

The Art History of Meghalaya

Hamlet Bareh

The Art History of Meghalaya undoubtedly the first of its kind has become the very important contribution to the subject. The book makes an attempt to give a historical interpretation to the birth and growth of the arts and also seeks to deduce and analyse the art concepts and practices and define the changes that have taken place in the present situation. The book makes an over-all review of the arts and crafts from all the angles that can be traced. The historical situations compatible to the growth and emergence of the formidable arts have also been assessed. The book seeks to survey the factors essential to the growth of the great arts as well as the factors that have retarded their continuity. Some of these arts obviously form part and parcel of the social institutions of the people mainly the Khasi and the Garo. The book, therefore, highlights the cultural grandeur of Meghalaya, one of the States in N. E. India. Moreover, the author has taken interest to elucidate the concept of art education as would be compatible to educational reconstruction as a whole. The concept of art criticism, creativity and inter-disciplinary approach has also been defined as would be more acceptable in the present context.

Dr. Hamlet Bareh, Professor and Head of Centre for Creative Arts, North-eastern Hill University, Shillong is a well known litterateur and educationalist of Meghalaya. To his manifold works on the various subjects concerning Meghalaya and the India's North-eastern region, this book, **The Art History of Meghalaya** is his latest contribution. It is anticipated that it will give a good coverage to the hitherto unexplored subject.

Hamlet Bareh is an outstanding educationist. He has conducted several integrated College and School Workshops for developing the standard of exposition and the art of expression among the students' community as developing the skills at interpretation or elucidation has, Dr. Bareh believes, its lasting effect in education.

Some of his works have found mention in the records of national and international value.

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**THE ART HISTORY
OF
MEGHALAYA**

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The Art History of Meghalaya



HAMLET BAREH

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Preface

Art history of Meghalaya has been the outcome of my persistent efforts to investigate, compile and deduce some facets of its formation. Art history has been hitherto a neglected subject. Its essence in shaping the ancient civilisation has never been grasped fully. Whatever inferences made to the arts and crafts earlier, by few of the eminent ethnologists and anthropologists, these cannot form a subject of their own as should consistently suit with the need of Art history. Art history has involved a process of historiography not always analogous with the other types of historical frameworks. A tribal Art history offers a peculiar situation suited to the ages and chronological ascription of its own treated in a historical perspective. Art history and social history, however, can provide the common grounds of coincidence or a simultaneous formation of events. Art, therefore, offers a considerable scope for the expansion of historiography as a whole.

As regards Meghalaya, its political, social and economic history, an intensive information in these respects, can also be gained from the other sources listed in our bibliography. Art, reckoned as a consistent discipline connected with arts and crafts, other aesthetic and creative performances and expression, has occupied its foremost place in this work.

We have sought to deduce the essence of Art history from all the necessary angles. Arts, crafts and especially the historical relics spread out in the secluded hills and valleys have drawn our attention. The difficulty has arisen because the bulk of the antiquarian remains have nearly become defaced. Most of them have fallen to ruins. Some of the indigenous folk performing and plastic arts have become almost obsolete. Some of the vital art traditions have been forgotten. On these grounds, I have endeavoured to deciphering and deducing these arts as much possible as I could lay hands on, I have sought to capture the art symbols and project them as much correctly as possible. The essence of arts—plastic,

traditional and modern has also been emphasised. The full picture of the art has indeed become formidable in a task of reconstruction.

The ten chapters assigned in this book have, therefore been devised to highlight the arts which reveal their typically ethnic and intrinsic character. The demarcation between the legendary and the historical formation and means of interdisciplinary approach if any, have to our best belief, been carefully analysed and evaluated. Art chronologically conforming to its age, is found to be vital in a process of historical reconstruction.

The work mostly was undertaken during my leisure time since, I have been involved actively also in performing my duties connected with art education and performances in the North Eastern Hill University. This volume is the outcome of field surveys and co-ordination of findings at the Museums and historical sites besides which, all the sources from the libraries and the views of our best informants on the multifarious aspects have been utilised. However, a more condensed bibliography has been attached so that scope is suitably thrown to curtail the unnecessary duplication of facts and provide room for a consistent, if not the very original dissertation. The task indeed has necessitated several stages of collation and evaluation with the frequent recasts attached thereto. At the final stage the big draft volume originally framed with its elongate chapters was needed to be compressed to reduce it to its final form, contained herein. Discovering the art symbols from the ancient historical relics especially lying in the more remote sites, is found to count immensely in a scheme of reconstruction. I feel it has been a pleasant task in this undertaking.

I commend it and crave the indulgence of readers in the event any drawbacks are found in this little volume.

Shillong

HAMLET BAREH

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The Indian Council of Historical Research has done a great favour in sponsoring this project; I am very grateful to them for sustaining my efforts producing the *Art History of Meghalaya* in which all the means and facilities opened before us have fully been utilised. I also acknowledge the support of North-Eastern Hill University in my capacity as Head of Centre for Creative Arts in compiling a History of Meghalaya As regards collecting the first hand information and co-ordinating the vital findings. I am indebted to the help of friends mentioned as follows :

Dr. R.S. Lyngdoh, Dean of School of languages in North-eastern Hill University, previously Speaker of Meghalaya Legislative Assembly for placing at our disposal the most valuable information in respect of the art of folk music, dance and theatre :

Dr. P.M. Passah for helping to assess goldsmithies at Jowai :

Dr. Kynsai M. Warjri for deciphering the ancient sculptures through carbon tracing or otherwise and Mr. Cajee for measuring and assessing components of those stone engravings lying at Raitong :

Mr. Rolin Shadap for helping to assess traditional weaving, dyeing and crafts in Ribhoi on the north :

Mr. Eljip Myrthong for actual measuring stone bridges and sculptures at Jarain and Syndai and preparing the actual sketches;

Mr. R. Gatphoh for assessing the pottery at Tyrshiang :

Mr. E. W. Dkhar for ensuring us the necessary information to reconstructing arts and crafts in Riwar on the south :

Mr. Ismess Giri Dkhar for providing the requisite information on crafts, architecture and the connected issues in Sohra :

Even Rimanbor Judah my small son has assisted in assessing the sculptures at Barato besides which, the other local friends in examining the same, deserve mention.

I have endeavoured fully to assess the State Museum in Shillong on many items of arts and crafts.

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1

Art Criticism, Classification, Methodology

1. Criticism—Its Conception and Functional Role

The Dictionary defines *criticism* as the *art of judging especially in the field of fine arts or literature*. Art criticism, therefore, gives us a connotative significance of the aesthetic and social conception of Art. It is a model to evaluate the form of artistic activity and provides us a criterion to examine the processes of Art formation. All the arts, however, had grown in response to the character of the age, society and environs to which they were subservient. Criticism is a realistic calculation of these trends. Critical insights when sufficiently developed could be very helpful to provide important clues to the events concerning the growth of arts in the past and the present time as well.

Criticism is of no recent beginning. In fact the social forms of criticism are as old as humanity itself. The bulk of pre-historic arts though primitive, were shaped in response to the concept and opinion of the day. The earliest critical tendencies have evolved some assets of creative guidance in the field of these creations. Criticism is reckoned generally for its role to provide some effective norms for the enrichment of the human society.

The earliest critical tendencies have produced their efficacious roles in many ways. The ancient fables and folk-tales which went into circulation, highly valued for their instructional lessons, aimed at elevating the moral standard, were the products of the ancient brains. We can say that most of the pre-historic arts, distinct and abstruse to themselves had emerged in response to the contemporary social usages and habituations. The critical insights have played enormous roles, some of them marvellously to giving shape to the form of social instructions and

discipline. Hence most of the community concepts from time to time, were oriented or re-modelled to suit with the changing situations. So far the ancient creations are concerned, there were the geniuses who were involved in bringing them forth as there were critics who provided them ideas to improve the style and technique of workmanship.

The corollary follows that Art criticism is a consistent study of arts and aesthetics, arts—symbolical and applied projecting upon the stages of their growth. They depict the arts' characteristic traits, their ethnic and folkloristic background and focus upon the geniuses of their makers. Arts in concrete terms, are the permanent legacies of the great civilisations.

While history in its broad-based or multifarious scope is defined as the record of civilisation, it is in our present context that it is the History of Art.

Art criticism is a narrative or interpretation of Art History suited to its purpose. Since during the ages gone by till today, criticism is reckoned as the great, interpretative and innovatory force.

Art criticism as formally institutionalised has been there since time immemorial and goes back to the days of Plato and Aristotle besides which, there were other geniuses who have made contributions in its field. Art is a specific discipline with its vast and varied scope for inter-acting with the other disciplines. It forms one of the assets upon which the concept of civilisation is elucidated. Art, has left its many sided impression on the scroll of human wisdom. This is corroborated by the fact that the artists even during the stone age had sought to improve their workmanship in those undertakings when man at first develop his skills to create the things of beauty. Making the first bare human existence to be properly organised, he was to be guided by the help of constructive criticism.

The orientation of Art with regard to its concept, its technique and its numerous other assets was given shape from time to time. The Schools of Art in fact have emerged in which the concept of aesthetism has been defined and interpreted. These in turn have provided the bases for the growth of humanities. The fallacies of some arts are also pin-pointed. The Schools of Art in interpreting the good models have sought to review these fallacies.

Because of these factors, Art History provides us the necessary potentials to the growth of the classical and popular arts. It centres on the splendour of the artistic accomplishments and reviews those models which show a blending of the many other characteristic features. It reveals further the vivid form of Art sequence

and transformation. It lays emphasis on the archaic and extinct types of Art. The sequences to the growth of pre-historic, fine arts and folk arts are reviewed and elucidated. The working of the historical processes in one order (or a divergence) of themes towards institutionalising the Art forms is stressed. The components to establishing the Art forms according to the availability of potentials and the environs which are congenial to the formative processes, are surveyed.

It is because of these factors that the great arts were born and shaped which ultimately reached their landmarks. It was also in the midst of these interesting developments that some great geniuses were shaped whose creations have outlived the passage of time. The technical components indeed are vital to our consideration.

Arts have their myriad reflections. Those famous arts of the ancient times are the great illustrious creations. Some classical arts exhibit their exquisite refineries. Great arts have left their impact exhibiting themselves like wonders. The fertility of the human mind had exerted itself to create, recreate and complete the various Art forms. Art can no longer be used as a medium for recreation and entertainment only. Because of its involving the vital facets of creative workmanship, the different processes it underwent, Art in fact was behind the growth of the social sciences. Criticism assumes its importance since the antecedents and sequences to the rise and fall of arts are realistically reviewed. The scenes which the arts focus themselves are variegated, such as the classical and impressional, visual and auditory and arts with their abstract and concrete symbols. Criticism provides the tools for research and for the systematic deduction upon the process of formation. Therefore, the ancient iconographic remains, artifices, inscriptions, figurines are reviewed in the light of the historical lines and their technical form. The critic assesses the laws of causes and effects which apply themselves in the field of artistic creativity and workmanship. He has to be thoroughly acquainted with the technique of the applied Art and workmanship in that field of artistic creativity. He develops close acquaintances with the great geniuses who have produced such masterpieces. He develops his insights into the form, style and quality of their work. It is an over-all analysis of Art formally, objectively and realistically. He has the ear and eye, he uses his mental power to define and propound them. He calculates the values and traditions enshrined in their formation. Different critics, however, advocate different opinion on the intrinsic form of Art where some controversies may have raged over the issue. The field of Art is so rich and variegated and includes the proto-historical, the folk performing and other forms of Art. In the middle ages when the European renaissance struck its roots, criticism was more concerned with examining the classical Art forms and the

pure aesthetics. In context of our present requirement, Art criticism can serve itself as the tool to examine the historical formation of pre-historic and tribal arts. We are searching to find out the befitting meaning of the functional and symbolic arts which have formed part and parcel of a tribal heritage. We are projecting the primitive arts in their complete or incomplete form along with the nature of their composition where the different potentials exploited from the crust of the earth greatly contributed to their formation. Primitive arts though less equipped, have their own intrinsic form and significance where the artists use their own techniques and devices. Art has its own soul and mind, its language and precept and applies in all cases to the primitive and advanced forms.

The quality of criticism depends upon many factors where the aesthetic, philosophic, ethical and expository principles are combined. It is always in direction to make the matter consistently objective, specific and utilitarian. Criticism, as stated has its own force and bearing in deducing and interpreting things systematically.

Criticism is always synonymous with creativity. Therefore we say that works, performances, creations are dominated by creative instincts and impulses which have contributed to make arts, the symbols of reality. Arts take their shapes according to the mental state of development. Arts have the touch of idealism, passionism and realism. The historical forms, styles and shapes are the essence which engage the minds of the researchers and critics. That is why the technical and communicative medium of Art is so essential to these forms of interpretation. All arts, however, are not aesthetical. Arts have their other connotations because they have their own profundity and use their composite frame-work.

Criticisms are modelled according to the different pursuits, procedures and approaches. All forms of criticism derive their strength from the different mental, psychological and emotional faculties for creating the necessary insights and incentives into the myriad Art form. Obviously there are criticisms which serve as the literary standards, there are others which focus the technical side such as the plastic arts. The critics have given us the glossary of Art, its significance, object and structural components. There are criticisms upon the viable pieces of work which are philosophically or more suited to psychologically rendering in the form of expositions, narrative, parabolical or otherwise. Reflecting the patterns and styles, the critics take note of the basic considerations—ecological, techno-economic, social and political where the growth of arts during the periods assigned to, has been intensively emphasised. Criticism has played its enormous

role to reiterating and highlighting the concept of Art education both in its theoretical and applied norm. Art History has done great service in preserving the works of great geniuses, pin-pointing the basic thoughts and sentiments which mankind has shared in promoting the civilisations of the world. Although the methods of criticism vary from place to place, depending upon the local situation as would have rendered Art its morphological concept, yet there are many things common among the races of people shown by their love of arts and the aesthetics.

Criticism is reckoned as the assimilative faculty because of its over-all analysis and exposition which has considerably helped to shape and reconstruct the Art History. It is equipped with the functioning of the mental power consistently and uniformly. The mental faculties within its scope are provided rooms to develop sufficiently. It takes note of the importance of the psychological insights and incentive for cultivating the critical attitudes and tendencies. Thus it helps to enhance the mental creativity and fertility towards framing the critical assumptions and expositions and as much scientifically. It seeks to make use of the faculties such as wit, acumen, inquisitiveness, mental alertness and others towards calculating the Art forms. A very few gifted persons combine in themselves, perhaps the skills of the inborn artists and critics. It is in this context that the forms of creativity are sought to be consistently deduced. Although criticism and creativity may have been compatible to each other on some occasions, yet creativity fits in also with genius only after the latter has accomplished considerably in the field of that undertaking and after it has shown its marks worth of public estimation. We also see that creative and intelligence are mutually linked up but creative persons always possess an extra-ordinary intelligence not understood in ordinary terms.

We see that creativity applies itself into the various fields of human enterprise not arts alone. Creative genius has academically and materially left its landmarks. Creativity also suits with the inquisitive and inventive character. It is perhaps in the fitness of circumstances caused sometimes by the arduous and insurmountable undertaking that the forms of creativity have evolved. Creativity in other words the fertile State of mind, no doubt has brought forth many wonders in the field of inventions, discoveries and great establishments. Artistic creativity has caused the great arts of various kinds to stay on.

Imagination contains the seeds for the birth and growth of arts which derive strength from its fertile state which when conceiving the scenes, provides also the means to establish them. The arts take their shapes after conserving such resources essential to their formation, they seek to depict the images and scenes,

true to life and the environs which are close to the human existence. Imagination because of its proximity to them offers the scope for the assimilation of the tradition and folklore, rituals and institution realistically besides which, the arts have other proverbial concepts which are in concord with human ideals. Imagination has its power of assimilation, conception and reproduction of the matter objectively. It plays its role also to tapping consciousness to the objects of its creation. As such humanism partly is expressed in the connotative forms and symbols. Imagination, that resource faculty, provides room for rediscovering the past, recreating the present and predicting upon the future state providing the meaning to all semblances and forms of reality, seeking to depict the human moods, taste, habits and temperament objectively. It helps the Art retain its intrinsic form and quality. Imagination fosters the creative urge and provides the models for developing the sequences in the process of Art formation. Imagination can be treated of as the repository of critical and creative insights where, the mind conceives the matter stage by stage setting itself first to the initiatory, then providing the means and devices, then evolving the frame-work and then producing or creating the thing it has adhered to. Imagination can best be defined as the attribute which considerably helps to shape the various forms of mental acumen.

Imagination normally does not function independently but keeps its pursuits in concord with the other factors derived from the human emotions, sensitivities and sentiments. The emotional urges and passions as such have their importance. Sensitivity has been one of the important assets for which the Art forms have been conceived and created. Most of the aesthetic effects have been made in response to the essence of sensitivity in both its intuitive and rational form. It provides the important assets for the development of Art in poetry, music, drama, sculpture, painting, other Art forms and expressions. Sensitivity is shaped under various circumstances arising from the profound interest so cultivated and after acquaintances have developed sufficiently with the subject matter.

The human emotions are the next asset upon which the artistic creations are built. Passions caused by the experiences of our human struggle and labour, adventures and exertions, victories and defeats, have brought about some Art forms of reality and the meaning which it throws upon the Art lovers and critics. Art has caused such wonders which have baffled the human minds for the lofty maxims ever held dear by mankind, for its redeeming and emancipating forces against the usual social constraints and for the aesthetic quality which it seeks to enhance.

Last but not least, sentiments especially folkloristic and national play enormous role to restore and institute Art symbols which have something on the

socio-cultural and community trends. Such arts have come to exist after having rallied considerable consciousness and after that form of consciousness had been channelled for expression and fulfilment. The national arts having myriad significances have emerged in the different circumstances after the consciousness has sought to express itself in the more tangible form, it is the symbols on its own which have been created. National arts seek to be true to the people's aspirations; they throw reflections upon such themes and keep themselves with their own identity; they serve as the precious Art treasures of the people who have produced them. National arts in the shape of the select types of iconography, temple arts, epigraphy, social and political symbols and other forms have their paramount importance in the field of arts. There are arts of cynical nature which seek to suit themselves with the individual taste, temperament, mood and some have social connotations.

As regards the pre-historic arts, some of them clearly reveal themselves as the nature myths or that they have some ritualistic significance. They suggest that some folkloristic elements derive their strength from the environs which are in concord with the human conception. This reveals to us that some forms of rhythmic harmony and music have derived a great deal of influence from nature. The natural lights themselves have fostered the sense for drawing, painting, colouring and sketching. Some of pre-historic arts are further attributed to the rudimentary state of mind when at that time, Art awareness and appreciation had been constrained by many factors. Some pre-historic arts are abstruse lacking their clarity. We can safely deduce that Art symbols are connotative to the age they belong.

Most of the Art forms, therefore, keep with their intrinsic form. They keep themselves with the ancient traditions or values while seeking to maintain their continuity and linkage with the present. The traditions have subsisted because the Art symbols rally the consciousness as to their importance. If the tradition is dead, those arts are also in a defunct state, counted more so, as the dead symbols. The situation could in turn afford the ground for tapping resources to evolve the new form of consciousness which could lead to an epoch of Art revivalism. Some factors could have been responsible for a marked decline of Art as well, but the resurgence with its renewed force and strength is not ruled out. Some new arts have also been evolved as an experimentation with the changing society.

In conclusion, the processes of social transformation are accounted for the rise and fall of arts. In these days when science and technology have made inroads into the society, it is most essential that the arts oriented and in their new form, should considerably be evolved.

2. Classification

Classification of Art into the relevant branches is of foremost importance in reconstructing Art History. Classification further helps to provide some clues to the appropriate roles of Art in its different manifestations. Classification fits in with its categorical importance. Arts properly defined and categorised considerably reflect the cultural usages and institutions of the people.

Although Art is an innate manifestation of creativity, yet creativity also communicates itself into the tangible fields of undertaking and the innumerable spheres of human activity. We start our preposition with trying first to deduce the significance of creative arts. Normally *creative* is compatible of *capable* or *being capable* of processing the Art forms or reinstating some dying arts. Creative Art has no independent standing of its own being virtually linked up with the other components of Art. It suggests that creative processes are worked out to lay down innovation to the existing Art and create new one. The creative processes are involved in making them. Creative Arts in this context cannot be detached from the other arts, creative Art viewed in its broader perspective, is the mother of all arts. Creative artists in fact originated most of the Art patterns.

The modern conception of creative Art here is emphasised that while earlier, it connoted the Art classics and the fine arts, today it is defined to include "any aesthetically directed expression in visual, verbal and auditory images and symbols. It has included today architecture, sculpture, painting and the various related visuals plastic and graphic arts, literature in its various poetic, prosaic and dramatic form, as well as the dance and music".¹

The forms of Art have further been elucidated² in the following definition :

(a) *Subjective*—in which the representation of a subject is reckoned in terms such as realistic, abstraction, symbolic, surrealist and in which the representation is conveyed in terms other than these.

(b) *Functional*—a distinction has arisen between functional and non-functional arts. However, most of the arts are symbolic and are almost functional in concrete and vague terms. Most of the applied arts, however are counted as functional.

(c) *Mediumistic*—a medium provides the means for communication and revelation, mediumistic mostly are exposed in terms of visual and auditory arts sometimes known as time and space arts. Therefore the medium is one of the greatest essences of Art.

(d) *Organisational*—which in fact is the tapping of the resources for creating the work of Art—an ordered arrangement coordinating elements of performance and exhibited wholly—whether tones, colours or words arranged sequentially.

(e) *Style-formal or non-formal forms of Art*—styles can be historical, classical being usually based on altitudes or forms of naturalism, realism, impressionism, expressionism, cubism and others.

(f) *Evaluation*—which provides insights into the artistic work by its depth of meaning, magnitude or impact of the work as a whole.

Creative Art in its significance has substantially altered. This is because of the fast changing situations due to the unprecedented heights which sciences have covered now-a-days. Modern comforts and artificial norms are the other restraints in which artistic sensitivities have considerably been jeopardised. They have caused the disappearance of the great traditions while science has largely modernised the Art concept. As such we see that man is gaining less physical strength causing the loss of certain skills and dexterities. Creative Art as such has been reduced to its generalistic sense. The other categories, pre-historic and primitive arts, ornamental and decorative, folk arts, performing arts, fine arts and classics, commercial arts are being reviewed in the historical perspective.

The claim that Creative Art played its role in shaping and reshaping the first stages of the human civilisation is substantially justified for, most of the pre-historic arts are definitely the outcome of its creation. The first man emerged from his wild stage placed in a different environment in which he had to entangle himself with the great hazards and obstacles which nature confronted him but the more the odds he was faced, the more his mind became creative in which he conceived the plan to overcome those odds. Then he developed his skill to solve the problem. The conception of creative Art truly is the conceptualisation of the plan in the first instance, the making use of the skill which his creative mind invents and the acquaintance with use of tools in his efforts to improve his workmanship to accomplish his purpose. Creative Art is an inquisitive search of some hidden treasures of knowledge. On its criterion, the first man was transformed from his savagery condition into an improvise human existence. Thus we obtain glimpses from a long story which pin-points the first phase of human civilisation like this—how the first man invented his hoe and axe in which he cleared the land and the soil to make it fit for cultivation; how he made use of his first rudimentary tools and weapons to combat with the natural force and enemy; how he first made and learnt the Art of cooking, how he shifted himself from cave dwelling to the house model; how he invented the use of stitching

to provide clothing to his body; how he made use of the first decorative and ornamental arts; how he developed the first folk rhythm and rudimentary Art of dance; how he was acquainted with the cave or wall drawing and painting and how he applied his system of cuneiform in which later he obtained his script.³ Man conceived in nature a unique force which shaped his religious feelings and sentiments and thus the religious beliefs and practices were implanted. But man is a social animal and creative Art played its role in preparing for the first social and civic organisation. He made use of these applied arts to evolve the first prototype of civilisation based on the rudimentary pattern of human craftsmanship.

The creative mind exerted pressure to process on the better kind of craftsmanship, produce the more refined artistic luminaries and perfect the social system. Thus came into being at one time the best kinds of Art, architecture, sculpture, literature, other creations and compositions, some of which have remained to this day the great accomplishment of mankind marking themselves as the triumph of the inquisitive and creative mind.

Creative Art has its day-to-day relevance in the modern world especially in improving or rectifying other Art forms and systems with which it is closely related. It leaves its effect within the area of pure arts and of generalistic arts, pure arts such as dance, drama, weaving, embroidery, mosaic and music. But if arts is reckoned in terms of other pursuits, one cannot neglect the importance of writing, public speaking, architecture, archaeology even sports and games, artistry and craftsmanship in respect of maintaining their standards, decorum and discipline, providing the necessary tools and skills and obtaining appropriate discharges. Thus it plays its role mostly to establish the Art and reinstate the dying Art alike.

The creative mind is inherent and demonstrative in different levels. It is the result of the deep and profound attachment to such pursuits and interests with which the acquaintance had developed. It takes its own time to grow, develop and nurture being the result of one's inclination to develop the creative talents and sometimes, it has been shaped to that extent due to the working of circumstances. As such a writer of public speaker uses its medium to interpret things and play his role to guide public opinion. On its basic criterion they use their arts and techniques to produce the imagery of their creation. On the application of such skills, architects, sculptors, composers, embroiders, craftsmen, weavers, potters, goldsmiths, silversmiths and other artisans and artists produce their work in a routine bound system.

The fine arts and performing arts although counted as the most academically advanced disciplines, Art criticism is confined to review and evaluate also the folk arts, commercial arts and other forms that are true to the ethnic and cultural conception. So the aesthetic significances against its social, ritualistic and spiritual side is grasped fully. Creative Art because of its basic nature becomes integrated with the other areas in which its linkage with the pure arts is focused. In a broader perspective, creative arts provide the assets for the foundation of human learning and the related activity.

Performing arts meant to be highly symbolical or demonstrative, belong to another category. They include dance, drama, theatre, music. Political arts fall into another category which according to the Meghalayan conception have already assisted to stabilise the conception of state formation and highlight the landmarks of statesmanship. These arts, it is obvious, play vital roles in enhancing the concept of civics and citizenship as ideally suited to the situation and the local genius.

Art classification has been rendered possible due to those different artistic concepts, skills and techniques which have through the ages been inborn and instituted, those arts especially classical and masterpieces such as the exquisite pottery, sculpture, painting, musical composition, ornamental arts, weaving and embroidery, iconography and even the literary arts. The search of beauty is inherent in the human soul and aesthetics have emerged as the creation of beauty through the work of Art. Art classics show a wide range of significance, the conception of Art being of great relevance in a historical perspective. To be precise, Art still is the great source of knowledge despite the progress made in the field of technology, science and space communication. Some arts of highly impressional or expressional, just like museum pieces and exhibits, or the types of heirloom which bear considerable importance to the concept of Art History. So also are the great arts—the outcome of the corporate undertakings—such as forts, temples, palaces, castles, towers, pillars, domes, the other grotesque buildings and architectural structures which we see. The other section is derived from the epigraphic and iconographic specimens.

Came the time when man had learnt how to use more of the metals and minerals so suitably conserved for Art purposes. We see, therefore, that the bulk of pre-historic arts are the products of primitive wood-carving and of the stone age. It marks the transition which led to the enhancement in the concept of Art where the specimens of sculpture, painting, pottery, iconography, pictorial and temple arts, visual arts and graphic arts were intensively reviewed and projected.

It marks the transition also when the ornamental and other arts became considerably innovated. The performing arts, in styles and contents were considerably oriented. So at the classical or golden age, the best arts came to stay hand in hand with other myriad creations and compositions which reached the degree of par excellence. The great, illustrious nations produced those great arts after the best potentials and talents were consistently tapped and when the social, political and economic resources had been competently utilised.

Our review of folk arts in context of Meghalaya is essential. We feel historically that folk art is the most original which provides room to the growth of other patterns. Folk in its broad-based conception connotes the ethnological pattern of the people who exhibit the type of its own society and culture, its institution and tradition, its linguistic and literary character and its other innumerable features. Folk art therefore connotes the Art style, form, habit and tendencies which obviously suit with the ethnic atmosphere, habituation and the other characteristic traits. The ritualistic and socio-cultural practices obviously have their bearing upon the process of Art formation. The antecedents to these have been provided by the pre-historic arts. Folk arts viewed in a wider perspective connote the practices, behavioural pattern and system of workmanship towards modelling and instituting them by their makers. Folk arts when delicately examined, reflect the social and civic significance. They bear their importance to the community, social and religious forms of heritage. Folk art is identical with the attributes provided by folklore and literary arts, dress and ornaments, dance and music, crafts and the other patterns which can be mentioned. The pre-historical antiquities highlight themselves because they project upon the ancient conception. Emphasis is laid on the rhymes and rhythms, the form of rhythmic movement, artistry and the other patterns which we class them as subsidiary arts. Obviously folk arts have the combination of these constituents and are communicated in the several media. Folk dance and music have their values alike because they catch with the tradition and because they focus the ethnic philosophy and sentiments being conveyed in an artistic way making use of cultural symbols. Folklore as such is a collective channelisation and interpretation of Art traditions, conveyed in the several media—music, dance and community performances.

Crafts give a systematic interpretation to folk art. They provide folkloristic semblance and symbol such as the embroidery pattern worked out in costume, style of ornaments, decorative crafts, basketry in which some of such crafts have become more commercially than culturally viable. As such the continuity of the process has its considerable impact upon our projecting Art History.

3. Methodology

We have deemed fit to substantiate this section as briefly as possible.

It is known that the sources of Art History are quite limited. Normally the textual sources are reviewed for crystallising the relevant source materials. Field collection is also very important. We envisage that most of the visual arts and symbols are the essence of history because they provide the Art components, ingredients and the other features. Therefore artistic significance deduced from these Art symbols in the form of epigraphy, iconography, architecture and even the crafts is most essential to organising the materials. Chronological and sequential formation needs to be carefully grasped from all angles varying (in some specific issues) from the other patterns.

The finds from the archaeological and other investigations provide the other concrete models and some interpretative datum. They provide the kind of structural appliances for determining the components of Art. Therefore, the bulk of folk, performing and fine arts project themselves upon the techniques of application. The visual Art in its form and contents had offered a rich potential for inter-acting with other disciplines.

Ethnology which sometimes is equivalent of cultural anthropology appropriately applied on its select issues could be very helpful to afford some glimpses to Art formation at a given age. As regards the ethnic concept, folk art forming the great essence of tribal history, because of its special features, deserves the greater stress.

The Art historian treats the different factors which govern the evolutionary stages at their core. He takes note of the human, techno-economic and ecological factors which account for the growth of arts. The other creative factors involved to the formation are reiterated.

Meghalaya has the rich collection of the pre-historic remains. How the orientation was caused in the Art forms, this is the concern which the Art historian has to subscribe considerable importance. As such the cycles of transformation have left their impact. The ecological setting along with the changes occurring on the earth's crust are the other considerations. The combination of the other facets in the field of Art also very significant. Because of these interactionary processes, the help of the archaeological conception becomes largely feasible in our project of historiography. Those findings will help to reveal those great, grand treasures which history has bestowed us. They help to

ennance our knowledge on the working of the historical forces. Archaeology has its paramount importance in remodelling Art History.

The dictionary defines archaeology—"The ancient history generally : the systematic description of study of antiquities : the scientific study of the remains and monuments of the pre-historic period", I have also reiterated its meaning⁴ "Archaeology makes a valuable addition to the study of history because it enriches our knowledge on the working of the contemporary forces. No genuine task of historical reconstruction, however, can be divorced from archaeology Archaeology, therefore, is helpful to set some scientific methods of study in the school of historiography and Art History. Archaeology has its inter-action with the Schools of Social Sciences of Humanities. Its importance is aptly demonstrated by Art schools, Art galleries, museums and emporia. It has its vital importance because it focuses on the inward structure as also the external shape of the ancient civilisation while taking to consideration the political, techno-economic, socio-cultural, religious situation of the contemporary age

Stress is laid on the minute collection and systematisation of datum, laboratorial analysis and excavation. It offers scope also for a broad-based conception in view of antiquities laying scattered in the State, not yet organised for proper study".

Archaeology and Art History which have evolved in a similar system are obviously linked up. Art History without the help of Archaeology cannot properly be established. Archaeology connected with the field investigation, excavation and a minute laboratorial process of examination, is envisaged as the vital base for framing Art History. The Art historian surveys such resources, provides a consistent deduction and, with the help of critical tendencies, gives the full coverage to the events which have distinctly shaped Art formation. The deductive and inductive implication involved in a process of reconstruction is reiterated. The forces of Art revivalism in that contemporary situation receive their due emphasis. The Art historian, therefore, is impelled, doing justice to his subject, to analyse and compile the varying sequences to Art formation elaborately. The archaeologist confines his work to the scope which field collections and excavations furnished him. I have summed up the functional role of an archaeologist as follows.⁵

"An archaeologist performs the manifold task of a field ethnologist, architect, Art exponent and critic. On the different stages of finding, he seeks to locate the intrinsic growth, formation and development of antiquities with their counter-



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parts, deduces the genuineness of the relics, determines upon the facets which bear external influences to these processes of development and seeks to deduce them in a comprehensive or limited scale. He deals with other themes which are of socio-economic and political significance—it is upon those ancient styles of dwelling, housing and village systems, corporate way of living, social habits, characteristic and tendencies, economic organisations, division of labour and many other connected themes that he goes on to propound. He categorises and classifies the ancient styles and forms of antiquities. Obviously his contributions in extending the orbits of learning is implied. He deduces these things to suit with the ethnological pattern while trying to correlate them with the similar system, and discovering the links. He uses other tools while dealing with the tribal patterns which are of primitive or antiquated system.”

As regards Meghalaya, the conception of archaeology here in the State is of utmost importance We are just starting to work from scratch. The importance of archaeology in exploring the treasure of our folk and pre-historic arts is understood. The study of Art and archaeology can most systematically be planned while the other sources from anthropology and allied sciences can be fully utilised. Its importance is enhanced because of the limited number of archaeological researches that have been conducted so far.

To make Art History true to its purpose, folk culture, the essence of Art itself, merits next for our consideration. It offers the typical models for review and examination. Folklore in this regard provides some prospective clues to the process of Art formation. The folktales have their utmost importance in focusing these trends. They fall into the different categories. The vital point is giving them the corroboration in the historical perspective.

About Meghalaya, the State possesses some unique institutions. Meghalaya is a hill tract. With her exquisite scenery, it is the land of eternal charm. Here we meet with the tribes who have produced and preserved their arts with some variance from others. Art consciousness is deemed most essential in the present state of affairs in view of the great transformation overtaking the tribal region due to the inroad of many complex factors. Art undoubtedly is the great essence for the survival of mankind, for holding high the ideas which have moved the world. On the other hand arts which are injurious to both the national and ethnic interest have no scope for their retention.

The Khasis and Garos are the people with the cultural heritage inhabiting this charming land of rich folklore and mythology, rich historical events, democratic institutions and other pristine institutions.

Further the matrilineal organisation which exhibits itself, irrespective of its anomalies is unique and offers a few parallels in the globe.

Now, therefore, the consistent *Art History of Meghalaya* commences.

NOTES & REFERENCES

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