

Sculpture of Character and Mind

For a true artist, limitations of a medium cannot stand in the way of expression. The one to gain expertise on a particular medium is just a craftsman, not an artist. The craftsman, being skilful and proficient in understanding of a particular medium, can translate art into a manifest form. But artists cannot be contained in such boundaries. The artistic ability of an artist is not bound by form of his artwork. Nor does it seek to impress like a craftsman's works. It can only be felt like the fragrance of a flower.

Pramodbabu is an artist of this kind. He is blessed with an artistic ability; the fact is evident from his artworks, yet he was never lured by fame and fortune to showcasing his abilities. Proficient in the art of portraiture, when Pramodbabu uses ordinary crayons to draw his artwork, it can prompt a six-seven-year old to say,

“Ma! I can draw this too!”

When an artwork can make the beholder realize about his own creative capacity, that is the work of a true artist. There are many to create a sense of mystery and command awe by using the strength of their artistic skill and expertise. But unlike them, Pramodbabu Ramteke is a simple, natural artist.

If you visit Pramodbabu's residence, you can see artworks done on canvases as big as eight –ten feet high or even as small as just eight to ten inches.

Pramodbabu has created artworks on a variety of artistic media, ranging from oil realistic portraits, abstract art, water colour paintings on a simple brown paper, to creating serene images using wax crayons.

In the recent days, he even used the digital medium to create his

artworks.

Dr. K. R. Narayanan was a student at London School of Economics where he even held the position of Dean. Later he was appointed as the honourable President of India.

In the year 1900, a delegation from the London School of Economic visited India in search of an artist who could draw the portrait of Dr. Narayanan. For the task, Pramodbabu was selected by the committee. The president himself honoured appointment for four days straight.

This portrait, made in the oil medium still adorns the gallery of the London School of Economics. Despite all this, Pramodbabu's personal favorite is an awkward portrait by him of his own son expressing the displeasure on being scolded for naughty behavior.

Pramodbabu's talent does not get stuck or curbed in any medium. The extent of his talent is 'abysmal'. This is also the name of the one of his art exhibitions. Abysmal, contrary to the popular understanding, also means very deep.

In the bottom of this room lies a peculiar artwork.

A stone with a face.

Pramodbabu has done many experiments with the art of portraiture and even background, meaning canvas. The most unusual among his canvases is the stone.

Once, Pramodbabu saw a stone. For over a week he observed the angles, contours and texture of that stone. After the scrutinizing inspection, he used the brush in his hand to paint his friend's portrait. The patience of creating an artwork on such an unusual background can only spring from the humility in one's heart. Only because of the

absence of arrogance about his skill, Pramodbabu could engage in such unusual experiments.

The portrait of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, painted on a longish stone is clearly one of his masterpieces. Similarly, in the year 2015, he held an exhibition called 'Stone Portraits'. In this exhibition, he showcased portraits of 20 personalities who have been working tirelessly in the field of social development. Some names include, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis, Former honourable President of India Pratibhatai Patil, Shri Nitin Gadkari, Shri Atal Bahadur Singh, Shri Girish Gandhi, Shri Maruti Chittampalli, Shri Yashwant Manohar, Poet Grace, Shri Jogendra Kavade and Shrimati Jotsna Darda.

The rough, coarse surface of the stone appears smooth and tender as a piece of muslin when Pramodbabu begins to paint on it. The stone begins to assume the shape of that person's character. The only weight, in this stone portrait, is that of the subject's character. Pramodbabu manifests that using tender, soft brush strokes.

Cubist painter Pablo Picasso have experimented on varied canvasses and medium. He also worked on stone, he made self-portrait on the plane side of the stone. This is the only reference of using a stone as a canvass for portrait. However, some experiments of creating art on stone can be found in the western world. Especially on the tombstone where name of the dead person is etched, even his image is drawn at times. But all that is done on the plane, smoother side of the stone. Pramodbabu makes use of the edges, contours, angles, etc. to define the character of the person whose portrait he is drawing. Definitely,

such an experiment has never been done before.

In the cubist artworks of Pablo Picasso and in Pramodbabu's artworks, there is a fundamental similarity. But this similarity comes forth in a contradictory way. In Picasso's portraits, the person's inner image is

drawn alongside his outer face. Picasso, by 'juxtaposing' hard to see traits of personality, could show reveal so much on one surface only.

Pramodbabu's stone portraits too highlight the personality of the subject using stone's uneven surface, with simplicity. Because of the angle of the stone, the image unknowingly gets juxtaposed and comes

to forth a three dimensional image of the person's nature.

If we straighten Pramodbabu's three dimensional images on a flat surface, it will look similar to Picasso's artworks. His stone portraits are

a true reflection of the cubist philosophy.

The very idea of drawing portraits on stone tells us that Pramod, instead of getting stuck in the medium, in fact, simplifies the medium itself to create simple imagery.

Clay is a medium which itself becomes the artwork. Pramodbabu's stone portraits are similar in nature. The stone painted by Pramodbabu, itself becomes an artwork. Some find God in stone, some see strength, Pramodbabu sees a person in that stone. And during the process of art making, even that stone begins to express itself.

Pramodbabu's stone portraits are in fact

Sculptures of a person's character and mind!

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