

Ganesha co

GANESHA, the elephant-headed God of Hindus, with a pot-belly believed to contain the entire universe and a single tusk around which revolves a lot of mythology, is a remarkable example of the multiple symbolism of Indian art.

To K.M. Gopal, the 59-year-old painter-sculptor of Chola-
mandal artists' village, Ganeshwar is the chief motif for metal-reliefs and paintings. Gopal, with a good understanding of the art forms of the past, struggles hard to blend tradition with his own creativity. Picasso, one of the masters of modern art transformed the various form of the past revealed by archeology Gopal refixes forms of the past into new context. So, we can confidently say that his various metal-reliefs of Ganesha, with their apparent traditional qualities, compete successfully with the most modern works in their own terms of modern art.

In a vast country like India, with a rich and varied artistic tradition, the release of art from the 'one-way-push' of the past, is really a difficult job. To the new generation of artists the frustrating feeling that 'everything has been done already' is posing a big problem. But to this artist, the fact that the Ganesha concept has been handled by scores of master sculptors and painters is in no way a discouraging factor. Rather, it serves as a spring-board for his creations.

The Ganesha series of Gopal is not a sheer counterfeit of ancient Ganesha sculptures and paintings of India. The full play of fantasy and imagination proves that they are the individual creations of the artist.

We can notice a fundamental difference between the Ganesha created by him and the Ganesha of our ancient sculptors and painters. The ancient works of art were strictly controlled by religion and the individual artist

was not given much freedom in creating his icon the way he imagined. On the contrary, modern art, by the constant revision of its aims, techniques and scope, has made itself a discipline rooted in the free development of individuals. So, Gopal's creations of Ganesha are his own and are not controlled by any outside agencies.

Jhon Mchale, the artist-cum-social scientist says, 'Accelerated changes in human condition require an array of symbolic images which will match upto the requirements of constant change, fleeting impression and high rate of obsolescence. We need a replaceable, expandable series of icons'. K.M. Gopal's works like Serpa Ganeshwar, Pranava Ganapathi, Gayatri Ganeshwari, Artha Ganeshwari, may be an answer to this need for a replaceable, expandable, series of icons.

The Ganesha concept started appearing in his canves early in his student days at the Madras College of Arts, where he formally learnt painting. We can find in his early medium group studies with strong native characters, the powerful perception of his creative self. Even during this period we find a good deal of works on Ganesha.

When he started painting with unusual surf-like colours, having internal emotional properties to convey his ideas, various Mantras and Yantras or Tantric cult, have started appearing in his paintings. Later, Tantra, the ancient esoteric cult of Hinduism, had its deep influence on all his works.

'Artha Ganeshwari' a metal-relief, which has won a National award for him, has a strong Tantric undertone. According to Sankhya philosophy, which has inspired many forms of Hindu religion and its art, there are two



Artha Ganeshwari



Pranava Ganapathi

principal forces, the Prakriti and Purusha. The balanced mixture of Purusha, the pure consciousness and Prakriti, the principal matter, is the main theme of his Artha Ganeshwari. On the basic structure of Ganesha, Artha-Nareeswar, the combination of Shiva and Shakthi has been superimposed. His complex allegories have links with Hindu mythology and at the same time baffles us with irrational images. There is a blend of the past and the present on metaphysical terms in the process of creating a modern art.

When the Salem-born artist with a grey moustache and beard, describes the various stages of his art, one can understand from his bright burning eyes that he is very serious about not creating a moonlight art of the West. His works, both his paintings and sculptures, have a basic classical character with grace, that is so Indian and so dear to him.

INDRAN



K.M. Gopal working on a sculpture