

RAVI VARMA

(A MONOGRAPH)



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K. P. PADMANABHAN TAMPY, B. A.

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BY

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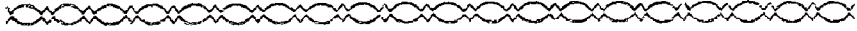
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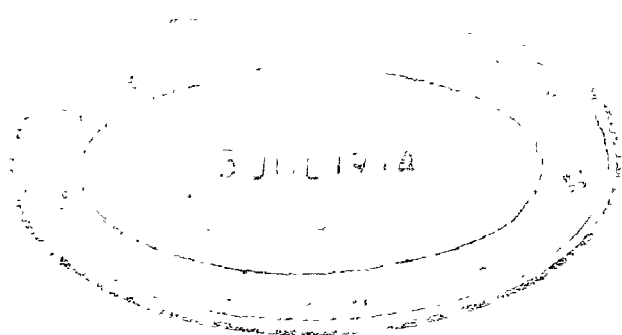
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DEDICATED

By Gracious Permission,

TO

Her Most Gracious Highness

The Junior Maha Rance

of Travancore.



INTRODUCTION.



RAVI VARMA was easily the most popular painter in India in the last century. He enjoyed a vogue which has not been surpassed. He was courted by princes and his pictures had a remarkable appeal to the common people. He created a tradition, and has had numberless imitators, none of whom has shown his gifts. His color schemes, physical types and back grounds have become the 'stock' of popular art, and are now features of the pictures 'made in Germany' to advertise European Soap on the Indian country side. He created a widespread taste for decoration in the Indian home, and cheap reproductions of his famous paintings have, like the ubiquitous Dietz lantern, spread to every nook and corner of India. He created fashions in dress, ornament and pose, and his heroines have become models, in dress and deportment, to the young womanhood of modern India. The Stage and the Cinema illustrate his enduring influence. His pictorial representations of Puranic legends and the stories in the ancient

Indian Classics have done more to create and keep alive interest in ancient Indian traditional lore than all our Oriental institutes. His tireless brush did the work of myriads of special educators, and created the pride in Indian History, tradition and custom, which forms the solid foundation of Indian Nationalism. He furnished the historic background to our nascent patriotism. It has been given to few other painters to exercise so much and on the whole such beneficial influence. He has earned for himself a place in Indian social history.

In life, the artist was shy and self-effacing. He was virtually self-taught. His subjects, rather than his artistic methods, had their roots in Indian tradition. His outlook on painting was not based on any such real knowledge or love of the ideals of ancient Indian art, as we find today in the Bengal School. A Ravi Varma picture will look an anachronism in a portfolio of ancient Indian paintings. No painter is able to get over the subtle influences which make him idealise his own racial type and the environment of his home. Ravi Varma's pictures illustrate this principle. His heroes and heroines, gods and goddesses are idealized or decorated Malayalees: his landscape,

fauna and flora are those of his mother-country Kerala.

Opinions might be divided on Ravi Varma's merits as an artist but they can not be on his vast and lasting influence, as a unifying Indian—and *Hindu*—force.

Studies of Ravi Varma's life and work are regrettably few. He is being forgotten in the land, for whose common people he brought some joy in life. It has been a happy thought of my old pupil, Mr. K. P. Padmanabhan Tampy, to make a beginning in correcting an omission, which reflects on the short memories of people.

His Sketch is informed by knowledge and irradiated by sympathy and insight, and will be welcome to those who admire and love modern Indian Art.

K. V. Rangaswami.

Raghava Vilasa,
TRIVANDRUM,
7th July 1934.

PREFATORY NOTE



IN the history of the Fine Arts as with the other departments of human activity certain masters have appeared from time to time and cut out new and enlightened paths. Ravi Varma, the Painter among Princes and Prince among Painters, was one such towering personality who added enormously to the artistic and cultural treasures of the world.

For generations past, men of genius—poets, artists and scholars—have come out of the cradles of the Travancore aristocracy. Ravi Varma was the greatest of them.

For high sense of beauty, moral and intellectual greatness, emotional fervour, subtlety of rhythm, untranslatable delicacy and abundant richness of colour, Ravi Varma's Paintings have won universal appreciation. They are enduring and charming expressions of a supreme culture. Abundant and spontaneous in imagination, daring and appealing in originality, remarkable alike in

conception and composition, *Ravi Varma Pictures* present in canvas in the most captivating manner, a whole people, an entire civilisation, rich in tradition and great in culture.

The encouragement so willingly and cheerfully extended to the writer by his friends and well-wishers (who have recorded their appreciation of his articles on Ravi Varma contributed to some of the South Indian Periodicals) has induced him to bring out this brochure. So the writer rushes into authorship and hopes the tyro would be judged sympathetically.

The writer is fully conscious of his mighty limitations. This booklet is but an approach to Ravi Varma and is not built on any ambitious plan. This humble literary attempt does not boast of originality and the author has not made any discovery.

The writer would feel happy if this brochure would act as a guide and cicerone to further study of the Artist. The aim of this little book is to draw the goodhearted, sympathetic and understanding reader to an imperishable human influence in Indian social history.

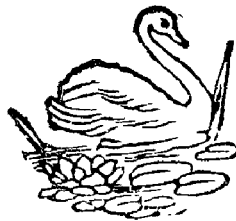
III

To Rao Bahadur K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, M. A., F. R. H. S., the celebrated scholar, the author is deeply indebted for the very valuable Introduction to this brochure. The writer expresses his best thanks to all those eminent men who have encouraged him with their appreciations. (printed towards the close of the book).

The author has great pleasure in recording his appreciation of the Press—the premier in the State—for the neat execution of the booklet.

With good faith in the wide sympathies of the public, the author—a youth of one and twenty—sets afloat his Flotilla.

AUTHOR.





RAJA RAVI VARMA.

RAVI VARMA

(A MONOGRAPH)

RAVI VARMA Koil Tampuran was unquestionably the greatest Indian Artist of his day. Even now he is held in great esteem as one of the foremost artists of India, nay, of the world at large. He was the founder of a new school of painting, which at the present day has many followers. Amidst the glorious galaxy of distinguished personalities of the world who have contributed vastly to the domain of art, the name of Ravi Varma looms large. His work awakened deep interest throughout India and his remarkable influence crossed the waters to far off lands. He came to be looked upon as a gifted artist who possessed an exquisite and exalted sense of the true, the sublime and the beautiful. In the history

of the progress of painting in Travancore, no other name is so famous and arresting as that of Ravi Varma.

In the ancient and historic village of Kilimanoor, there still stands the mansion where three generations ago was born the greatest of Indian painters, Ravi Varma. Not only was he the greatest of Indian Artists, but his place is among the divinely inspired artists of the world.

Kilimanoor Palace has been from days past famous in the art of painting. The male and female members of that illustrious royal house were and are gifted with very high tastes for painting, music and other fine arts. In such a great family of soundly established traditions, was born the genius, Ravi Varma, the talented artist who won for himself international reputation and made over to his glorious motherland a seat of honour in the world of art. It is indeed eminently refreshing to note that the reputed royal house of Kilimanoor continues to maintain and further its glorious traditions in painting. The late Ravi Varma Koil Tampuran's nephew, Mr. K. R. Ravi Varma, is an artist of exceptionally brilliant

talents. At the present time in Travancore, Mr. Ravi Varma is the best and unrivalled portrait painter. No less distinguished is the late Artist's son Mr. Rama Varma. He is an artist of outstanding merits and maintains most admirably the traditions of his family. Only recently did he return from a continental tour during which he exhibited some of his pictures.

Raja Ravi Varma received his early training at the hands of his learned uncle, Raja Raja Varma Koil Tampuran, who had well developed taste for painting and who won his laurels as the supreme artist in Malabar of the time. His works of art are outstanding for their mastery of all technicalities of painting, fidelity to nature and instinct besides being brimful with life. He was one of the good and godly souls who loved the noble art for its own sake. It must be said with abounding reverence for him, that he was a favourite and devoted votary of the Goddess of Art. As was the usual custom in all the noble and aristocratic families of the age, Raja Ravi Varma while very young was placed under the family tutor (*Kula Guru*) to study Sanskrit. The predilections

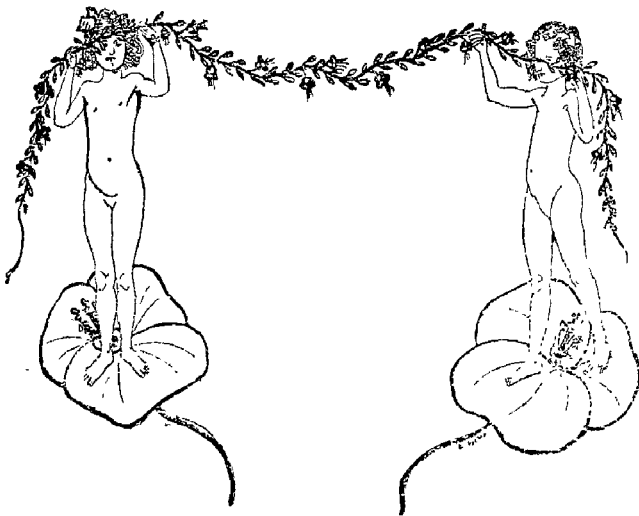
of the youth were in a different line—Drawing, Painting and mastering the Classics. He made drawings with charcoal on the walls and floors of the family mansion. His sole attention while a student was upon drawing. In his note book were not notes, but sketches. In his mind were not ponderings upon the subtilities of Sanskrit phraseology, but impressions of the effect of light, profound and somber, faint and evanescent and its relation to the beautiful. He paid greatest attention to light in its sublimest form. As time passed it became evident that the lad was destined to be an artist first and foremost. The lad became a different being with a pencil and paper in his hands. So was Rembrandt the celebrated Dutch Painter. He had no taste for books. Always he was drawing, sketching, picturing and always he was fascinated almost fully by changing depths of shadow and the beautiful effect of fine light. The uncle of the youth, Raja Raja Varma, watched his nephew with great pleasure. Young Raja Ravi Varma took his first lessons from his uncle who was a clever master of the brush. Ravi Varma began to portray in

eloquent colours, striking scenes from the fabulously opulent lore of Hindu Mythology.

This was his fertile field of exploration in which he achieved marvellously tremendous success almost unapproached even by the greatest artists of modern times. At this period of his career, Theodore Jensen, an English Painter, eminently skilled in portrait drawing, paid a visit to Travancore. Ravi Varma the young and aspiring artist, was introduced to the English Master, who at once understood the genius of the youth. Theodore Jensen, for the first time in the life of Ravi Varma, revealed to him the immense possibilities that opened before him with high promises in the realm of oil colours. The technical difficulties Raja Ravi Varma overcame with ease. What seized the master with almost breathless admiration was the manner in which the youthful artist manipulated the light and shade upon the face of the subject. The drawing bore every evidence of painstaking work. There was no suggestion of slackness. Ravi Varma knew what he was after and knew too that he must work hard to reach his goal. Soon the

ideal teacher Jensen understood that he had nothing more which he could impart to his pupil. The meeting with Jensen was a turning point in the career of Ravi Varma who was bound to thrill the world with his immortal and inimitable productions.

“ The spirit of a youth
That means to be note, begins betimes.”



II

RAVI VARMA took the fire from Theodore Jensen, the broadminded portrait painter, whose works of art were decidedly of a high order. The ambitious and intelligent youth took to his brush and pigments more interestedly and assiduously with the result that he met with increasing success, which never once went down the scale of great height and glory. To have been young and gifted, to have worked, dreamed and achieved everlasting fame—that was the reward of Ravi Varma. The first portraits he painted were those of the members of the royal house. He had as his models the excellent and perfect pictures of Jensen. Ravi Varma's concrete and real studies on canvas were much praised by discerning art critics. Encouragement willingly and judiciously

given, gave the enterprising budding artist great impetus for higher work. Next he entered the domain of imagination where his fine and well-developed genius found ample scope for winning world fame as a master painter of first-rate portraits. He won his spurs for the first time and in the midst of keen competition, at the Fine Arts Exhibition of 1873, at which he was honoured with the much coveted Governor's Medal. The painting was that of an aristocratic Nair Lady at toilet. This piece of art showed very great powers in the rising artist and opened the eyes of all. The teeming originality and supreme beauty of the picture which was most true to life gave rise to rapturous sensation in the art circles of South India. Now Raja Ravi Varma was on the road to immortal fame and fortune smiled on him most graciously. He found a powerful rival in the person of Ramaswamy Naidu a courtier of the Madura Naicks who was a clever Painter. At that time Ramaswamy Naidu, was at the court of Travancore a protege of the First Prince. Naidu was extremely jealous of the young Artist who was fast becoming famous. Ravi

Varma often approached Naidu for guidance which of course the envious Artist flatly refused to give. Thereupon Ravi Varma felt wounded and worked with his brush carefully, vigorously, and with vengeance. Needless to say ere long he eclipsed his powerful rival and added one more feather to his cap. Ravi Varma fanned into flame the fire of his own genius. In him there was neither presumption nor conceit; there was merely knowledge—knowledge that the kind of art which he was destined to produce was an art in which he must look to no one for instruction.

In January 1873 Ravi Varma was united in wedlock with the younger sister of the late Senior Rani C I. whose consort was Kerala Varma Valia Koil Tampuran the distinguished literary genius and father of an epoch making renaissance in Malayalam literature.

(In this connection it is interesting to remember that H. H. Sree Chitra Thirunal is the direct grandson of Raja Ravi Varma—the Queen Mother's mother being the daughter of the Great Artist.)

His Highness Sree Vishakam Thirunal, prince among patrons of art and literature, took Ravi Varma under his patronage and provided him with a wellfurnished studio in a wing of the palace. Soon he became the friend and companion of the Maharajah.

As advised by the Maharajah, Ravi Varma went to Madras and interviewed Lord Hobart, the then Governor. His Excellency felt great pleasure on seeing the young Painter's picture and eulogised it. This picture won for Ravi Varma the Gold Medal. Later on the picture was sent to the Great International Exhibition at Vienna where it was honoured with a Gold Medal and Certificate. Now with all help and recognition from the enlightened ruler of the State, Ravi Varma worked with his brush inspired by overwhelming earnestness. This certainly was a great step. In the next year's Exhibition at Madras, Ravi Varma won the Gold Medal for the picture of a Tamil Lady playing on a Sarabat. This along with a couple of other Paintings were presented to H. M. The King Emperor when His Majesty visited India in 1875 as the Prince of Wales.

III

THE enterprising artist began to paint the celebrated classical themes. The first classical subject he made over to canvas was Sakuntala's Love Epistle to Dushyantha. This picture is an exquisite reflection of his ideal—every picture must have in it sparks of the divine element without which the portrayal of humanity is naught but surface study. This brought him the Governor-General's Gold Medal in 1878. The picture was a crowning success and attracted the attention of the Duke of Buckingham who purchased it and adorned his home with the masterpiece. The next year, a life size portrait of the Duke was painted by Ravi Varma for the Government House. This is one of his most successful works and proclaims the genius of the artist.

Paintings of other Governors by distinguished European Artists hang side by side with Raja Ravi Varma's life-like study of the Duke. The Duke was deeply struck with the artistic excellence and true to life nature of the picture. He remarked with great warmth that even in spite of his having given nearly eighteen sittings to an eminent European Artist, he had not succeeded in painting such a perfect portrait. At the suggestion of the Maharajah, Ravi Varma portrayed Seetha's Ordeal of Banishment of Rama. This picture pleased His Highness—himself an art connoisseur of the first water—most. Raja Sir T. Madhava Row, saw the picture and purchased it immediately. It was placed on exhibition at the Poona Arts Exhibition of 1880 and won the Gaekwar's Gold Medal. Sir James Ferguson, Governor of Bombay saw the charming picture and almost fell in love with it. He wanted to have the portrait, but was disappointed on knowing that it belonged to Sir T. Madhava Row and was not for sale. So Sir Ferguson requested Sir T. Madhava Row to get for him another picture of the type. Raja Ravi Varma was asked to produce a replica for the

Governor. This was done and Sir James presented the Artist with a costly collection of the Photographs of the English Royal House as a token of appreciation.

In 1885, Raja Ravi Varma was invited to Mysore by His Highness The Maharajah to paint pictures of His Highness and Children. H. H. The Gaekwar of Baroda invited the Artist to his Court in 1888. Ravi Varma spent a couple of years at Baroda, contributing a number of excellent pictures to the Art Gallery of the Palace. The Portraits depict in true, enchanting colours some of the brilliant and picturesque scenes from Hindu Mythology. A fine set of fourteen first-rate Paintings adorns the Palace representing choicest scenes from the Hindu Epics, in all their divine glory and grandeur. These pictures caught public attention and eventually proved to be his *tour de force*. In these pictures the draughtsmanship is admirable—astonishing in its facility. For anatomical perfection and perfection of perception of light and colour effect the studies are brilliant. The artist undertook an extensive tour throughout North India. In two years he finished the fourteen

pictures. They were exhibited at Bombay. The pictures were hugely appreciated and many people wanted to have copies. Sir T. Madhava Rao desired the popular artist to set up an oleographic press to meet the ever-increasing demands of interested people and to place copies of the pictures within easy reach of all. The distinguished statesman wrote thus exhorting Ravi Varma "There are so many of my friends who are desirous of possessing your works, that it would be hardly possible for you with only a few hands to meet such a large demand. Send therefore a few of your select works to Europe and have them oleographed. You will thereby not only extend your reputation, but will be doing a real service to your country."

Ravi Varma's paintings were exhibited at Vienna and won many gold medals and high-sounding encomiums, all of which he fully deserved. Mr. Dara, a European Trader at Aleppey, saw some of Ravi Varma's Paintings, which he sent to America, where they were welcomed most enthusiastically and highly commended by leading Artists and Art Critics. In 1892 the famous Indian Portrait Painter sent a set of ten

Oil Paintings to the Chicago Exhibition. The American Press spoke in glowing terms of the Pictures. Two Medals and a Diploma were awarded to Ravi Varma. In 1900, Their Excellencies Lord and Lady Curzon visited Trivandrum. Ravi Varma had an interview with them. Lady Curzon was presented with two pictures by the master Artist. His art was appreciated by their Excellencies. Some time after he was invited to the court of Udai;ur to paint some pictures of the Maharana and four of his renowned ancestors. This work was done most splendidly by Ravi Varma. Maharana Pratap Singh's Fainting by Ravi Varma is considered as a masterpiece in portrait painting. Sir Arthur Havelock's picture was painted in 1904 by Ravi Varma for the Madras Government House. Lord Amphill unveiled the portrait and remarked "there are a few artists of the eminence of Raja Ravi Varma who could perform such a feat so successfully or who would even dare to attempt it". Ravi Varma was honoured with the Kaiseri Hind Gold Medal in 1904. This was the first time when such an honour was done to an Artist. When H. R. H. The Prince of Wales came to Madras, the

then Governor invited Ravi Varma and introduced him to the Royal Highness. The talented Artist was invited to Mysore in connection with the visit of H. R. H. Ravi Varma accompanied the royal party as the Court Artist in all hunting expeditions. He painted scenes from elephant hunts and camp life in Mysore forests. The pick of renowned European Artists who went with the Royal party was immeasurably struck with the wonderful genius of the Indian Artist. To give a catalogue of all his paintings and the multitudinous honours awarded to him by Maharajahs, Lords, Emperors, Artists, Art Critics and men of light and leading, is indeed an arduous task. "When righteous men rejoice there is great glory." Lovers of art, right and righteous, rejoiced in the pictures of Raja Ravi Varma, with rapture, ecstasy and sincerity.



IV

IT needs to be emphasised most that Raja Ravi Varma had no good training at all in his profession. In spite of that fact, he achieved wonderful success. His inherent genius, immense imagination, and tireless endeavour, so harmoniously blended in one person to make him world famous. His mind, great and noble it no doubt was, was like a fine camera fitted with a powerful lens, loaded with first-rate speed plates and operated by a master craftsman. He remembered men, things and events with astounding cleverness and enviable acuteness, even to their minutest details. He was a keen observer and a profound learner. Anything that appeared before his far-seeing eyes, never went out of his prodigious memory. So strong and true it was. He visualised all imaginable themes and accumulated in his

brain and heart all forms and shapes and whenever he wanted to draw, he simply transferred them in glorious colours over to the canvas with his heavenly brush. Such was the secret of his success. Raja Ravi Varma was pre-eminently an artist of inspiration and overwhelming creative genius.

Ravi Varma has done for art so much indeed and it is no exaggeration to say that no one has eclipsed him in his field of action. He was, so to say, the first really noteworthy pioneer in his line. He achieved the highest mission of art, which is "not to copy nature, but to express her, to seize the spirit, the soul and the expression of beings and things." He was the pathfinder of a decidedly novel school of thought in painting, which now boasts of many a distinguished follower and eloquent advocate. Such a splendid institution owes its birth to his genius and its breeding to his wholehearted and unselfish endeavours. Raja Ravi Varma largely drew from imagination. He conceived forms before him in flesh and blood as the result of his intense study, his deep scholarship and his extreme devotion.

All the Puranic heroes and heroines, kings and queens, saints and prophets, politicians and ministers, war-lords and prelates, courtiers and servants, all appeared before him in their true colours. Who but a deeply pious soul could ever dream of such visions, visions that bring forth joy and bliss? Ravi Varma has pictured various scenes depicted in the Great Epics of Hinduism. All Hindu homes and houses of art-loving people are adorned with hosts of his pictures. The name Raja Ravi Varma is a bye-word in Malabar. He is revered by all Hindus for it was he who drew for them their ideals. *Ravi Varma Pictures* are so famous and popular throughout the world. So alive are they, moving with happy ease and gesture at all public places. The wisdom of the late Highness, a great patron of art and literature, blended with the abilities of Ravi Varma, gave rise to the opening of the Art Gallery in the School of Arts, Trivandrum, which always focusses all the attention of the art-world that visits Trivandrum. The School of Arts presents a splendid trio of paintings by the pride of our land. They are three Puranic subjects which are

unique and of perennial interest. To create better works of art than these is something which could never be accomplished save by such geniuses of the type of Raja Ravi Varma the best known portrait painter. The group of Paintings in the School of Arts is indeed most representative and expresses the characteristic features of Ravi Varma's art. In composition and conception the pictures are without a second. They are triumphs of realism that could only be equalled by the camera. In one, a lovely and enchanting picture—a representation of truth, beauty and goodness—Sakuntala with all her sylvan companions is depicted most faithfully and superbly. Sakuntala, the love-sick maiden of sweet attractive grace stands before us as the the perfect ideal of pristine charm, trying to take off her sole a thorn, but with the real desire of catching a last glimpse of her retreating lover full of amorous airs and desires. The picture is most natural, supremely realistic and eminently captivating. It is in fact, pronounced to be the diadem of his masterpieces. In the portraiture of Sakuntala the artist's genius has found fullest expression.

Another portrait represents the pompous, yet pathetic, Court of King Virata, where the helpless Droupathi, escaping from the clutches of the devil Keechaka, prostrates before the Assembly in the immediate presence of her husbands the mighty Pandavas, who are incognito. This scene is exceedingly romantic. There is romance, pathos, despair and arrogance in this highly realistic study in canvas. Though a realist, Ravi Varma was also romantic, but his romanticism was purely literary. The last one exhibits Simhaka, the wickedest of villains, misleading Droupathi. Damayanthi and the Swan is another of his best pictures. She is the most perfect representation of a lovely, bashful, amorous maiden in her teens. These beautiful pictures look very well against the walls and shine out with all splendour, which immediately helps and keeps alive the reputation of the artist. They are perpetual monuments of the genius of Raja Ravi Varma. A miraculous specimen of his wonderful art is the six-faced God Subramonia in his gorgeously plumed peacock. The picture is saturated with intense religious feeling and exalted with noble ideas.

V

Hamsa Damayanti (Damayanti and the Swan) is one of the best paintings of Ravi Varma. The picture is *realistic* almost to perfection. Realism is the paramount and distinguishing quality in Ravi Varma's works of art. This painting represents realism at its highest. Hamsa Damayanti, is a monumental manifestation of the artist's inspired creative genius. The oil painting trumpets aloud in silver tones the immortality of real art which is the best and highest expression of the everlasting, truth, beauty and goodness. An analysis of the picture will reveal its greatness alike in conception and composition. There is a lovely garden and in its inviting shade lies a beautiful Lotus Pond. On the waters' edge is wrought a snow white marble pillar of exquisite



Ravivarma's "Hamsa Damayanti"

workmanship. The beauty of the marble pillar is enhanced by a swan, perching on its top. The *Hamsa*—a bird which combines in itself all beauty, grace, elegance and dignity of form and colour—the good hearted and selfless messenger of the lovesick Prince, delivers the message in moving tones. Leaning on the pillar, Damayanti the paragon of beauty and chastity stands all attention, eagerly listening to the message ably and eloquently passed to her by the gifted bird of charming plumage. Inimitable and fullvolumed powers of portraiture skill have been lavished most appropriately and in the grandest manner ever possible at the hands of a mortal, by the gifted artist in this *magnum opus* in Indian mythological Art. Damayanti, the incarnation of all heavenly and earthly beauty is portrayed in eloquent colours, colours which give forth the marvellous sumptuousness of Ravi Varma's magic with the brush and the pigments. All beauty seems to have assumed human form in Damayanti who looks every inch an Angel. The picture is true to life and bespeaks the inspired artist's manysided gifts.

A contrast would give us truer insight into Ravi Varma's unsurpassed genius in portrait painting. *Hamsa Damayanti* has been made over to canvas by Nandalal Bose, one of the foremost artists of India at the present day and one who has taken the lead in the Bengal Renaissance of Indian Art. Nandalal Bose's picture is totally different in manner and matter from its brilliant predecessor and poineer. A pale reddish brown colour dominates throughout the painting. Damayanti is seated on the ground. She is not represented as an idol of beauty. The study is antagonistic to anatomical perfection. On her knees which rise high, is seated the swan. A light brown coloured cloth just covers her nakedness. Her hair is dishevelled. Her dress and make up are meagre and they do not at all give forth the impression that she is a Princess. But a few moments study reveals the tremendous force and significance of the painting, wherein more is meant than that which meets the eye. Damayanti is the embodiment of great, strong and noble feelings of love, devotion and expectation. The picture is hundred percent suggestive. It is

brimful with vigorous feeling. The painting makes a spirited appeal to human intellect and emotions. We feel ourselves to be in the immediate presence and direct influence of a mighty thought, a tremendous feeling, a sincere emotion, emanating out of Damayanti, affecting the swan, expanding throughout the garden, encompassing all and in fine transcending everything earthly and reaching the summits of love. The picture is profoundly suggestive. The mystical conception vibrates with deepest sense. But the Painting does not make a direct appeal to the ordinary man who is uninitiated in the ways of mysticism and symbolism and whose head cannot rise high above his heart. A high degree of intellect, poetic fancy and rich imagination are essential to understand and appreciate Nandalal Bose's study. Hence its scope and influence are limited to the few—the highly cultured and the intelligentsia. The study is not realistic and falls short of universal appeal. Art is for all humanity and art must not fail to appeal to the layman.

Here we come face to face with the two and opposing sides of Indian art—*realistic* and

suggestive. Indian Art is pre-eminently symbolical, predominantly suggestive, bewilderingly mystical. The realistic artist in his attempt to perpetuate in canvas a rare and beautiful incident of life, largely employs the real, in nature. The symbolical painter, makes as little use of the real in nature as possible. He adopts the real in nature just enough to bring out the larger and fuller aspects, and makes free and fearless use of symbolism. Realism means presenting things as they are. Symbolism is picturing objects in a mystic light, by and through significant suggestions, i.e. giving imaginary and intellectual touches but at the same time imparting completeness as best as possible.



VI

RAJA Ravi Varma is universally known as a master painter of portraits in oil. In his later days he did water colour work also and gained marked skill. All his portraits have bright settings and are remarkable for life, vigour and realism. His conception of beauty was predominantly perfect and even to-day remains a serious problem to most of the artists. For grace, charm and personal elegance, his portraits are without a second. His portraiture of women is unmatched. His heroines are characterised by grace of form. Beauty was Religion to Ravi Varma and his pictures are visible manifestations of real beauty. The inspired art of Ravi Varma discloses before us Beauty in its sweetest and sublimest form. We are ushered into a realm of the highest colour,

clear, convincing and intelligent conceptions, so as to realise the beautiful. He has expressed emotion which is beyond doubt all beauty and art in his pictures. His women are hundred per cent Indian. Some of his masterpieces are Seetha, Mahalakshmi and Saraswathi—all of which alike are superb ideals of divine beauty and excellence. For exquisite charm in manner and matter these pictures are non-pareil. Even at a very early age he had established his reputation as a sensitive artist of finest imagery and striking originality. In many respects his art is distinctly original and it has been placed on a lofty pedestal higher than any allotted to our present favourites. There is an amazing spontaneity about his paintings. It is the teeming spontaneity of expressing the highest in the most understandable manner. Every keen student of the many-sided creativeness of Raja Ravi Varma will indeed note, both in colour and form, the highly unusual expression of the outstanding individuality of the Master Artist. Verily he was not an orthodox follower of the old and conventional art of the East. Ravi Varma had noteworthy mastery of European Art. He

chose Western mediums but his pictures are purely Indian to the very soul. With the powers of European Art at this command, Ravi Varma created miracles of art. He spent much of his time in studying problems of light and colour, and achieved triumph in this difficult line. With his brilliantly analytical mind he succeeded in producing marvellous works of art. The beautiful light of Ravi Varma not only shone upon the flesh of his portraits but the flesh itself glowed with its own reflected light and in all his paintings there is the glamorous, enchanting colour. So alive, so graceful, so lovely, so beautiful and so arresting his portraits are. His art sings with warmth, brilliancy, spirit and joyousness of his great gift. The Oriental feeling is best expressed in his art. His masterly studies of the lofty Puranic themes are an invaluable contribution to the art of India and have opened the eyes and hearts of many in the noble profession. He has depicted contemporary life in a few of his paintings. He was more influenced by the aristocratical bent, and was more concerned with kings and queens and courtiers than the humble folk. He was not a painter of

nature, but used nature as background for his portraits. "The creations of Ravi Varma, stand for emotions, eternal and universal. Priceless in themselves they are but vehicles of the mysterious passions that govern life." So wrote an ardent admirer of Ravi Varma.

It may truly be said that he has fully revealed himself in his works of Art. No deep or extended study of his work is needed to discover not merely his characteristics as an Artist, but his thoughts and feelings, opinions and sentiments, likes and dislikes, his conceptions of life and in short all about the man. With perfect fidelity to truth and clearness he has left marks of the man and artist in his pictures.

Raja Ravi Varma's great art has devoted friends and distinct enemies. It is true that one cannot pass his powerful paintings unmoved. They must appeal to him one way or other. There is a definite and all powerful creativeness and appeal in his paintings which are certainly the best expressions of a new and significant school of Art. One of the important charges levelled against Ravi Varma by the present day

critics is that he did not care for the pure technique of the art and departed far from it. Some critics have remarked that his female characters lack "the innocent purity of the unsipped blossom". Mr. S. Aiyappan Pillai B A., B. L., in his interesting and stimulating volume on "Ravi Varma and His Art" opines, "Ravi Varma worked to please the millions of devotees of India without caring for the pure technique of the art. The average Indian has a craze for colours and tints and flamboyant settings of the various descriptions he is familiar with in his holy writ. Ravi Varma fully satisfied them. In works like *Vinayaka*, *Sesha Narayana*, *Sakti* etc., neither context nor emotion is depicted and we are prone to doubt whether they were ever painted by the great Ravi Varma and whether the great Artist understood the elements of proportion, perspective and the like." This criticism is sweeping and vague. It savours of supercriticism. As it is always with men of real genius, with the development of his powers, came an ever-increasing demand for Ravi Varma's Paintings. Needless to say there was an increase in the output of work.

Painting after painting followed in quick succession. As is quite natural all did not satisfy every strict requirement of art. A number of Masterpieces of invaluable worth, as well as Paintings with shortcomings were drawn by the dexterous hands of the heaven inspired Artist. Despite his limitations which are but few when compared with the great qualities of his art, Raja Ravi Varma richly deserves to be regarded as the Father of Modern Indian Art.



5 JUL 1974
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RAVI VARMA'S "KALIYA-MARDANAM."

(From a Coloured Print)

By the Courtesy of the V. V. Press Branch, Trivandrum

VII

THE artists of the Bengal Renaissance School have contributed enormously to the progress of Indian art. They have almost ceased to pay any attention to the occidental methods. Their aim is to follow purely eastern ideals and methods. They are extremists and their departure has not proved to be a very healthy one from the point of view of real art. Their aim is to make Indian art nothing but symbolical. The Bengal Artists have little sympathy with Realistic art. In fact they seem to disregard realism in art. Beauty and grace of form and anatomical perfection, the Artists of the New School, look down with contempt and painful disregard. Their daring originality one must appreciate. Their sheer indifference to realism in art, all lovers of art must

deery. They have transgressed the limits thereby making their figures in disharmony with nature and naturalness. Surely Art must make man more intelligent, but art must not be so complex as not to be easily grasped and appreciated by all. Art is not for the few but for all.

The Bengal School of Painting seeks to elucidate the permanent in the transitory. In Ravi Varma's Paintings—as is seen in the famous pictures of the great masters adorning the Art Galleries of Europe—there is a vigorous and successful attempt at accuracy of detail and close resemblance to actual life. The present day artists advocate that the Spirit is all important and that the Form does not matter much. Ravi Varma—the realistic artist he was every inch of him—held the opinion that form matters most and spirit is but subsidiary to form. The aim of Indian art of the day is “not of bringing about a speaking likeness but of capturing or endeavouring to capture, beyond and away, an immanence in the personality”. *Harvest Gathering* of Raphael, and the *Madonna* of Leonardo da Vinci are two of the greatest paintings in the world. They are

perfect in many respects and no wonder that all people even at first sight fall in love with them. The reason for such universal appeal is simple. The pictures are true translations of real life. Hence they are understood by all at first sight. Direct vision reveals at once the greatness of the paintings. Ravi Varma's pictures are similar. He followed Western Art, in this important respect. When judged by purely anatomical standards and simple laws of mensuration, criteria of beauty, grace of form, sweetness and charm, Ravi Varma's pictures are first-rate. but if they are judged by the laws of the spirit they fail miserably.

Anatomical perfection weighs considerably in portrait painting. This involves the structure of the human body as a whole. If so, true art consists of reproducing the body under the most advantageous circumstances with due regard for the component relations. It is equally desirable but more praiseworthy to interpret, to the fullest possible extent, the finer traits and nobler qualities of the personality without sacrificing the physical definitions. Current Indian thought in painting, vigorously favours that all attention must be

paid to the depicting—by and through symbolism—of the finer traits and nobler qualities of the personality even at disregard for perfection of physical definitions. Hence the incontrovertible conflict between the Realistic and Symbolical Schools of Art which unhappily foreshadows prejudiced fanaticism in Art.

Ravi Varma was the highpriest of realism in art. His pictures appealed to all because of their realism. This was the secret of his success. He was not an extremist yet he was a revolutionary. He combined Eastern and Western methods of painting as to yield rich fruits. Thereby he made his art more pleasing. He wanted to paint a maiden as a maiden and a tree as a tree. The champions of the New School of Indian Art inaugurated by a brilliant host of North Indian Artists, point their finger of scorn at Ravi Varma's realistic art by stigmatising it as much too simple. They do so at serious risk to their Art which sometimes turns out to be ridiculously symbolic. Portrait painting first and foremost demands a brilliant analytical mind, and perfect draughtsmanship. These requisites, Ravi Varma possessed in abundance

as no other Indian Artist has ever owned. The portraits from the brush of the most modern artists of Bengal are not true to life. They see more beauty in eyes that reach up to the ears, fingers long and pointed and waists that are very slender and narrow. The realistic perfection of Ravi Varma was classic to the core.

Some critics discern in Ravi Varma's pictures of the Hindu Pantheon, a superfluity of nearness to human life, which is deliberately made by the Artist. The critics speak out that the portraits bear close resemblance to Greek Statues and Paintings of Titian and Velasquez but distinguished only by exquisite beauty and exchanting grace of form. It must be said with due deference to Ravi Varma that in his pictures of Hindu Deities the marvellous perfection of form has eclipsed the expression of the spirit. Yet his art is magnificent. There is a certain extravagance of colour, in all his paintings. In the paintings by the North Indian Artists there is a deliberate extravagance of expression and emotion.

Prof. Rawlinson in his *Indian Historical Studies*, in the chapter on "Foreign Influence in India"

says:—"It is after all impossible for any one to represent purely Eastern ideas by Western methods. The result is always lamentable." Under footnote he continues, "Take for instance, the atrocities of Ravi Varma, unhappily, so popular in Western India." This sweeping criticism is at once prejudiced and incorrect. Prof. Rawlinson stops short with this remark but has not proceeded any farther to prove the truth of his statement which is most unwarranted.



VIII

RAJA Ravi Varma, born of the Royal Family of Travancore, with a latent genius for Art, rose in the firmament of Indian Art like a luminous star depriving the other luminaries of their lustre. He had blazoned talent and burning ambition which revolutionised Indian Painting and created a new Epoch of Renaissance. He had visioned eyes and a steady hand which enabled him to reach the topnotch of artistic eminence at an early age of his brilliant career. Ravi Varma was greatly influenced by and fully charmed with the smooth faced Madonnas of the famous Italian School of Art. Creamcoloured skin resembling the marvellous and captivating texture of a tender petal of a beautiful and sweet smelling flower, always captured his fancy. The inspired artist would most eagerly and with determination scour the

lovely land of Travancore characterised by 'prim-
eval forests and palm-fringed shores' and reputed
for "its exuberant natural beauties, its old-world
simplicity and its Arcadian charms', just to catch
sight of beauties of Indian womanhood with long
black hair falling down to the knees, eyes like
those of a hunted deer, and retire in inviting
corners for undisturbed contemplation over the
problem of most effectively depicting Indian
womanhood at its best.

Ravi Varma had in his sumptuously equipped
studio, a life-like statue of a beautiful woman
made of fine wood, which could be adjusted in
many a different pose, as the artist—a keen critic
of beauty, human and divine—pleased. The
statue was robed in charming clothes and beauti-
ful poses were adjusted by the master portrait
painter. It is said that the artist before drawing
any picture of women, fixed upon attractive and
captivating poses, by adjusting the statue. He
devoted much thought upon visualising his themes.
A celebrated Chinese Artist once said:—"To create
does not take long but one must first visualise
what one desires to create."

Ravi Varma was immersed in the romance of Earth and Heaven. He had the vision to see it, the wisdom to know it, the heart to understand it, the intellectual equipment to appreciate it, and above all the great gifts to perpetuate it in canvas. To him as to every other creative artist, life on earth was enkindled with greater life full of divine beauty and charm. His pictures are living expressions and inspiring representations of that high and robust faith of his. Often he was rapturous and ecstatic. The expression and the embodiment of the divine in humanity, has been inimitably, pictured by Ravi Varma in all his paintings. He knew like every great creative genius that "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever". Ravi Varma became fully conscious of the realm of the heart and invariably he landed at the shore of creativeness. In indescribable, unutterable ways, his pictures of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, ennoble the innumerable devotees of the Hindu Pantheon. No confused hazy occultism or mysticism is seen in his paintings. Reality shines there and high enlightenment of consciousness has taken roots

there. *Satyam, Sivam and Sundaram*,—the eternally Triune manifestation of Godhood in man, Immutable, Blissful and Beautiful—Ravi Varma's Paintings reveal. He found the earthly and heavenly reflection of Divinity in Art. More than any other Artist, Ravi Varma has contributed to the religious consciousness of India. His pictures of deities, enter into every day life, into huts as well as palaces. His paintings hallowed in Indian homes have given great impetus to purified thinking and high thought.

His influence in Indian art has been tremendous, one that has left a lasting and mature impress in the artistic life of the country. Rabindranath Tagore, winds up his book *What is Art?* with these beautiful words:—"In Art the person in us is sending its answer to the Supreme Person, who reveals Himself to us in a World of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts." Truth, Beauty and Goodness were painted in glorious colours by Ravi Varma. Ravi Varma's Paintings—to quote from an old book of the XVII century—have been painted "with honest mind and decent purpose, and with noble love for embellishment, for the

people to see themselves here as standing before the face of the Highest."

Ravi Varma's art has a peculiar charm. He crossed the limits imposed on Indian Art by academic formulas and popular principles, with great advantage to himself. All his works show a high decorative sense. The texture of the colours and their effect of luminosity reveal the artist as a colourist in the acme of perfection. Ravi Varma's art sprang from his study of the Puranas which are full of colour, warmth and romance.

John Ruskin the Prince among Artists defined Art as "any work done by the hand and the head together". Said he:—"Art is a manufactured good of the three machines, the hand, the head and the heart together." Ravi Varma's art is in strict accordance with Ruskin's definition of art.

In the 18th century artists used to say "Every picture tells a story". Indeed every painting of Ravi Varma tells a story. Artists of the day remark "Every picture sings a tune."

One has always to bear in mind that like every other human activity Art also has gone through

different phases. Art reached its climax of perplexity at the time of the Great European War. Frank Rutter concludes his excellent book *Evolution in Modern Art* thus:—" Whither we are going it is very difficult to see: but the journey is exciting and the road is full of interest."

One cannot better conclude the contemplation of creativeness, in the Great Artist, than with the beautiful dedication of Count A. Tolstoi *To the Artist*.

"Be ye blind as Homer and deaf as Beethoven,
But strain more zealously thy spiritual ear and
spiritual eye

And as if upon the flame of a secret writing
faint lines emerge suddenly

Thus will the pictures suddenly emerge before thee
And more vivid will become the colours and
more perceptible the paints

The harmonious correlation of words will inter-
weave in clear meaning.

And thou, at this moment, behold, hearkening
thy breath.

And afterwards, creating, creating—recall the
fleeting vision!"

IX

IMMORTAL fame is to the lot of the Artist whose search is after the Beautiful. Has not Manu, the great Hindu Law Giver said:—"The hand of a craftsman engaged in his craft is always pure." Verily does Homer in his Odyssey proclaim:—"Those that are craftsmen of the people are welcome over all the wide earth". Rabbi Gamaliel endorses:—"Every occupation which is not accompanied by art leads nowhere". Rabbi Iehuda adds:—"He who does not teach his son art, makes of him a high-way robber". It has been truly said that every great painting is a prayer of Earth to Heaven! Ravi Varma was a great visionary and painter. His art was certainly new and original but not bizzare, indubitably graphic but not photographic. His art needs to be studied

fully and closely. Sufficient justice has not been done to Ravi Varma's art by art critics of the present day who are over enthusiastic about singing praises of the other schools of Indian Art.

Ravi Varma is regarded as a great artist who is unforgettable, whose popularity never reaches the ebb. Intelligent and understanding critics of art who have faith in the maxim "Gratitude is the virtue of great hearts," and who are dispassionate, know Ravi Varma's greatness, as a Beacon of Art. No other Indian Artist has been honoured with such vast popularity as is to the store of Ravi Varma. Other artists are no doubt envious of such all embracing popularity. Ravi Varma's art has not been dispassionately and intelligently studied. One enthusiastic admirer of the Great Indian Artist, hits off thus:—"It is sad to note that whilst European critics speak in terms of praise concerning Impressionistic, Cubistic, Realistic, and Post Tagoreic Art, not as much as a passing whisper is made of Ravi Varma, one of India's greatest Artists, which is as absurd as going to Rome without visiting the Vatican". Is this because Ravi Varma was born in South India?

E. B. Havell in his *Indian Sculpture and Painting* says:—"The important part which craftsmen, more especially oriental craftsmen have always played in the world's history as missionaries of civilisation, culture and religion is not generally realised by bookmen". Ravi Varma belongs to that glorious Valhalla of Artists who have not been fully understood and appreciated by book-men among Artists, Art Critics and Literateurs.

This enables us to put our finger at once on the fundamental quality of Raja Ravi Varma's art, just the quality which distinguished him clearly from other artists and gave him a very singular and exalted place of honour in the long sequence of the glorious, age-long traditions of Painting. He mastered Western art and adapted it most successfully and realistically to the life and literature of India with special reference to Hinduism. He was the ablest exponent of the grand aristocratical style as opposed to the simple back-to-nature style of modern Bengal. His, then, is an art which, in its constant reference to our inspiring Puranic traditions, affords us endless

pleasure. His inventive fertility and magnitude of extra-ordinary gifts contributed to his firm seat of highest honour in the realm of art. Beyond doubt he was a part of the Great Creative Artist from whom he received all inspiration, all intellect, all imagination and everything, which made him an Artist of the first order. He was one of the greatest Poets and Singers of our great motherland, who wrote on canvas and sang in and through them. Ravi Varma was the only Artist of his day whom the plebescite of Hindus, rich as well as poor, high as well as low, heartily acclaimed as their most popular favourite. Ravi Varma's realm is an accomplished fact. Ravi Varma's colour is an achievement to which all have paid homage.



X

RAJA Ravi Varma was for the most part of his life at work and hated to be idle. He used to spend the greater part of the year at Bombay supervising the printing of his pictures. *Ravi Varma Pictures* have become very widely known everywhere. Their popularity never runs down the scale. His active work naturally undermined his health. This led to a speedier demise. Ravi Varma's fame and prosperity increased by leaps and bounds. And then shadow, deep and black, came into his life and he was snatched away at the zenith of his well-earned fame. Ravi Varma who was a Prince by birth, was possessed of a very pleasing personality which found an easy passport into the hearts of all. Always kind and genial, calm and calculating, humble and sincere,

noble and loving, liberal and virtuous, Ravi Varma was one of those really great souls on earth who knew the pleasures and rewards of work. The outstanding trait in his character, which indubitably is the best test of truly great men, was that he remained most humble in spite of his fame having extended all over the civilized world. He was a profound Sanskrit scholar. His scholarship stood him in good stead in conceiving before his mental eye the personalities revealed in the great Epics of Hinduism. Ravi Varma the talented Artist, the distinguished scholar and the perfect gentleman deserves greatest praise. His fame as artist, scholar and man will be "an echo and light unto eternity."

He was a commanding genius who combined in himself in a marvellous proportion rare qualities of the head and heart. He was the supreme highpriest of transcendent realism in art. In actual life also he championed realism and truth and was deadly against all sham and hypocrisy. As a scholar in Sanskrit, Ravi Varma was no whit less learned than his brilliant contemporaries. He knew that scholarship and

sincerity should go together. He had acute intelligence, amazing resourcefulness, capricious mind and retentive memory. Ravi Varma was deeply religious. Did not swami Vivekananda, the Great Teacher teach:—"That man cannot be truly religious who has not the faculty of feeling the beauty and grandness of art." He was a man of a contemplative turn. Yet he was fully alive to the lighter and serious aspects of life. He was highly spiritual and he painted for aesthetic enjoyment and for avowedly religious purposes.

"The painter must be a good man, no sluggard, not given to anger, holy, learned, self controlled, devout and charitable, free from avarice—such should be his character." So runs the English translation of the definition of a Painter as given in the *Srimahavajrabhairava Tantra*. Raja Ravi Varma's character was the best expression of the spirit of this definition.

Raja Ravi Varma first saw the light of the world on 29th April 1848 and after an eventful life of greatness of the first magnitude, gave up his mortal coil on the 9th October 1906. Though he is gathered to his forefathers, his work lives and

will continue to live through all ages, with untarnished brilliance and ever increasing importance, always inspiring and eliciting warm-hearted esteem from all intelligent and honest-hearted lovers of real Art.

“For love, and beauty and delight,
There is no death nor change; their might
Exceeds our organs.”



ERRATA

- Page 3, Line 2—read the best and the most unrivalled *for* “the best and unrivalled”.
- Page 4, Line 7—read subtleties *for* “subtelities.”
- Page 4, Line 9—read sombre *for* “somber.”
- Page 6, Line 8—read That means to be of note *for* “That means to be note.”
- Page 19, Line 16—read His *for* “the”.
- Page 22, Line 8—read The Painting *for* “The oil painting”.
- Page 31, Line 20—read savours *for* “savoures”.
- Page 43, Line 12—read the Prince among writers *for* “the Prince among Artists.”

Ravi Varma is popularly known as “Raja Ravi Varma”. The great artist was neither a Raja by birth nor by title. He was a Koil Tampuran. This fact notwithstanding, the millions who revere him, always associate with his immortal name *Raja*. Thus he is widely acclaimed as *Raja Ravi Varma*. The writer has often prefixed *Raja* to Ravi Varma’s name. This is an error.

APPRECIATIONS.



“I appreciated the book not only penmanship but also your tribute to a Guru.”

His Excellency Prof. Nicholas de Roerich,
Supreme President of the World League of Culture,
NAGGAR.

* * * * *

“I am glad you are trying to open a new line of distinction.”

Rt. Hon. Y. S. S. Sastry, P. C. C. H., L. L. D.,
COIMBATORE.

* * * * *

“His Sketch is informed by knowledge and irradiated by sympathy and insight, and will be welcome to those who admire and love modern Indian Art”.

Rao Bahadur K. V. Rangaswami Ayyengar,
M. A., F. R. H. S. etc.,
TRIVANDRUM.

* * * * *

“I looked through your book and find it A1.”

M. M. Banaji (Jinab),
Author of ‘Sublime Though Blind’,
BOMBAY.

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“I read your fine dissertation concerning Raja Ravi Varma. It is very interesting and well written. He must have been truly great.”

Dr. Louis M. Eilshemius, M.A., M.M.M.,
 Author, Artist, Musician,
 NEW YORK CITY.

* * * * *

“I like your book. Your style of writing meets my deep appreciation. Your book is really good. You have the quality of style seldom seen in India.”

“Mr. K. P. Padmanabhan Tampy has written a very sympathetic brochure on the great South Indian artist Raja Ravi Varma. Mr. Tampy has a flowing style, lucid and terse, which makes what he writes very interesting to read. Ravi Varma was one of the few Indian artists that by dint of skill and energy have left behind them enduring fame. It is all the more pleasant to note then how men like Mr. Tampy bring out their good qualities, so that those in other countries, besides those in India, may appreciate their values in the realm of fine art.”

Dr. H.W.B. Moreno, M. A., Ph.D., D. Litt., M.L.C.,
 Retd. Principal, The Armenian College, Calcutta,
 Retd, Professor, Calcutta University,
 CALCUTTA.

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“ I am happy and proud to see the life of talented Ravi Varma, the king among Artists, published in a book form by you.”

Sridhar Majumdar, M. A.,
Some time Professor of Sanskrit,
Author of The “Vedanta Philosophy”,
MASTISUNDA.

* * * *

“ It was with no small delight that I glanced through Mr. K. P. P. Tampy’s booklet *Raja Ravi Varma and His Art*. I was agreeably surprised not only at the beautiful style employed and the flair shown in writing up the essay but also at the zeal and critical acumen brought to bear upon the work. The matter though brief has been clothed in language, that leaves nothing to be desired. The language is wonderfully adapted to the theme. The maiden attempt on the part of the young author augurs well for the development and fruition of his innate powers at prose composition. I congratulate Mr. Tampy on this production and wish him good luck in his future attempts of a similar nature.”

H. Sankarasubramoneyan, M.A., L.T.,
First Grade Teacher, E. H. S.,
ERANIEL.

“Your booklet on the Great Indian Artist, Raja Ravi Varma is very good”.

Sukumar Haldar B. A., P. C. S. (Retd).,
 Author of The “Cross in the Crucible” Etc.
 RANCHI.

* * * * *

“Mr. K. P. Padmanabhan Tampy’s brochure on *Raja Ravi Varma and His Art* is very readable. In the first place, it is short and pithy; secondly, it is brimful of patriotic loyalty to the theme. The sweetness of the rose lies no less in its form than its fragrance. The hero and his achievements are apotheosised by the halo which the author has clothed them with, in celestial colours.....”

“The author has done his best with the materials at his disposal.....”

M. Raja Raja Varma, M. A., B L.,
 Retd. Devaswom Commissioner,
 President : The Travancore Cultural Association,
 TRIVANDRUM.

