

Dream and Existence in Tara Sabharwal's Paintings

In our dream we experience an absolute autonomy. We are relatively free from our human bondage. It is no surprise therefore that such a state of mind is inspiring and highly charged. In Tara Sabharwal's artwork it is also a challenge. How could this unbound treasure nourish our conscious lives without losing its character and freedom? How can the freedom of the dream inform her ability to fashion her painting in this world where her work acts to distribute her personhood?

In "Rooted Uprooted" you have the issue in a nutshell, as she moves so effortlessly from compositions with figurative elements to pure colors. In earlier paintings there are echoes of zoomorphic elements, leaves, plants and shells, which invite many other trajectories of our restless minds and now, in her more recent canvases we witness the immense flow of life that carries in its generous arms all that there is. In working from mono prints transformed into paintings, the mere pigments acquire character and significance that forms unities and integrities that could not be achieved otherwise. Never more so than in "Glide", "Collect" "Bridge" and "Float" in which layers of transparent colors, cloud-like, creating a movement across the canvases as well as in deep spaces, opening up to a world of shifting horizons, as never before seen in her work.

We are often advised to explore pluralities; to search for singularity within a greater plurality. Rarely are we told much about the nature of either. And yet, neither, singularity nor plurality are given, or can be taken for granted. On the contrary, different cultures are capable

of a very, very different plurality indeed; individuals are capable of infinite versions of singularity. Tara Sabharwal's paintings, monoprints and prints, pose dramatically all of these questions in several types of ambiguity and forms. Who are we? Who am I? Who are you? Who is the Other? Are we whom we think we are? How could we know otherwise? Where am I coming from? Where am I destined to go? "What is anyone?... The dream of a shadow" Pindar.

Recently Tara embarked on a long journey studying Sanskrit. It is written with the same letters as Hindi but it is as far apart as the German language written in Latin script is far from the Latin language. Of course, what occurs in the letter scripts occurs in the paintings. Miniature forms indicate a vast universe to which our desires are bound, in constant search for significance and meaning. These letterforms, like the abstracted forms in Tara's paintings, are coded language with which we are deciphering our adventure here on earth in a limited horizon of temporality.

As many children born in the Indian subcontinent, we are inevitably caught in the tissue of religions, customs, culture and languages that seem to have no end, no boundaries or limits. Even when they are made of infinite numbers of exactly such limits and boundaries.

Of course the painter knows how to distance herself from existing versions of whatever she is contemplating. She could not possibly embark on her voyage without such detachment. This is so much more so for a painter who was born in New Delhi, India, but has lived the larger part of her life in London and New York. These questions are even more pressing and defining for her

than for many other painters. As if for Tara Sabharwal, the paintings themselves are to provide the possible answer. They are the constellations in which she is traveling with no respite in sight. How could it be otherwise? The constellations themselves are in flux. We are strangers in this world no matter where we were born or, where we shall die. Perhaps nothing distinguishes human lives on earth than this sense of not belonging here.

But in Tara's paintings, one finds a respite from such agonizing existents. The tapestry of colors and shapes moving constantly from configuration to configuration allow us to hold on to the illusion of patterns, in a repetition of multiplicities and simultaneities. We are forever indebted to her for her courage and fortitude in persuing her visions, defying nihilism and melancholic temptations.