



Pramila Giri. *Togetherness*. 1980. Bronze.

ART CREATIONS OF PRAMILA GIRI

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Abstract

During the 60s and 70s, various new concepts and trends of European modern arts were slowly and nobly emerging in Nepali Art. Traditional Paubha artists and some senior artists such as Chandraman Singh Maskey, Tej Bahadur Chitrakar were following the conventional grammar, characteristics and themes in their art creations.

There were virtually no women artists in the creative art scene. Later Pramila Giri and Shilu Payri along with some other female artists appeared on the art stage with new ideas and concepts of modernity. Artist Giri in her early stage, was also following the conventional approaches, but later she began to experiment and present her new art forms with mythical figures and themes.

Her analytical thoughts and search led her to use the various forms, images and symbols of religious and mythical figures of BHAIKAV in her art creations. Thus, she started in presenting the figures and forms plus sculptures on her large size canvas. It was completely a noble approach and presentation.

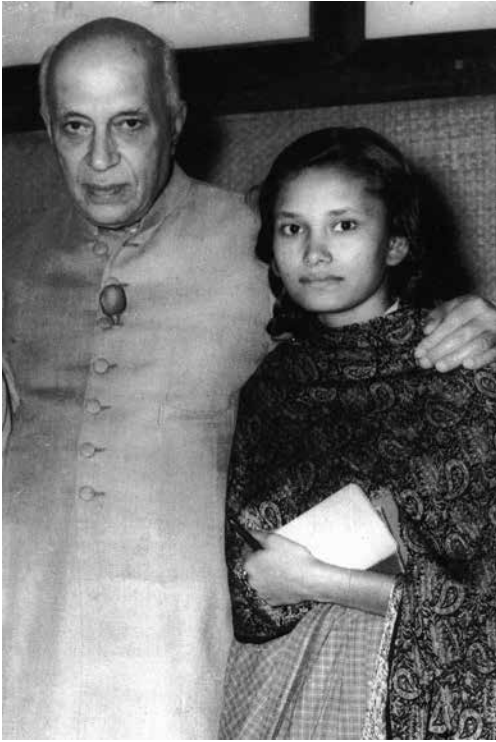
BHAIKAV, a gigantic demonic figure but with all the divine powers is regarded as the incarnation of Lord Shiva. Red, white, blue, black colors are used to represent a chosen incarnation of the Lord.

Thus, if the viewers are familiar with the mythical figures of Lord BHAIKAV, it will be easier to understand the use of colours and the presentations of the figures in her art creations.

The decade of 1960s in Nepal was very significant in the political, cultural and artistic history of the country. Many new changes and developments were happening and passing fast. Similarly, the traditional mass psychology was at the threshold of the changes, moreover the educated, elite, literate and conscious persons/citizens were crossing the threshold for new and better aspirations in social life.

A simple girl grew up and educated in a village called Bastipur of southern Nepal

in Siraha district, left her native soil to join the Tagore Kala Bhawan, Shantiniketan of West Bengal, India for her art education in 1963. She returned to her native land in 1976 after the completion of her degree in Masters of Fine arts from California state University and exhibited her solo art show in the capital city. At that time, we as teachers were also deeply and enthusiastically involved in the literary and artistic circles and movements. With friends, we used to visit the art exhibitions and enjoy the nobility and innovative figures, forms, colours including the



Pramila Giri with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru during her convocation in Santiniketan, India, 1963.

paintings of Pramila. The art lovers with their knowledge of native and western art used to exchange and share the opinions; and appreciated the new trends in Nepali art.

Then, in 1982 Pramila as an emerging artist of the country, exhibited her huge sized paintings with sculptures in the City Hall. There I met her again and talked about her paintings and sculptures.

By then she had exhibited on various occasions in the City Hall and also at the Patan Museum with her own new concept of the Bhairav series in paintings and sculptures.

Now, after the lapses of three decades I can vaguely recollect my bygone memories of her unconventional paintings and

sculptures. Again, in 2016 AD she exhibited her art works under various titles such as – (i) Sculptures and Paintings, (ii) Bhairav series paintings, (iii) Birds are flying, (iv) Bhairav series sculptures, (v) Other sculptures, (v) Tibet series paintings, (vi) Impression series paintings, (viii) Images of earthquake and family painting.

We began to talk about her new artworks. She answered her new series is entitled - 'Different Aspects of Lord Shiva'. Here, I realized that she was highly interested in the incarnated figures of Bhairav, the supreme figure of Shiva. She went on to explain that long before, she happened to meet a tantric named Dhana Shamsher. He had explained to her that the purpose and function of the incarnation of Bhairav. That it means Bhishan Naad or terrific sound.

According to the myth, she described, "Once Brahma, the creator and incarnated figure of Bishnu argued about their supremacy." To settle their claims Lord Shiva incarnated himself in the figure of Bhairav, and settled the issue by saying that none is supreme except Lord Shiva. God Bhairav punishes the evil or wrong doers but protects the rightful devotees. The myths or the old scriptures also describe God Bhairav has an ability to change the forms to suit the purposes and functions. It is said, there are generally eight various forms or images of Bhairava. And they are represented in red, yellow, black, blue, etc. They are used for different occasions to suit a desired function. As for example, black is used for Kaal Bhairav meaning that the God could punish or destroy the evil doers. Blue is used as the symbol of infinity as the lord of the whole universe.

According to Pramila, her guru Keshav Malik described her artworks on Bhairav series as not abstract. But the artist disagreed and said that her works are indeed abstract. To her, the works remain



Pramila Giri. *Blue Series I.* 2010. Oil on canvas. 195 cm x 195 cm.

abstract, and evoke aesthetic feelings and compel the viewers to think. This is regarded as the success of the Bhairav series.

In this regard, her love, reverence, devotion to native culture, traditions, religion remain appreciable. She seemed to express her feelings of absolute totality in representative forms and symbols. She is found to visualize her dreamy meditation or meditative trance. Here she

is philosophic and symbolic because of total infinity or divinity. That is beyond the descriptions.

As a creative artist she has taken the mythical Bhairav quite differently from the traditional appearances. She penetrates beyond the sensory natural forms and figures and tries to paint the invisible and divinely aspects. She



Pramila Giri. *Tibet Series I.* 1991. Oil on canvas. 190 cm x 192 cm.

visualizes in deep thoughtful meditation. She added she was trying to express her inner emotions and the feelings. So she is not interested in the natural forms. Some viewers may find male and female forms but they do not represent as serious expression. Our scriptures also describe there are no difference of male or female figure in absolute totality or Sampurnata.

The colours, forms, figures of paintings harmoniously attract the feelings of art visitors and arouse the sense of

appreciation and wonder. The art creations exhibited at Nepal Art Council hall reflect that she is expressing her feelings of inner senses with suitable harmonious colours. All the works are reflective and representative. We know that the infinite universe, the unseen reality, spiritual feelings and human values can never be described in words. Only the visible natural objects and forms can be described in words and colours - not the divinity or an infinity.

In the present series, her art creations remain dreamily meditative. The artist is seen going beyond the myth and religion. Her series of 'Sound of Silence', 'Birds are Flying', 'Bhairav' and 'Tibet Impression' are more reflective, representative and symbolic.

It seems, she also enjoy in creating sculptues. She is said to have been impressed by Jean Arp (1888-1966), Henry Moore (1898-1986) and Barbara Hepworth (1903-75).

During her visit to Tibet she found the Buddhist devotees practising meditation from the childhood. Then she had no language to exchange the ideas and feelings with the Lamas or the Tibetans but through her observations and learning she easily understood the simplicity and devotion of the people.

During the show as stated above, we also exchanged views and ideas about the monasteries in Tibet such as Gyantse, Salu, where the visitors can clearly see the influence of Newar artists.

Sculpture and painting are seen integrated in her series of 'Birds are Flying'. She has painted the bird in symbolic form. Here, she could recollect migrating birds from Siberia to Nepal in winter. They fly very high over the Himalayas. Their sounds could be heard. Figures are faint. But one could recall a philosophic description or palpable vision. One could also smell the scent of the unseen flowers. Her art works remain highly symbolic. The understanding of meaning of Pramila's artworks depends on the religious, cultural, philosophic knowledge of the viewers,

The title of her exhibition held in 2018 was 'My Roots'. She is said to dedicate the

show to her widowed grandmother. She considers her as her roots who supported, encouraged and inspired her.

As a keen art lover and visitor I found the art creations of Pramila philosophic and symbolic. The colours, forms and figures give us the meaning and feeling that surpass our literally descriptions. One cannot normally express the impressions and feelings completely.

Thus, she has philosophically displayed the interest and love as the roots. So, her search and devotion in religion has led her to the symbols of Bhairav. Her roots can be interpreted as the invisible spiritual power of Bhairav. She has expressed it all in her varied paintings in harmonious colours. The symbolic forms and shapes draw the deep interest of viewers, and the colours attract senses and feelings.



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Books on art – "R.N. Joshi", 2006 and "Fifty Years of Nepal art Council", 2nd in English. He often enjoys Painting with other artists in the field.