



AN INDIAN ART TEACHER IN U.S.A.

G. K. DESHPANDE

*Photograph of the Poster on International
Education Year 1970
Executed by G. K. Deshpande*

It was in the year 1959-60, that I had the opportunity to visit the United States of America for advanced studies in Commercial Art, under the Fulbright Exchange Program for University-Teachers. Then I was working as Lecturer in Applied Art at the Chitrakala Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur (then the Art Department of Govt. Polytechnic, Nagpur). A batch of 35 participants with different subjects for their studies sailed all the way to New York. And from there we departed to our respective institutions. In a batch of 35, Shri Biren De of Delhi and I were the only two in Fine Arts. Shri De was placed in New York, and I went to Los Angeles.

I was very fortunate in getting placement in one of the foremost American institutes of professional arts viz., "The Art Center School" L.A., now, known as "Central College of Design, Los Angeles". Everything was entirely new and different for me from the point of view of how I studied and taught the subject in our country. And on that day, I decided to forget that I was an art teacher. Even

today I do not consider myself an art teacher. I am a student of art and I shall be so till I breathe my last. This is what I learnt on the first day of my art education, in that entirely different environment at the Art Center School.

Here, the teachers were more like guides, instructors and friends striving to professionally satisfying results. Right from thumbnail drawings to the finished art works there was a system of professional discipline. The class was working without the signal-bells of the commencement and completion of the day's work. Coffee breaks used to be announced in the class by the instructor with a broad smile on his face, "come on let us have a coffee break for 10 minutes".

Instructors would join us for coffee and lunch on many occasions. And the informal conversations with them covering all topics from T.V. shows to their day-to-day experiments in profession taught us a good many things which otherwise we would not have learnt in the class-rooms.

All this made me feel different. I never felt home-sick. I made many friends and we used to have healthy discussions on the good and bad points of our work done during the day. Meetings with counsellors gave me a new insight into students' problems on returning home. This very fact has broken the barrier between teacher and the taught. This has also given me an understanding of considering my colleagues as co-travellers, to the same destination, in one train.

My studies in the States particularly in the subject of design and colour inspired me to carry out many different experiments in the subject and media, and later on recently, helped me when the Government of Maharashtra decided to reorient the Higher Art Education in the State. The important task was to conduct training seminars for those art teachers who belonged to the old school of art education. I can confidently say that my training in States did help me a lot in passing on the information I gathered there to the trainees when I was appointed as one of the instructors consecutively for three years during summer vacations. I dealt with subjects like "2-D" Design and Colour. The Govt. of Maharashtra reoriented the Art courses on

lines which are to some extent similar to those I had studied in the States. This helped me also to contribute towards the implementation of the revised courses in the institutes where I had the good fortune to serve, namely Chitrakala Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, Sir J.J. Institute of Applied Art, Bombay and presently at Govt. School of Art, Aurangabad.

I have had the proud privilege of establishing a new Govt. School of Art here, at the regional level and building it up from scratch. We are now nearing completion of third year. Within our own limitations we are trying to pick up the best from the different parts of the world and trying to pass on our experiences to the generation that is growing under our care. Our students during these three years have achieved many successes, the latest being the winning of the Ist Prize—a State award—for a work in Drawing and Painting at the State Art Exhibition, organised by the Govt. of Maharashtra. Though credit goes to the efforts of the students and the staff, it is the new outlook in Art Education and the orientation of Art Education in Maharashtra that enabled me to use the knowledge and experience acquired during my short stay in the States under the Fulbright program.

G.K. Deshpande ("An Indian Art Teacher in U.S.A."), a 1959-60 Fulbright alumnus, went to the Art Centre School, Los Angeles, California for advanced studies in Commercial Art. Mr. Deshpande has put out a number of posters, photographs, panels and paintings. He is currently Officer-in-Charge, Government School of Art, Aurangabad, Maharashtra.