

THE HINDU

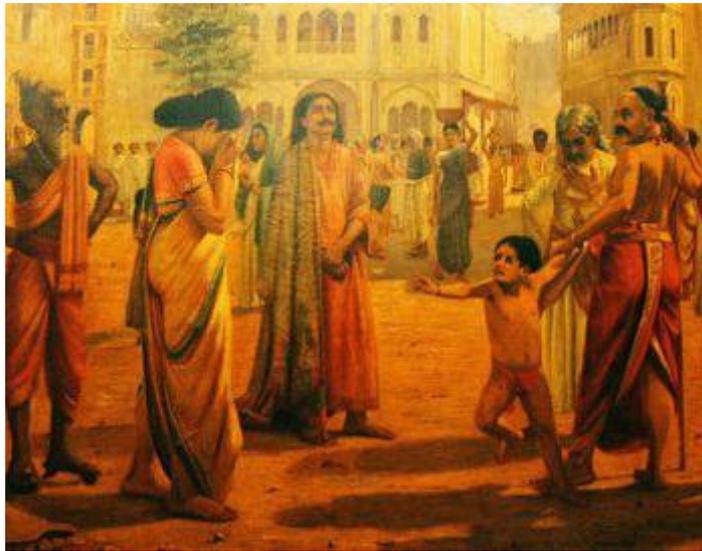
An exhibition of oleograph prints of Raja Ravi Varma

Muralidhara Khajane

It will coincide with the great artist's death centenary

*He is most remembered for his paintings of beautiful sari-clad women
Ravi Varma allowed oleograph prints of his work for the common people*

— Photo:M.A.Sriram



Epic proportions: Paintings of Raja Ravi Varma will be on display at Rangayana in Mysore.

MYSORE: An exhibition of oleographs prints (a chromolithograph printed with oil paint on canvas) of paintings of Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906) collected by Mr. Omprakash, an engineering consultant from Baroda, and organised by Rangayana, will be a major attraction for connoisseurs of art. The exhibition has been organised to coincide with the death centenary of the painter who achieved worldwide acclaim for his depiction of scenes from the epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana, according to the Director of Rangayana, Chidambara Rao Jambe.

Early teachings

Ravi Varma, who was born to Umamba Thampuratti and Neelakandan Bhattadaripad in the royal palace of Kilimanoor, showed his talent at a young age. He received the patronage of Ayilyam Thirunal Maharaja of Travancore when he was 14-years-old and was taught by the palace painter Ramaswamy Naidu. He was later taught oil painting by British painter Theodor Jenson. The

power and forceful expression of European painting fascinated Ravi Varma, a style very much in contrast to Indian art work.

His paintings are considered to be among the best examples of fusion of Indian traditions with the techniques of European academic art. He is most remembered for his paintings of beautiful sari-clad women, who were portrayed as very shapely and graceful. He often modelled Hindu Goddesses on south Indian women, who he considered beautiful. He is particularly noted for his paintings of Dushyanta and Shakuntala and Nala and Damayanti, from the Mahabharata.

Reproduction

His exposure to the West came when he won first prize in the Vienna Art Exhibition in 1873. After a successful career as a painter, Raja Ravi Varma died in 1906 at the age of 58. He is considered as one of the greatest painters in the history of Indian art. His paintings are on display at Jaganmohana Palace, Mysore, Art Galleries of Baroda and Thiruvananthapuram.

While painters abhor reproduction of their works, Raja Ravi Varma generously allowed oleograph prints of his work, to reach out to the common people. Mr. Omprakash, who has converted his office in Baroda into an art gallery titled "Baroda Art Gallery", houses the permanent exhibition of the oleograph collection. He started his collection after he acquired an antique German print of Vasudeo Pandya "Krishna Leela". He began to look around for similar old prints and oleographs in and around Baroda, Surat and Ahmedabad and could collect sizable number of paintings. He will exhibit over 100 oleograph paintings of Ravi Varma at Bhoomi Geetha Auditorium of Rangayana, according Dwarakanath, convener of the exhibition.

Schedule

The exhibition will be open to the public from October 16 to 21 and a documentary on the life of Raja Ravi Varma will be screened on October 17. A discussion on his works will also be held on the occasion, according to Mr. Dwarakanath.