

## **Exploring Indigenous Artistic Identity during the Colonial Period in India**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the development of indigenous artistic styles in India during the British colonial period, focussing on Bengal, the main hub of cultural rediscovery as well as artistic innovations. During the initial period of European cultural exposure, there was mostly a whole-hearted reception of European artistic styles. Indian traditional art was already in a state of oblivion following the decline of the Mughal rule and the gradual strengthening of the British Empire. Artists like Raja Ravi Varma though initially hailed for their artistic contributions, were later denounced for their thorough imitation of European artistic styles. It was with the emergence of the Bengal School of Art and more importantly with the rise of consciousness in the English art teacher Ernest Binfield Havell and Abanindranath Tagore, one of the most prominent members of Bengal's esteemed Tagore family, regarding the suppression of indigenous Indian art that the indigenous artistic revolution started in India. By focusing on glorious artistic achievements of the previous eras in India and also by incorporating artistic techniques from other parts of Asia, artistic methods more congenial to the formation of indigenous art were developed. The nationalist artistic movement was not only impacted by the prevailing situation of rising national consciousness regarding the atrocities of the British rule but also it acted in turn to generate nationalist fervour.

**Key words:** Nationalist Art Movement, Indigenous Art, Bengal School of Art, Abanindranath Tagore, Indian Traditional Art.