

The Paintings of Gopal D. Deuskar

PAINTERS from Western India have not, as a rule, shone in the exhibitions of Europe, for very few of them have made themselves known by showing their work in the centres of art such as London and Paris. Among those who have gained such coveted recognition, Mr. Gopal Deuskar has lately figured with considerable prominence; his success is the more welcome because much of it has occurred in lands distant from his own country, where optical proofs of the high talent of India's living artists are as rare as they are welcome to all admirers of India. My own acquaintance with this young artist of fame and promise dates from 1927, when as a particularly bright youth of sixteen he joined the Bombay School of Art, of which I was at that time in charge. He was quick to make his mark in the largest and most advanced art school of India, where first class standards of painting, modeling and architecture (as standards go in Europe) were in process of stabilisation. I well remember Deuskar's abilities; but still more lively is my recollection of the young art student's enthusiasm, the best of all gifts for the artist.

His course at the Bombay School received the final distinction of a silver medal for his painting, which gained him his diploma. A further success awaited him when two of his drawings shown in the exhibition of work by students of the Bombay School of Art, which I organised at India House, Alwyck, in 1930, were among those personally selected by Her Majesty Queen Mary. It was subsequent to this that the young artist won the Gold Medal of the Bombay Art Society, and that blue ribbon of Indian exhibitors, the Viceroy's Prize at Simla. The timely grant of a scholarship from the Nizam's Government enabled Deuskar to visit Europe, and to spend a year in Paris, studying at the Beaux Arts, and making copies in the Louvre. The two years following were spent at the celebrated schools which are under the aegis of the Royal Academy of London. These studies were preliminary to an extended tour on the Continent of Europe, where the young artist visited the art centres of Belgium, Holland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Hungary, Italy and Spain. It was in Madrid that his picture, "Shakuntala", which appeared in the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition of 1936, was painted. "A Bull's Holiday", his latest composition in oils, was the only work by an Indian artist to gain admittance to the recent Annual Exhibition at Burlington House.

Deuskar's work has also been seen at the Exhibition of Modern Indian Art held at the New Burlington Galleries in 1934, and the Royal British Colonial Society's small but admirable show of contemporary Indian art, held at the Royal Institute, Piccadilly, last year.

Deuskar's output of work has hitherto fallen into three main categories : subject pictures, portraits and water-colour in what is usually, and somewhat loosely,

known as the "Indian Style". Among the portraits those of Sir Akbar Hydari and Sir V. T. Krishnamachariar are among his most prominent achievement. These works are of frankly Western inspiration. His water colour entitled "Raja and Rani" furnishes an example of his sensitive feeling for colour and design, inherited with that instinct for both which is of typically Indian derivation, rather than based on archaic or mediaeval traditions. Will Gopal Deuskar give us more of this valuable kind of work in future? His Academy pictures show this versatile young painter under the mingled influence of East and West. In them are fused something of the decoration and poetry of the Orient, with the technique and proportion of the West. Both display that instinct for pictorial composition and design which is Deuskar's strongest gift; and it may well be that the attempt of this gifted young artist to merge and reconcile some of the permanent features of Western and Eastern art will strike out a new school of painting. At any rate Gopal Deuskar has come nearer than any Indian artist towards accomplishing the engrafting of these divergent but not necessarily antithetical methods in art. If he does not yield to that soft inducement-which has been the undoing of so many promising young Indian artists within my own knowledge - to rest upon his laurels, but continues in his present course of sincere study and effort, then achievement which will reflect credit on himself and his country should not be beyond his grasp.

- *W. E. Gladstone Solomon*