

DR. MOTI CHANDRA : A Profile

With the Nineteenth century dawned a new era of peace and prosperity in Banaras. This was the culmination of the Mughal tradition and culture which faced the challenges of European impacts. Banaras produced genius after genius, among whom Bhāratendu Harish Chandra occupied the premier place. Bhārtendu is usually known as the father of modern Hindi, but he is equally noted as a social reformer and a freedom fighter. The business community in Banaras contributed a number of personalities of national importance, who showed their brilliance in some field or the other.

Dr. Moti Chandra comes from the illustrious family of Bhārtendu Harish Chandra, the family has been hailed both for its economic prosperity and intellectual eminence. He developed the traditional love for learning, for Indian culture, for Hindi and Sanskrit poetry, classical Indian music and above all, Indian art. As he passed his M.A. from the Banaras Hindu University he was advised by Rai Krishnadas to develop into an art historian and was baptized in the University of London. His first positive contact with the actual objects of Indian art and the traditional artists began at Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras, where he started collecting material for his future investigations.

Dr. Moti Chandra soon found himself involved in the ancient texts and the early representations of Indian art. He discovered that Indian art could be of immense value in the reconstruction of our material culture. He pored over ancient texts after texts and collected a vast material which subsequently appeared in the form of various papers covering costumes or coiffures, early terracottas, the folk deities, the Western Indian paintings, the early Rajasthani illustrations or their technique of Mughal painting. He had to traverse the path which even the angels feared to tread. In this connection people still remember the famous eulogy by Dr. V. S. Agrawala : 'Moti Chandra is comparable to the mesh filters used by the pearl merchants.' He has found more than anybody in this field, logical solution to numerous obscure technical terms which earned him the above remark and an unprecedented honour among the scholars.

Dr. Moti Chandra is one of the few scholars who have a wide range of interests stretching from the prehistoric times to the end of the Mughal period. He believes that the Muslim culture, particularly of the Mughals, made an important contribution to Indian art and society, which cannot be ignored. It is in its complexity and variety that Indian art and culture found expression in visual arts. The Mughal