



LEADING INDIAN ABSTRACT PAINTER

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Abstract

Art is a powerful medium of human civilization. Every painting or visual scene contains echoes of its time, society and culture. This research essay analyses a selected painting to interpret its colors, composition and the emotions it expresses, with the aim of understanding its social and cultural contexts. The essay does not remain limited to the painting's external appearance; through it, the study seeks to reveal prevailing ideas, feelings and changes in society. Artists and writers act as mirrors of society, and their works reflect the many facets of life seen in that mirror. Through an author's works we learn about their personality, thinking, sensitivity and worldview. A close study of a creator's works to analyses the ideas, emotions, style and aesthetic values contained within is called a Rachana Chitra (creative portrait). Through a Rachana Chitra we can not only appreciate an artist's creative capacity but also assess the social, cultural and emotional conditions of the era in which those works were produced. Thus, a Rachana Chitra becomes a living document of an artist's oeuvre, revealing their literary journey, sensitivity and perspective towards society.

Definition of a Rachana Chitra Research Essay:

1. A Rachana Chitra essay explores hidden meanings, emotions, themes or social contexts within a painting or visual scene.
2. It combines creativity and scholarship: the aim is to present a fresh line of thought inspired by the painting. Careful observation of subject matter, color, form and the activities of figures is essential.
3. The essay locates the painting within its social, cultural or creative contexts and analyses the emotions conveyed for example, noting specific actions or demeanor of figures in the work.
4. Where possible, the essay should adopt a research perspective and identify factual or historical references.

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5. The essay must be presented in coherent, logical and concise language, with ideas expressed clearly.
6. A rachanachitra requires in-depth interpretation of the painting's elements, citation of sources where possible, and a clear presentation of main ideas.
7. It is the artist's duty to present their reflections in a concise form after viewing the painting.

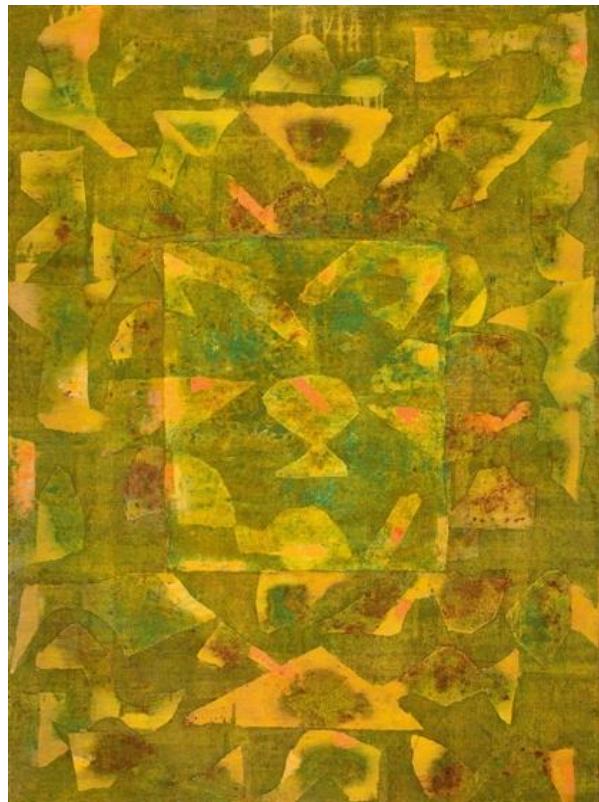
Introduction:

(Leading Indian Abstract Painter) (1924-2001)



Vasudev S. Gaitonde was a major Indian abstract painter, born in Nagpur, Maharashtra. He received a diploma in painting from the Sir J. J. School of Art, Mumbai in 1948. Gaitonde's art made profound use of form and shape, and his works were influenced by Zen philosophy and ancient calligraphic traditions. He did not consider himself an abstract painter; rather, he described his work as non-objective and as a personalized form of pictorial calligraphy. His paintings are notable for their transparency of color, texture and balanced structure, which impart vitality and depth. He adopted a slow and subtle painting process, and consequently produced a limited number of works, yet he is regarded as an important and influential figure in modern Indian art. Gaitonde played a role in the founding of the Progressive Artists' Group in 1947, which encouraged modern forms in Indian art. He was honored with the Padma Shri in 1971. His work received international recognition and is considered a leading example of contemporary Indian abstract painting.

Gaitonde was regarded as one of India's finest and most solitary abstract painters. He was invited to join the Progressive Artists' Group in Mumbai and participated actively in its activities. He exhibited widely in India and abroad. In 1956 he took part in an Indian art exhibition held in Eastern European countries, and in 1959 and 1963 he participated in group shows at the Graham Art Gallery in New York. Gaitonde's abstract works are included in collections at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and in numerous Indian and international collections. In 1957 he won first prize at the Young Asian Artists' Exhibition in Tokyo, and in 1964 he was awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship. In 1971 he received the Padma Shri from the Government of India for creative excellence. Gaitonde made extensive



use of form and shape in his works. His shadow-like and varied paintings present an obscure and indistinct description of the real world, although Gaitonde himself did not care to be labelled an 'abstracts'. Zen philosophy and ancient calligraphic art had a deep influence on him. Within his oeuvre one can observe a subtle depiction of controlled and compressed structure. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Gaitonde preferred a slow and delicate painting process, which resulted in only a few completed works. His minimal use of symbolic elements and base lines gives his paintings the appearance of a flowing river. Gaitonde's works recall Paul Klee and Joan Miró, artists he studied alongside during his college years. His evocative scenes captivated viewers and many were deeply moved by the poignancy of his images; his

understanding and compelling sensibility were boundless. Vasudev S. Gaitonde was undoubtedly one of India's most serious and thought-provoking artists, who established a distinguished presence and influenced the principles of contemporary Indian art. In 1947, together with the internationally renowned Goan painter Francis Newton Souza and other artist friends, he helped found the Progressive Artists' Group, which sought to move away from the colonial classical conservatism of the past and to assert an Indian modernity with international outlook. This movement helped establish the vibrant art environment that exists in India today. Although Gaitonde was associated with this historic group, in a conversation he once told me: "I was apart from it." He was never indifferent to the group, but as an individual this separation was a defining feature of his artistic personality. His non-conformist nature and firm belief in his identity as a painter led him early in his career to distance himself from aspects of his milieu that he considered irrelevant to his artistic identity. Over the years his development was characterized by an increasing inwardness and a deliberate consolidation of that identity. A critic once described him as "a calm-minded person and a painter with full access to imagination," which captures Gaitonde well: an intellectual whose outward demeanor concealed ideas that simmered within.

Ideologically, he never accepted the label of abstract painter and preferred not to be called one. He insisted that there is no such thing as abstract painting; instead, he described his work as non-objective, a personalized pictorial calligraphy and calligraphic invention that refreshes

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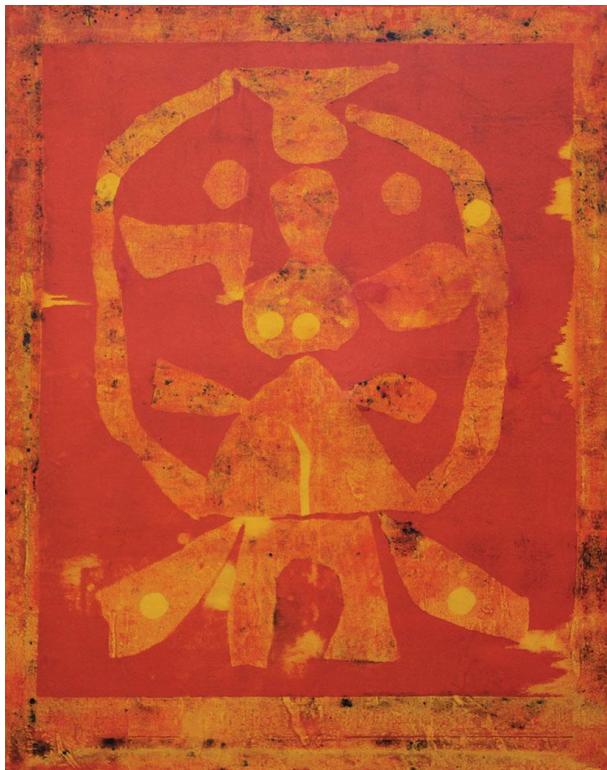
the painted surface with an arresting immediacy. He understood this through the essential encounter involved in the exploration of Zen. The contemplative Zen quality revealed in his speech is an exemplary instance of emotional silence, for silence itself is enduring and meaningful; from this perspective the tendency to identify mysterious primal feelings in a person does not arise. On Gaitonde's canvases, the revelation of intuitive perceptions and the arrangement of highly personalized pictorial calligraphy in various chromatic sequences open a space that the mind must fill. The interplay of colors and structural textures in his paintings are the principal instruments that animate the mysterious "self" of painting; this is sacred yet implicit, never dogmatic. His compositions include animation that functions like a kinetic energy, imparting movement to a skillfully balanced arrangement, because Gaitonde controlled his depictions through the perception of form, which was essential. He planned each structure in color as an integral part of his inner unity of life.

Gaitonde's art begins in intensity and continually moves towards refinement; each moment is philosophically reflective, and nothing could prevent him from seeking the inner places and transient realities that fuel his creative inspiration. His paintings are self-referential; the process is the outcome. In art, a non-objective absorption akin to life itself is firmly present. Gaitonde compels viewers to look at his paintings intently, as they depict a wondrous illusion of form, color and painterly craft. He had the ability to transform the ordinary into a spiritual element. His work displays tremendous talent and skill, giving his oeuvre an inexhaustible depth. To fully affect various media and blend them on canvas, Gaitonde used a roller and a palette knife. His art seems excellent in every element that might otherwise fade into another form. With luminous clusters of light, his abstract paintings generate a hidden intensity. Gaitonde's work scatters a contemplative beauty across vast flat surfaces and delicate layers of color on the canvas. There is a particular quality of light in his paintings that completes them. His work builds up colors and then carefully removes them to achieve the desired effect. V. S. Gaitonde was the first contemporary Indian painter whose work sold for ₹9.2 million at an Osian's auction. Gaitonde died in 2001. He is still regarded as one of India's foremost abstract and spiritual painters.

Characteristics of Gaitonde's Painting Style:

Abstract Art: Gaitonde's work is wholly abstract; his compositions do not present direct depictions of people, objects or scenes. He expressed emotions and spiritual experiences through color, form and line.

Spirituality and Tranquility: His paintings were inspired by meditation and Zen philosophy. They convey deep tranquility, silence and balance. He believed art to be an inward journey.



Wordless Expression: He said, "My paintings are not for talking about; they are for experiencing." His art cannot be bound by words; it must be felt.

Subtle Use of Color: Gaitonde's color palettes were extremely gentle and restrained; he used soft, transparent tones of grey, brown, blue, gold and green.

Layering of Color: Colors were applied in very delicate layers, creating depth and a mysterious luminosity.

Structure and Texture: He built texture on the canvas by applying color in multiple layers. This technique produced a sense of depth and movement.

Forms and Lines: His paintings feature indistinct lines and forms that resemble script or calligraphy but carry no specific literal meaning. This element lends mystery to his work.

Influences and Inspirations

- Indian, Jain and Buddhist philosophical traditions and the yoga lineage
- Abstract artists such as Paul Klee and Mark Rothko

Conclusion:

Gaitonde's style may be described as the art of silence, where color, form and line speak



more than words. His art leads us towards inner peace and self-awareness. He has been described as "a painter of calm mind and full access to imagination," an intellectual whose outward presence concealed inwardly simmering, indeterminate thoughts. Ideologically, he never accepted the label of abstract painter and preferred not to be called one. He insisted that

abstract painting as a category does not exist; instead, he described his work as non-objective, a personalized pictorial calligraphy and calligraphic invention that refreshes the painted surface with an immediacy he understood through the encounter with Zen. The contemplative Zen quality evident in his speech exemplifies emotional silence, for silence itself is enduring and meaningful. Gaitonde's canvases, informed by Zen and ancient art, reveal highly personalized pictorial calligraphy. Through abstraction he gave artistic language to the depth of silence and spiritual tranquility. His paintings are called the art of silence because they provide a direct experience of inward emotions and philosophical reflection beyond words.

In Gaitonde's paintings there is no figurative or representational depiction; rather, abstraction, introspection and the "light of silence" emerge from the combination of color, line and texture. His style shows the influence of Jain and Buddhist thought and the ideas of Krishnamurti, bringing depth of thought, meditative silence and contemplativeness to his work. Gaitonde's approach was based on abstraction and minimalism; his paintings combine texture, transparent color layers and line to evoke deep tranquility and a meditative experience. He used symbols, transparent color layers and subtle forms to create a sense of incompleteness and silence in his works.

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