



## A STUDY OF EUROPEAN ART CULTURE

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**Introduction-** Salar Jung Museum houses a variety of Western arts—paintings, marbles, metal casts, metal casts, porcelains, glass, furniture practically from every European land noted for one art or the other. Totalling some thousands the occidental arts occupy a dozen display galleries and four stores of the Museum.

What is special about Salar Jung's collection of European art is not its numerical strength but its worth and rarity. A Veiled Rebecca a neo-classical masterpiece in marble-is worth its weight in gold. A Canaletto's picture present in the museum is rare, rare because the artist's works are mostly preserved in difficult-to-see Royal collections. A magnificent replica of that 'mobiliary gem'-- Louis XVth's writing table, preserved in the museum is a treasure since it is only one of the two copies which the French Government allowed to be made. German, Dresden and French Royal Sevres porcelains are assets to the Museum for the reason that they are rarely encountered in such variety and decorations outside their countries of production. To acquire all these and many more western art objects Nawab Mir Yousuf Ali Khan, Salar Jung III (1889–1949), possessed the requisite assets: taste, money and contacts. An unmarried scion of a noble family-Salar Jung-of the princely state of Hyderabad, a connoisseur widely known for his refined taste in paintings and decorative arts, and a heir to an annual revenue of about Rs. 23 lakhs from his huge estate of 450 villages spread over 1480 square miles Nawab Salar Jung. after whose family the museum is known, had set up, by means of travel and correspondence, contacts with western art dealers, both in land and outside India.

Thus Salar Jung's paintings of Italian and French masters were assembled through the agency of National Association of Artists, Florence, Italy. The London-based art agencies like Christies, Wilson and Gill, M. Harris and Sons, Maple and company were instrumental in supplying porcelains, glass, furniture, silver, clocks etc. Nearer home, Moser, Bombay who were sole of Wedgwood ware were responsible for the objects of that name kept in the museum. over the years from different sources and supplemented with the findings of Mr. Timothy Wilcox, Curator, Victoria and Albert Museum, London who had examined about 580 paintings and decorative art pieces (the best of the lot) is contained in this hand book prepared for the visitors desirous of acquainting themselves with the European arts in the Museum.

The study explain three parts deals with three categories the museum's western collection has been studied under: paintings, and decorative arts. The detailing of Museum's objects in each category, is preceded by a brief historical survey of each 'member' of art to enable the reader to 'stand' the museum's arts in their allotted places in European art history. To attempt an account of European painting is to tell the story of painting since man in Western countries started drawing. We are told

that the Western man had drawn figures of animals in a place called Altamira in Spain which seems to have taken place about 200 centuries ago. It is rather impossible to delineate, even remotely, in the short space available here, the various stages in European painting the 30 centuries of Egyptian painting which is said to have given birth to European painting in Crete; 12 centuries of Creto, Greek, Roman period; 11 centuries of Christian religious painting upto 14th century A.D.; the next three centuries of Renaissance painting including the contributions of Rembrandt and others; new movements in 18th c. and the modern trends in 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.



What is important-and what is worthwhile attempting in an exercise of the kind we have begun-is to pinpoint the contributions made by each period-or a cluster of periods where necessary- the growth and the beautification of European painting. If we want to trace the subject in the manner aforesaid the better course would be to consider the progress of painting from the Egyptian period to the end of Christian religious painting in one long sweep; the development of painting during the Renaissance age-from 14th to 17th centuries; the developments in 18<sup>th</sup> century; and the birth of new movements in 19th and 20th centuries.

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