

ALLAHABAD MUNICIPAL MUSEUM

A German's Paintings

ALLAHABAD, Jan. 27.

Anagarika B. Govind, a German Buddhist monk and a well-known artist, has given about 100 of his beautiful paintings and drawings to the Allahabad municipal museum.

The museum authorities have dedicated a room to the art of Anagarika B. Govind, the opening ceremony of which is proposed to be held on or about Feb. 28. Anagarika B. Govind is on a visit to Allahabad and he is the guest of Rai Bahadur Braj Mohan Vyas, executive officer of the municipal board. The Allahabad citizens had recently the opportunity of witnessing an exhibition of the works of this artist in the Annie Besant Memorial Hall.

Thus there will be three separate halls in the Allahabad municipal museum dedicated to the art of three artists, Roerich, Haldar and Anagarika B. Govind.

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was taken to the word dishonest by several members of the Unionist party.

The Speaker, intervening, pointed out to Dewan Chamanlal that as the word dishonest was unparliamentary the latter should withdraw it. Dewan Chamanlal refused stating that he had a right to question a member's political honesty. The Speaker did not accept this explanation and asked Dewan Chamanlal either to withdraw the word or leave the House for the day. Thereupon Dewan Chamanlal walked out.

After lunch, the Speaker announced that the leader of the Opposition had approached him to allow Dewan Chamanlal to attend the House. Although under the rules he must remain out, but since many members were missing him, he had no objection if the House had no objection.

The Premier said that the word used by Dewan Chamanlal was very improper, but probably he did not wish to insinuate against any member. Therefore the Government had no objection to his return.

Dewan Chamanlal, thereupon entered the House.—*A. P. I.*

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**INDIAN ARTISTS
HONOURED**
FUNCTION AT ALLAHABAD

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

ALLAHABAD, March 2.

A delightful ceremony was performed by Dr. Rai Rajeshwar Bali, ex-Minister of Education, U. P. when he performed the ceremony of dedicating two halls in the Allahabad Municipal Museum to house the paintings of Mr. Asit Kumar Haldar and Mr. Anagarika Govinda. Mr. R. N. Basu presided over the function.

Rai Bahadur Pandit Brij Mohan Vyas read two messages received from Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore and Dr. Nicholas Roerich.

The meeting was then addressed by the two artists whose paintings are to be housed in the two halls. Mr. Haldar said that Art colours life as sunlight colours the flowers. He added that he was deeply moved to see that the authorities had signified in the creation of the Hall the supreme importance of art in the daily life of all. Mr. Anagarika Govinda expressed pleasure that his paintings have found a home in Aryavarta.

Dr. Rajeshwar Bali then delivered his presidential address in the course of which he emphasised that the opening of these halls was a unique occasion in the history of Indian Art, for he believed that it was the first time that a municipal corporation had taken upon itself the dedication of two entire halls to the genius of two living artists.

After referring to the fact that well-equipped museums were a common feature of the civic amenities provided by a modern city, Dr. Bali stated that the absence of such institutions in the civic life of an Indian city might be partly due to lack of funds, but, much more, perhaps, to apathy and lack of imagination and effort on the part of its citizens.

Dr. Rajeshwar Bali then proceeded to point out the merits of the arts of both the artists, Mr. Haldar and Mr. Anagarika Govinda. As regards Mr. Haldar, he said, that to comprehend his art, people should bear in mind the three distinctive qualities which pervaded it, the lyricism of line, the harmony of colour and the mystic significance of its purpose. In the paintings of Anagarika Govinda, one found the expression of a highly sensitive soul, seeking through form and colour, the eternal verities that lie concealed from the eye of the ordinary man.

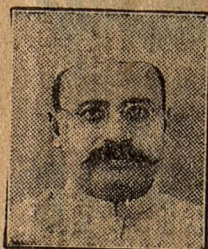
INDIAN ART

RAI RAJESHWAR BALI'S
SPEECHAllahabad Municipal
Museum Function

Two halls dedicated to the paintings and drawings of two more notable artists, Prof. Asit Kumar Haldar, and Anagarika B. Govinda, a German Buddhist monk, were opened in the Allahabad Municipal Museum on Feb. 28 afternoon, as appeared in a recent issue of the LEADER.

DR. RAJESHWAR BALI'S SPEECH

Dr. Rajeshwar Bali, opening the Asit Kumar Hall said that the opening of that hall was a unique occasion in the history of Indian art for he believed that it was for the first time that a municipal corporation had taken upon itself the dedication of an entire hall to the genius of a living Indian artist.

MUSEUMS AND MUNICIPAL
CORPORATIONS

A well-equipped museum, said he, was a common feature of the civic amenities provided by a modern city in the west. There were smaller municipal galleries, in addition to representative national institutions, in almost every modern city in the west adding to the joy of civic life and making the municipal corporation a centre for the dissemination of art and culture. The Birmingham and Liverpool galleries were notable examples of what a municipality could achieve in that direction. The absence of such institutions in the civic life of an Indian city might be partly due to lack of funds, but, perhaps much more to apathy and lack of imagination and effort on the part of its citizens. For though they might be poor in other respects, there was no dearth of material of historical and archaeological interest within reach of almost every important city of India with which to equip a museum of permanent value which should serve as a constant reminder of the great days of that neighbourhood for which not only the people of that city but the whole of India might be proud.

ALLAHABAD'S LEAD

Allahabad had always occupied a distinctive and peculiarly important position in the shifting scenes of civilization; and the country round about it abounded in the relics of the glorious past. That it should have been left to Rai Bahadur Pandit B. M. Vyas, the popular executive officer of the Allahabad municipal board, to collect together that rich material of abiding value was as much a tribute to his energy as to his imagination and genuine interest in our glorious heritage, and Dr. Rajeshwar Bali congratulated the citizens of Allahabad and especially Rai Bahadur Braj Mohan Vyas, on their unique enterprise and on the lead they had given to other local bodies in India in that matter. The Allahabad museum was, he added, an accomplished fact and he wholeheartedly associated himself with the demand of the citizens that the Government should give the municipal board an adequate grant to meet the growing needs of the museum and provide a suitable building to house the collection.

FATAL INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH
EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

In the course of his remarks about the works of Mr. Haldar and paying a tribute to his artistic genius, Dr. Rajeshwar Bali said that Indian art from the beginning of the nineteenth century till about the beginning of the present one, had been under a social and intellectual shadow not easily paralleled in history. It might have been supposed that with the restoration of law and order under British rule, the artist, who had fallen into disgrace and disrepute and who was atrophying for want of patronage, would at least find conditions revived for the development of his creative genius. But the impact of western civilization brought with it problems much more difficult for the Indian artist than he had hitherto faced. As British influence and power extended, the credit of Indian art fell lower and lower.

Nothing had contributed more to that process of degeneration than the fatal influence of the English system of education in India. Originally designed to be the breeding ground of clerks for carrying on the administration, the universities in India sedulously cultivated the idea that all that was best came from the West and that the heritage of India was not worth a half-penny. It was well known now that Bentinck, the founder of the western system of education in India, looked at Indian art so scornfully that he was prevented from selling the Taj Mahal for the value of its marbles because the proceeds of a test auction of materials from the Agra palace proved unsatisfactory. And Macaulay did not hesitate to declare his conviction that the whole of Indian and Arabic literature was not worth a single bookshelf of a good European library.

'No wonder then', Dr. Rajeshwar Bali remarked, 'that under the denationalizing influence of this system of education, the average Indian student, with all his remarkable assimilative powers, grew up with his aesthetic and creative faculties deplorably warped. He was brought up to appreciate western art and culture and seldom cared to study his own. And whenever he did, he applied the western canons of criticism to their valuation and thus became supremely contemptuous of his own heritage.'

MISTAKE OF WESTERN CRITICS

Continuing, Dr. Rajeshwar Bali said that that intellectual domination of the West in the latter part of the last century resulted in the production of some monstrous art. The fundamental mistake of the Western critics of Indian art had been that they had applied indiscriminately the standards of the West to the art of the East. It must, however, be remembered that though art, in one sense, was a universal language, the finer inflections of it were so intimately associated with national life and thought that no one could pretend to understand any distinctly national phase of it, who ignored the national environment in which it was nurtured.

FIRST SYMPATHETIC CRITICS

Dr. Rajeshwar Bali pointed out that the fundamental difference in the artistic ideals of the East and the West was brought out prominently in the midst of the general neglect, and even contempt, of our own countrymen, by the first sympathetic critics of Indian art, such as Mr. E. B. Havell and Dr. A. Coomarswamy. A mighty genius appeared on the scene and Abanindra Nath Tagore laid the foundation of the new Bengal school of art which had for its aim the expression of the new on the lines of the old. But the sponsors of the new movement, who were all the highly educated men, could not remain content with the mere reproduction of the old forms. Fortunately for the development of Indian painting on characteristically Indian lines, the early period of the new school almost synchronized with the publication by Mr. Griffiths of his two volumes on that great art heritage of India, the cave paintings of Ajanta. They opened new vistas of vision, of kaleidoscopic variety of form and colour, which, though they had been the fountain head of all artistic practice in India during the last 15 centuries, had lost much of their original charm and vigour through their association with a different aim in life during the medieval period. It had always appeared to him, said Dr. Rajeshwar Bali, that while in ancient India the emphasis of artistic endeavour lay on its unbounded vastness, infinite variety and a sublime grandeur of conception, the keynote of the medieval period was the attainment of perfection and the development of exquisite forms of beauty in a limited sphere.

It was not surprising that the imagination of the young artists of the new school, who were eager to interpret the complicated life of the present day, was fired by the never-quenching flames of Ajanta for the art of Ajanta was not only based on Indian cultural ideals and Indian motifs but it was also capable of yielding itself to varied treatment.

TRIBUTE TO MR. HALDAR

Mr. Haldar was one of those who went there in 1909 to copy the frescoes and thus he had the opportunity of imbibing its spirit at

first hand. Mr. Haldar was not merely an artist of line and colour; his wonderful paintings had a deeper significance. His paintings were like mythical poems expressed in superb language. That was due perhaps to the fact that Mr. Haldar was himself a poet of considerable achievements. Mr. Haldar was one of the creators and, so far, the greatest representative of a distinctive phase, a particular mode of the modern art of India. Since his arrival at the Lucknow School of Arts and Crafts, the speaker added, Mr. Haldar had given a new direction to the methods and ideals followed there. They could easily see the Orient coming to its own there not only in the higher domain of pictorial and plastic art, but even in the designs of furniture and everyday household requisites. But an atmosphere had yet to be created among the public for the proper appreciation of works of such a high order as those of Mr. Haldar.

TRIBUTE TO ANAGARIKA GOVINDA

Dr. Rajeshwar Bali next paid a tribute to the Anagarika Govinda, a German Monk, while opening the hall dedicated to the works of that artist. Haldar's genius, he said, was rooted in the soil of India; Anagarika Govinda was a pilgrim whom the search for peace and truth had brought to this ancient land of theirs. In his paintings they saw the expression of a highly sensitive soul, seeking through form and colour, the eternal verities that lay concealed from the eye of the ordinary man.

MR. HALDAR

Mr. Asit Kumar Haldar in the course of his speech, thanking the authorities of the municipal board of Allahabad for setting apart a room specially for his work in their museum said that there were two schools of thought so far as appreciation of art was concerned. One school believed that art was a necessary factor of life, while the other held that it was a mere embellishment and as such not very important and that it simply gave expression to the superfluous human energy like sports and other amusements. Many of them had, however, noticed how people degenerated into cynics and lost all the finer sympathies and sensibilities under the hard pressure of life which made them oblivious of everything save wage-earning and money-making till at last they were devoid of every feeling for creative work and in the end they tried to cry down all that was beautiful and inspiring in life. To these people the speaker could only say that it was in the museums of art that one could feel the living minds of creative artists and that could not be done in an atmosphere of mass production and machine-made articles. By a happy coincidence his works, Mr. Haldar added, had been placed alongside those of the great modern master Prof. Nicholas de Roerich and also of his friend rev. Anagarika B. Govinda. He believed that in such company the value of his works would be enhanced.

ANAGARIKA B. GOVINDA

In the course of his remarks, Anagarika B. Govinda said that his paintings had been wandering about in three continents. They had lived with him the life of a houseless pilgrim. From the blue shores of the Mediterranean through the burning deserts of Africa, the green paradise of Ceylon, and the eternal snows of the Himalayas, they had found their way to that sacred land of Aryavarta. And there their pilgrimage has come to an end, because they had found a home,—in both the material as in the spiritual sense—because they had not only been housed in a temple of art, but they had found a home as well in the hearts of many people there. That, indeed, was the greatest joy to him, because he was convinced that it was the highest function of art to remove the hindrances which kept them separated from each other and to unite them in a purer and

nobler realm in which the brotherhood of the spirit was realized. His feelings of joy were intensified by the circumstances that his work had been placed in the company of the works of such masters like Nicholas Roerich and Asit Kumar Haldar. Whatever their differences in style and expression might be, one element was common to all of them—the deep reverence for the great message of ancient India and the firm conviction that the future of humanity would depend on the realization of that message within each of them.

It was, indeed, a unique and shining example for other cities what Allahabad, he added, had done for the cultural welfare of its citizens. As Tagore said in his message the Allahabad municipal corporation was the only one in the whole of India which had taken a lead in the matter of establishing art galleries. Allahabad might be well proud of that testimonial. People generally associated the idea of municipal work with the upkeep of buildings, roads, and drains, and the extraction of taxes, but the Allahabad municipal board had shown that the cultural life of a city was as much the concern of city-fathers as the so-called practical duties. The Allahabad municipality had rendered a great service not only to the inhabitants of Allahabad but also to hundreds and thousands of visitors by maintaining that museum which had been brought into existence by the zeal and untiring effort of Rai Bahadur Pandit Braj Mohan Vyas.

MESSAGES

The following message was received from Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore for the occasion, by Mr. Vyas:—

I have had the occasion to congratulate the Allahabad municipal corporation in organizing the only municipal art gallery in India. I am glad to learn that your interest in the venture remains unabated. It is indeed a great joy to me that you are now having a special hall dedicated to the art of Asit Kumar Haldar, who, as you are no doubt, aware, was intimately connected with me and my institution in the formative years of his life as an artist. Wishing you continued success in your great enterprise.

The following message was received from Prof. Nicholas Roerich:—

It was a great joy for me to hear about the inauguration of special halls in the Allahabad municipal museum in honour of Asit Kumar Haldar and Anagarika Govinda. This dedication is precisely along the lines of progressive modern thought. Such a festival of the East and West confirms my motto that 'the best roses of the East and the West have the same fragrance'. Both artists, each in his line, expresses modern aspirations based on the corner-stone of wise ancient traditions. The dedication of a hall to one artist should be greeted already from that point of view that only in studying a series of creations one can profoundly appreciate the master. In spirit I am with you on the day of the celebration—Vijaya Haldar! Vijaya Govinda!

The function terminated with a

TWO FAMOUS PAINTERS

ASIT HALDAR

By RABINDRA NATH DEB

TO build up a museum which is large and representative, to collect the works of world famous artists and all this without funds, without encouragement, and that, too, within the brief space of about half-a-dozen years sounds nothing short of a miracle. And yet, one has to see the Allahabad Municipal Museum to believe that such a miracle can happen even today, provided one has the driving energy and the firm determination with which Mr. Brij Mohan Vyas is inspired. For six years he and his friend, Mr. R. C. Tandon, have worked patiently and silently and the result is the Allahabad Municipal Museum, which is a monument of Mr. Vyas's power of organization and taste and culture.

The public of Allahabad owe Mr. Vyas and Mr. Tandon a debt of gratitude which cannot be expressed in words but which one realizes when one stands awe-struck before the canvasses of Roerich with their grandeur of the Himalayas or when one sees the divine felicity of Mr. Haldar's lines or sees the subtle colouring of the pastels of Anagarika B. Govinda.

Slightly more than a year ago the Roerich Hall was opened at the Museum. Two more halls will be opened formally today, on this day of Shivaratri, where will be kept the paintings of Mr. Asit Haldar and Bramhachari Govinda. I do not know how we can express our gratitude to these artists for making these valuable presents to the museum.

Mr. Asit Kumar Haldar requires no introduction. He is one of the foremost pupils of Dr. Abanindranath Tagore.

MESSAGE OF JOY

Oriental painting emphasizes the beauty of line instead of mass of colours. Mr. Haldar is one of the greatest masters of line. He is at his best when the subject is full of poetry, full of grace and beauty. Then his lines seem to flow in magic-soft colours. In the 'DANCE OF THE SEASONS' we find that happy fluidity of lines, the slender grace and the balance that he can give to the figures. Each figure is a complete whole and yet the group of seasons dancing round the central figure of Krishna—they complete the picture. Here is pure beauty of lines carried to perfection. We feel the soft roundness of the maidens' limbs, we almost feel their silken skin—so eloquent are these lines. We see those long slender fingers charged with poetry and we see in them a message of joy, of beauty.

I have always felt that no other artist in India can render such happy themes with so much grace and joy and refinement as Mr. Haldar does. If we do not find in him the strength and solidity of firm lines of Mr. Nandalal Bose we need not quarrel with him. If we do not find in his lines the philosophical anarchism of Mr. Sharda Charan Ukil or the Vaishnava purity of Mr. T. Muzumdar it is not Mr. Haldar's fault. In his lines we get the joy of pure grace, which at its highest have the ethereal brightness of Shelly's imagination, and which have the delicacy and richness that lovely moon-beams have on still winter nights.

PROFOUND OBSERVATION

But that does not mean that Mr. Haldar cannot take up more serious themes. I stood spell-bound before his work where Asoka gives alms to the Bhikshus. It is no use expatiating on its compositional value. We all know that Mr. Haldar is a master. The dominating figure is that of Asoka dressed in a Bhikshu's garb when he is giving alms to the Bhikshus. The Bhikshu's right arm is extended receiving the alms from the emperor and the other Bhikshus show respect and reverence and pay homage to the royal personage, whose eyes are full of a benign majesty and calm, 'all passion spent', and who looks on steadily ahead gazing beyond the Apparent, realizing the Real. The emperor is old. He stoops slightly and that adds a regal majesty to his figure, an effulgent purity spreading from him. We see the folds on the skin, especially on

(Concluded at foot of Col. 2)

ANAGARIKA GOVINDA

CONTRIBUTED

IN a parallel column on this page, Mr. R. N. Deb has given a description of some of the paintings which now decorate the Haldar Hall. It would only be appropriate to give a very short account of the Govinda Hall, which is located adjacent to the Haldar Hall.

For one thing the Govinda Hall has the advantage of being planned in every detail by the artist himself, and is most impressive in its unity and well-balanced arrangement. The lower part of the walls is covered by wood panels and low cabinets, both of which are decorated with rows of brush drawings of the 84 Siddhas (Buddhist mystics), which the artist has copied from stone-engravings in Tibet. The wall space above the panels, which has been done in delicate cream distemper, is occupied by two rows of pastel paintings. The lower row contains 20 pictures of middle size hung at eye-level; the upper row consists of 10 big pastels which Anagarika Govinda has specially painted for the hall so as to represent the main periods of his life and work in Italy, Africa, India and Tibet. At the same time they show the variety of his work in the treatment of landscapes, architecture, figures, and abstract composition.

RICHNESS OF COLOUR SCHEME

When entering the hall the visitor is at once struck by the richness of the colour scheme which characterises all his paintings. In the centre of the north wall our interest is attracted by two powerful pastels, one showing the view from within one of the big caves at Capri upon the blue Mediterranean. The artist used to retire into this cave for his meditations, and it was here that he received some of his best inspirations. The other picture belongs to the same period and depicts a narrow gorge called the Valley of Horrors. On either side are pictures of the Tibetan period, namely the Buddhist saint 'Milarepa', and the 'Hemis Monastery' now occupied by his followers. Above the entrances on the east and west walls preside two Bodhi-attvas rendered in traditional style. The most important pictures on the south wall are 'The Sacred Lake', a Tibetan landscape, and 'Volcano', belonging to the African group of the artist's pictures. India is represented by 'Koais and Houses', a typical Bengal landscape near Santiniketan. Of the abstracts, 'The Entrance into Dante's Inferno' occupies the right side of the east wall.

ABSTRACTS

Among the middle-sized pastels the Tibetan motifs prevail, but the smaller group of African paintings, dealing mostly with architectural subjects, convey the religious atmosphere of Islam. Mention also needs to be made of the artist's abstracts, expressing his experiences in meditation, the group of three such pictures on the south wall representing the fundamental form and colours of our universe in their essential relationship.

The general impression of these paintings is one of seriousness and pursuit of high purpose in art. In the words of Nandalal Bose, 'They are composed with form and colour only to produce the feeling developed by an artist in his *dhyana* after intimate observation from nature'. Anagarika Govinda only continues the lofty traditions of the old Buddhist monks who had found a reconciliation in their lives between the claims of art and those of religion.

(Continued from col. 1)

the chins and each line shows the artist's profound observation.

GLORIOUS COLOURING

The two panels done in lacquer require greater space than I have at my disposal. Of them some time later. Suffice it to mention that both of these paintings show glorious colouring. 'AKBAR THE BUILDER' and 'CHAITANYA DEVA' show a strange combination of strength and grace. And in 'AKBAR THE BUILDER' one cannot help mentioning the superb sense of balance between the elaborate, delicate detail of the emperor's Angarkha and picturesque strength and simplicity of the labourers laying the bricks. Here too Mr. Haldar has seized the dramatic movement which he so beautifully captures in the half finished work, 'CHAITANYA',

PAINTING

THE ART OF ANAGARIKA B. GOVINDA; by R. C. Tandon, with 15 illustrations.

THE ART OF ASIT K. HALDAR; by R. C. Tandon, with 14 illustrations.

—Published by the Roerich Centre of Art and Culture, Allahabad.

Thanks to the energy and enterprise of Rai Bahadur Pandit Braj Mohan Vyas and Mr. Ramchandra Tandon, Allahabad has been privileged to welcome several distinguished artists and to attract specially the attention of Nicholas Roerich. The Municipal Museum has some very fine specimens of the work of Roerich himself. But in addition the Roerich Centre has done much to enable the public of Allahabad to see the work of artists like Haldar, Vijaivargiya, Bruster, Amrita Sher Gill, Anagarika Govinda, and some other younger artists. Scores of young men and women have thus had the opportunity of examining and studying the original work of several artists. These exhibitions have been of immense educational importance. But Mr. Tandon has not been content with only organizing exhibitions. He makes it possible for readers to study these works of art at leisure. In several interesting brochures he introduces us to the life and work of the artists whose paintings have been exhibited under the auspices of the Roerich Centre. The two latest brochures are before us. Mr. Tandon's remarks are carefully worded, and show a keen sensitiveness to beauty and a sound knowledge of technique. He is not like the fashionable art critic, so mercilessly caricatured in one of Fougasse's drawings, who on being asked if he liked a certain picture in an exhibition, replied: 'Well, I think the organic sensibility inherent in the subject is certainly very beautifully brought out by the rhythmic balance of its planes'. From this jargon Mr. Tandon's criticism is entirely free. We should like to express our appreciation also of the excellence of the reproductions.