by artists in their works like the Pursha and Prakriti or Siva and Sakti, the concept of bindu, chakra and triangle.

We also view symbolism as endowing the Indian images with many hands. The multiple heads and arms were used as a symbols to suggest the combination of the potentialities of different Gods in one form.

"The attributes and the vahanas of different Indian deities virtually give symbolic impact of their function or activity" (Savita).

The super natural attributes of Gods and Goddesses are also represented by the various weapons implements for material objects held in the hands such as wheel trident, conch, club, flame, lotus, serpent skull, etc. In Indian religious painting every colour used has a special symbolic meaning.

For example white in Buddhist as well as in Hindu symbolism, signifies heavenly purity and bless white is the colour symbol of water. Blue is the
symbolic colour of Vishnu the preserver and his incarnations Krishna and Rama. Red is the colour of the sun, of Brahma the creator and also of solar system.

And the combination red, white and blue gives the distinctive colours of the ascetics robe, and is the token of his mission, it was adopted by Buddha's followers as the symbol of humanity.

Images of Buddha are painted golden yellow. Yellow is also the symbol of earth. Green colour represent the animal kingdom. Black colour is the symbol of space. In Hindu sastras it represents the formless, conditionless state which existed before creation and is personified by Kali, the mother of universe and the great destroyer.

"As the lightening is born from the cloud, so Brahma and all other Gods take birth from Kali and will disappear in Kali" (Havell).

After Mughal and Pahari school of painting the
process of art suddenly got slower. There was no prominent school of art and no prominent activity of art was noticed in the country. We called it the dark period of Indian art but independence gave a considerable impetus to Indian art.

The climate for art changed after 1947 and this change is attributed to the political, economic and social stability of the country. The first group of artists who's work was noticed after independence were B.C. Sanyal, Kanwal Krishna, Amarnath and Satish Gujral. These artists were dispersed in different part of the country making their own groups on the basis of their ideology.

Then came the renaissance in Bengal with the combined efforts of Havell and Abindra Nath joined by Rabindra Nath Chughtai, Gaganendranath, Nandalal Bose and Amrita Sher Gil. The outcome of this movement is art colleges that were started at Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Delhi and Baroda.
The prominent group of artists in the 1940s and 50s, representing the era from the Bengal school to modern international art, are H.H. Hebbar, Sailor Mookerjee, B.C. Sanyal, S. Chand, or N.S. Bendre.

Inspired by the nonobjective art of the West, a large number of painters moved from figuratives to different kinds of abstractions. The rejection of figure was due to the awareness of world art and the desire for unlimited freedom. Each artist explored its own possibilities of texture. "A number of artists who first started as figurative painters by a process of elimination or elaboration later established themselves as abstract painters are Ram Kumar, Krishan Khanna, Biren De, K.G. Subramaniam, and M.F. Hussain" (Jaya).

The younger generation of artists is now producing interesting work, the variety is more than in the older generation. But what they are painting is highly individualistic art.
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