

BLUE PRINT FOR PROJECT TO REVIVE “RAJA RAVI VARMA “

AIM: To make RAJA RAVI VARMA of KILIMANOOR 'S contribution to India's art and culture known to India and world again and to reintroduce beauty and Traditional Art form of India.

Present scene : Ravi Varma is famous for 2 historical achievements in the field of art in India.

1. Creating India's first oil paintings on canvas in the European style with Indian themes ,
2. Created mass production of art prints known as Oleographs copied from his mythological based topics, which ultimately started India's calendar art

Ravi Varma's paintings whose number is not exactly documented but could be more than 500 nos. are most expensive piece of art and are owned by art collectors and museums all over India. Maximum numbers are owned by 3 palace museums namely Trivendrum , Mysore and Baroda. These account for about 150 nos. of his paintings.

His birth place Kilimanoor palace was possessing 75 nos. original paintings which were given to Trivendrum Chitra art gallery and now has none. Balance 400 or more original paintings are now owned by many individuals.

While Ravi Varma became famous among elite kings and British rulers of India for his oil paintings, his popularity among India's common man was through his Oleographs.

These Oleographs were printed in thousands by presses associated with his name for very large numbers of mythological characters depicted in his many paintings and nearly flooded India's houses and business places small or large. Mainly due to mythological characters in his Oleographs many of which were popular Gods and Goddesses respected in most Hindu public, these found places all over India and have survived still due to respect they received as images of Gods.

Only not more than 100 -150 oleographs are attributed to be based on Ravi Varma's original paintings which were also signed by him, much larger number of these Oleographs were printed by presses based on other artists paintings later on and are also not now classified to exact numbers, but are estimated to be more than 1000 different topics. These Oleographs whether based on Ravi varma's paintings or other artists later on, who used his presses for printing them, were all became known as Ravi Varma Oleographs and were a major contributor to India's art ,social, culture as well as political scene of that time.

Many of these Oleographs have survived due to their religious connection to popular Gods and Goddesses even though these were printed on more fragile medium of paper which got easily damaged by harsh Indian climate. These surviving prints provide even now a very rich source of Art, social and cultural history of India from 1894 to 1930s

The legacy of Ravi Varma's contribution to Indian art and culture scene is based on these 2 completely different form of Art both of which he initiated in India as originator.

Before Ravi Varma there was no artist whose name became known for art, even though there were famous art form like miniature art by unknown artists, and before his lithographic presses there was no other commercial press for colour prints.

Even with above mentioned pioneering contribution to India's art, society and culture Ravi Varma name is getting forgotten because of following :

- a. After his death in 1906, many other artists continued to practice similar art form of realism and contributed to build into Indian Popular Art in the form of Calendar art. Artists who became known for this were Dhurandhar, Tagore, Vasudeo Pandya, Sharma Brothers of Nathdwara, Thakore of Dakore, and many other artist who contributed to the publication of calendars from SS Brijbasi, Chitrashala Press Pune etc. All these Popular art form created a new field of mass production of art which could be accessed by common person and ultimately brought Gods and Goddesses in every home and created impact on Hindu religion spread as well which lasted well from 1910 to till today. This art form slowly degenerated into copy based art with the advent of modern computer and printing technology.
- b. However all these calendars created by many modern presses and unknown artists are still a factor in popular art field and is competing with any other art form like modern art form and keeps the Popular art based on Realism alive, and not allowing Modern Art to get into common man's home place of Puja which still keeps occupied by the Gods images initiated by Ravi Varma even though now modified and revised by unknown artists.
- c. The advent of Modern Art form which got initiated into Indian art scene also due to effect of western art and also due to its ease in drawing it and variety of topics and mediums of creation has stuck a blow to traditional realistic art form originated in west and introduce into India by Ravi Varrma.
- d. Slow but steadily appreciation and valuation of art form has shifted to Modern Art form, both in education, promotion through exhibitions and publications etc. Now there are no realistic artist any more who are anywhere as famous as Ravi Varma and whose art creations are in common home and work places as the Popular Art form of yesteryears.

- e. Due to very high brand name of Ravi Varma his original paintings are still priced very high and their appreciation in art market continues to be upwards equal to or more than most Modern Artists creations, the owners of these original oil paintings by him are proud of their possession, but are rarely interested to build into the importance of the name raja Ravi the original artist of India and his contributions to art of India.
- f. These owners of original paintings whether individuals owning one or two paintings or various Palace Museums owning many numbers of his paintings rarely educate people into the complete personality and total contribution of Ravi Varma in the form of hundreds of paintings created by him and thousands of Oleographs printed from his presses.
- g. These art collectors are too happy to keep their own treasures with them and are neither aware of others similar collection nor make others of the availability of more paintings from Ravi Varma.
- h. Thus in absence of totality of information about Ravi Varma's creations we are never able to realise the real importance of his contributions Indian art, culture and social life of India.
- i. Due to above, common man and even educated youth of today is unable to know much about Ravi Varma of Kilimanoor and cannot recognise an antique oleograph printed by his press 100 years ago and being worshipped in place of puja in his house or work place purchased and placed there by his grandfather or father and readily throws it into rubbish bin when it changes colour or gets out of place on a new home, even though these antique prints still command very high price when it is still recognised by art lover.

THE PROJECT DETAILS :

1. Kilimanoor Palace is the most important and central name related to Ravi Varma due to his birth place and
2. KP does not possess any one original Painting or Oleograph.
3. KP has ownership of largest number (75 Nos.) of original paintings of any other museum, which have been given to Trivendrum Museum and Chitra Art Gallery and fighting to get them back through court.
4. While KP does not possess any originals it has greatest value treasure of brand name of Ravi Varma and commands highest respect with the name of Ravi Varma.
5. KP should try to get copy rights on the paintings given to Trivendrum Chitra Art Gallery even if not actual possession of these paintings.

6. With copy rights of 75 paintings with KP, it should try to exchange copy rights of all major paintings in possession of other museums for the purpose of making copies of their paintings for the purpose of archive and education purpose only. This move will enable KP to possess copies of all paintings of Ravi Varma for the purpose of a common archive in its Palace which will be used to make a complete soft and hard copies for education and research purpose.
7. Oleographs have no copy rights by now due to their availability in thousands and made over 75 years ago, which makes them available in Public Domain under copy right act. Hence their soft and hard copies can be easily made available in the archive of KP for education and research and information purpose to all.
8. While all others who possess even one Ravi Varma original painting or Oleograph have no interest in propagating or revival of the name of Ravi Varma, KP has the reasons and valid reasons to above.
9. KP should aim to possess information on every thing or topic connected to the life and works of Ravi Varma, in the form of soft and hard copies.
10. The archive of information on Ravi Varma should contain most complete and most authentic as much as possible by any source and over a period of time it should be a reference point of all such information.
11. The archive should contain information on :
 - a. His biography and lineage of the kingdom of Kilimanoor from all the sources of official records of palaces and family members.
 - b. His day to day work history as in Diary of Raja Varma.
 - c. List soft and hard copies of his entire works of paintings from all sources, similar to that published in Mangharam Book, past and current owners, sale and auction records of these paintings.
 - d. List and soft and hard copies of entire oleographs printed by his many presses, with dates of printing, size. Oleographs from his paintings, his signature.
 - e. History of operation, ownership and business details of all his printing presses.
 - f. Details and copies of all **books** and documents **and Documentaries, cinema, songs, plays** made and published on his life and works from all publishers till now all over India and by Door Darshan TV.
 - g. All and any printed documents from any sources related to Ravi varma.

12. The entire archive database and information will be compiled in both soft and hard copies and made available to any person from the library of KP.
13. The total information will be then converted to soft copy, a package suitable for education purpose in various art colleges, museums and any other institute interested to carry out research further on the life and works of Ravi Varma.
14. This **Educational "Ravi Vram Archive Package"** along with 42" LED TV will be gifted free of charge to all major Art educational institutes and Museums of India having exchanged their copy rights of Ravi Varma paintings with Kilimanoor Palace. These initially may include Fine arts faculties of MSU in Baroda, Mysore, Trivendrum, JJ School of Arts Mumbai and Raja Ravi Varma College in Kilimanoor.
- 15. The above Archive Package will cost about Rs. 50,000/- each and during 1st year of launching our all India educational project on Ravi Vrma an investment of about Rs. 5 lacs is envisaged for about 10 locations spread all over India.**
16. Major Fine arts faculties of Indian universities will be encouraged to start new course on Life and works of Ravi Varma and its impact on Indian Art scene based on database created by KP. Course material to be provided by KP.
17. Exhibitions of Ravi Varma paintings and Oleographs by major owner Museums of these works will be conducted every 2-3 months all over India, with support from KP and with the help of **"Ravi Varma Educational Package"**
18. Seminars will be conducted in all major cities of India once every 3 months to bring out importance of Ravi Varma and his works, lecturers to be invited who have written books or done research work on Ravi Varma.
19. Every year all India competition will be held for making the best copy of a selected painting of Ravi Varma in its original size and prizes to be given to the best copy made by any one or two artists or students of Fine arts in education institute. This winning copy will be auctioned on internet with the support of Ravi Varma Foundation and money collected would go back to the artist and support our project of education.
20. Articles on Ravi Varma and his works from various writers should be brought out with the support and encouragement of KP in all major magazines of art in India and abroad.
21. Scholarship and research grants into Ravi Varma life to be made available to students in all major Fine arts Universities.

22. Vivekanand and Ravi Varma were both contemporary and both were at Chicago convention at same time, Vivekanand introduced Hindu way of life of India and Ravi Varma showed Indian art to all the world .
23. Vivekanand followers developed education centers all over India, each of them is equipped with all the literature, CDs and lecture program giving information on Hinduism ideas and every center contains the entire database information on his life and teachings.
24. We will build similar total information archive database about Ravi Varma to be made available in the form of educational package, free of charge to all institutes and all museums in India and abroad university libraries having courses on Indian arts.
25. A website will be made, immediately by me in the name of KP Foundation where the entire archive of collected database will be posted as it is collected slowly and made available to everybody free of any charge.
26. People can download all Ravi Varma paintings whose copyright has been obtained by Palace from other museums and collectors in exchange of their own copyright of 75 paintings now with Chitra Art Gallery, Trivendrum for education purpose and Oleographs as well as all information about his life.
27. Website possible name could be any one similar www.rajaravivarma-foundation.com or www.rajaravivarma-archive.com ,
28. Involve Govt. of Kerala cultural, education and Tourism deptt. In this venture and get whatever help and support could be obtained from them. Get the scheme approved at govt. level for introduction of a education course in Fine arts faculties of all major Universities of India.
29. TIME TABLE : To complete 80 % of all above activities which could be easily done with available information in books, many websites and other published material already in public domain, within 6 months, and balance activities of creation of educational Module for Museums and Art Institutes , requiring more efforts in 1 year time.
30. FINANCES : Many cultural, educational, NGO, Industrial houses and Govtt. Deptts. Of Culture, education, Tourism can be made interested to finance the scheme after it gets stated up substantially with the help of the 1st st Exhibition cum Seminar to be held in KILIMANOOR PALACE in the month of October/ November 2013.
31. Currently financial and operational help could be obtained by the Producer of Film on Raja Ravi Varma “ **Colours of Passion**” which is yet to be released in India, who could be most willing person to help our venture.