

A Moment of Survival

"One must say that the nature of painting is indecisive, that it would be comparatively simple if its object was to give the illusion of the visible scene, or to amuse the eye and the mind by a kind of musical distribution of colours and forms, but actually the process is much more complicated, In any great picture you will find a whole system of values; some scientific, some formal, some spiritual. The artist assembles, accumulates, and composes in a material medium a number of desires, intentions, and conditions received from all points of his mind and being. Now he thinks of his model, now of his colours, his oils, his tones; now of his flesh itself, now of the canvas which takes his paint. But all these independent attentions are of necessity united in the act of painting, and all those distinct movements dispersed, followed up, recaptured, held in suspension, lost again all grow into a picture under his hand.

Nothing then is more suitable, more successful in the pursuit of the evanescent than a really achieved painting. Question is, how far has Somnath got towards this very achievement? One of the figures in his semi-abstractions is observed flexing their muscles as if to take on the mountains of the Ideal, and we are with him in this resolve. But then this is a long term project, which entails endless preparation, as the specter of those setbacks that assail all contenders of the arts. But great artists failing They set out a new. We pray that this painter is up to constant self-renewal, as to self -examination. In the meanwhile, we can savour moments of felicity in certain of his composition we look forward to his giving expression to his Chhattisgarh experience, the state from where he hails. The oral culture art-crafts of this state ought to be an object lesson, indeed inspiration, for the more ambitious painters of the land."

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