

Concise course in Indian Art : History and Appreciation.

Lectures and films by Benoy K Behl



Bodhisattva Padmapani, Mural, 5th century AD, Cave 1, Ajanta, Maharashtra, India. Photograph by Benoy K Behl

Bodhisattva means one who he is on the path towards enlightenment. *Padmapani* means one who bears a lotus. This gentle figure is one of the masterpieces of the art of India.

Art historian Benoy K Behl takes us on a journey through Indian art, across ancient and medieval times.

These talks are profusely illustrated by Behl's well-known photographs and films on Indian art, including the scarcely-seen ancient murals. He shows the continuity of the tradition of painting and sculpture in India, through ancient and medieval times.

Selected films are shown from his series of 52 documentary films, on Indian paintings and on sculpture. He also takes us on a journey through the development of Buddhism and some of the famous Indian temples.

Behl presents the traditions of art making and patronage of art since ancient times. He shows the first deities that were conceived in Indian thought and art, as well as the development of subsequent spiritual traditions and deities. He explains the meaning of the

stupa, the *linga* and the development of the temple in India.



Parvati, Chola Bronze, Tamil Nadu.

Photograph by Benoy K Behl

Collection: Saraswati Mahal Art Gallery,
Thanjavur

The bronzes of the early Chola period are
among the masterpieces of the art of
India.

He shows Indian art in the light of the ancient Indian treatise on art making and Indian philosophic traditions upon which the art is based. The spectrum of art and temples presented covers the sub-continent and collections in museums in many countries. He presents the Indian philosophy of aesthetics, which underlies the making of art and deities, since ancient times.

Early India art embodies deep philosophic concepts. What survives today of the ancient art of India is only a small fraction of what would have been created. Yet it consists of such vast number of monuments and sculpture that it staggers the mind.

The art and culture of India is our greatest treasure. It is very important and very enriching for every Indian to be aware of this great heritage that we have.

This art embodies a deeply ethical vision of life. It is these values which provide a stable base to life and make it possible for us to have a joyous existence. People deserve to be exposed to these traditions, so as to experience life in its fullest and most meaningful dimensions.

Benoy K Behl is a film-maker, art-historian and photographer who is known for his tireless and prolific output of work over the past 40 years. He has taken over 50,000 photographs of Asian monuments and art heritage, made 138 documentaries which are regularly screened at major cultural institutions worldwide. His photographic exhibitions have been warmly received in 54 countries around the world. These have been inaugurated by ministers of the governments of various countries, ambassadors, archbishops and others dignitaries. He holds the Limca Book Record for being the most travelled photographer.

His films, including 26 documentaries on 'The Paintings of India', 26 documentaries on 'The Sculpture of India' and 26 documentaries on 'Spectacular India' have been nationally telecast on prime time in India, as well as repeat telecasts. These have also been screened at scores of universities and museums in several countries around the world.

Behl is the first Indian about whose work the National Geographic magazine has carried a story (18-pages, cover story in some European editions). BBC World News have also carried 3 major stories about Behl's pioneering work in India and Vietnam.

The vastness of Behl's documentation presents a wide and new perspective in understanding the art of India and Asia.

His photography of ancient murals in remote places has clearly established the continuous tradition of painting in India, from ancient times through the medieval period. This is significant, as earlier, the Indian tradition of painting was believed to begin in medieval times.

Behl's recent work on Yoga has made a notable contribution to the knowledge of the subject. On International Yoga Day 2015 and 2016, his exhibitions on the subject were held in 20 countries and his films on Yoga were shown in Indian Embassies and High Commissions in 50 countries.

Behl's film on 'Indian Roots of Tibetan Buddhism', with interviews with HH Dalai Lama won the Best Documentary Producer Award at the Madrid International Film Festival 2015. It has also won two awards

at international film festivals held in India. His film 'Indian Deities Worshipped in Japan' has also won a number of international film festival awards in 2016.

He has been invited to lecture by most of the important universities and museums around the world, who have departments of Asian art. His book on 'The Ajanta Caves' is published by Thames & Hudson, London and Harry N. Abrams, New York. His book on the Buddhist Heritage of Andhra Pradesh was published by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in 2014. Behl's book on the Buddhist heritage of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kalmykia, Tibet, China, Mongolia and Buryatia, was released in April, 2014 by H.H. the Karmapa. H.H. the Dalai Lama accepted an advance copy of the book at IGNCA in November, 2013.