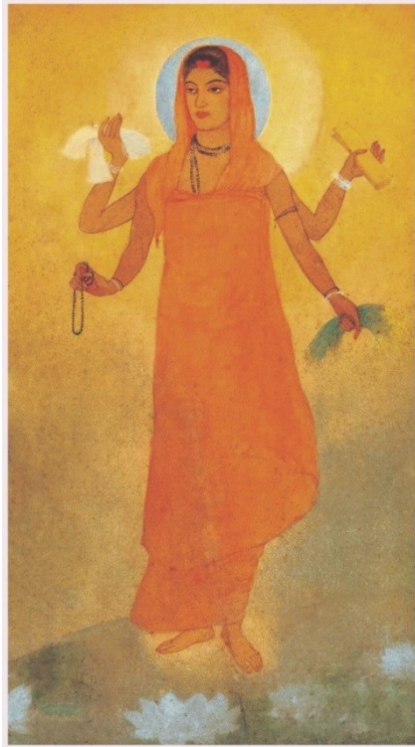


**Dr. Ritwij Bhowmik**

## **Bengal School of Art: The Movement that Challenged the Colonialism in Indian Art**



The 'Bengal School of Art' arose as an avant-garde and nationalist movement reacting against the western academic art styles previously promoted in India, mainly by the British artists and then by the Indian artists trained in western art like Raja Ravi Varma. The Bengal School of Art attempted to construct a manifestly Indian art that distinguished an indigenous cultural heritage rather than Western art and culture. Following the widespread influence of Indian spiritual ideas in the West, the British art educator and then principal of Government Art School in Calcutta, Sir Ernest Binfield Havel, attempted to reform the teaching methods by encouraging Indian students to imitate the traditional Mughal and Rajput miniature paintings. Havel was supported by young painter Abanindranath Tagore, a nephew of the Noble-laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore. With Abanindranath, Havel went on to spearhead a nationalist and modern art movement that celebrated historical, spiritual, and artistic Indian traditions.

In this lecture, I shall discuss the origin of this style, its influences, development, and significant artists. By giving reference to the next generation of artists of the Indo-Oriental style, I shall draw a possible conclusion to this modern artistic style.