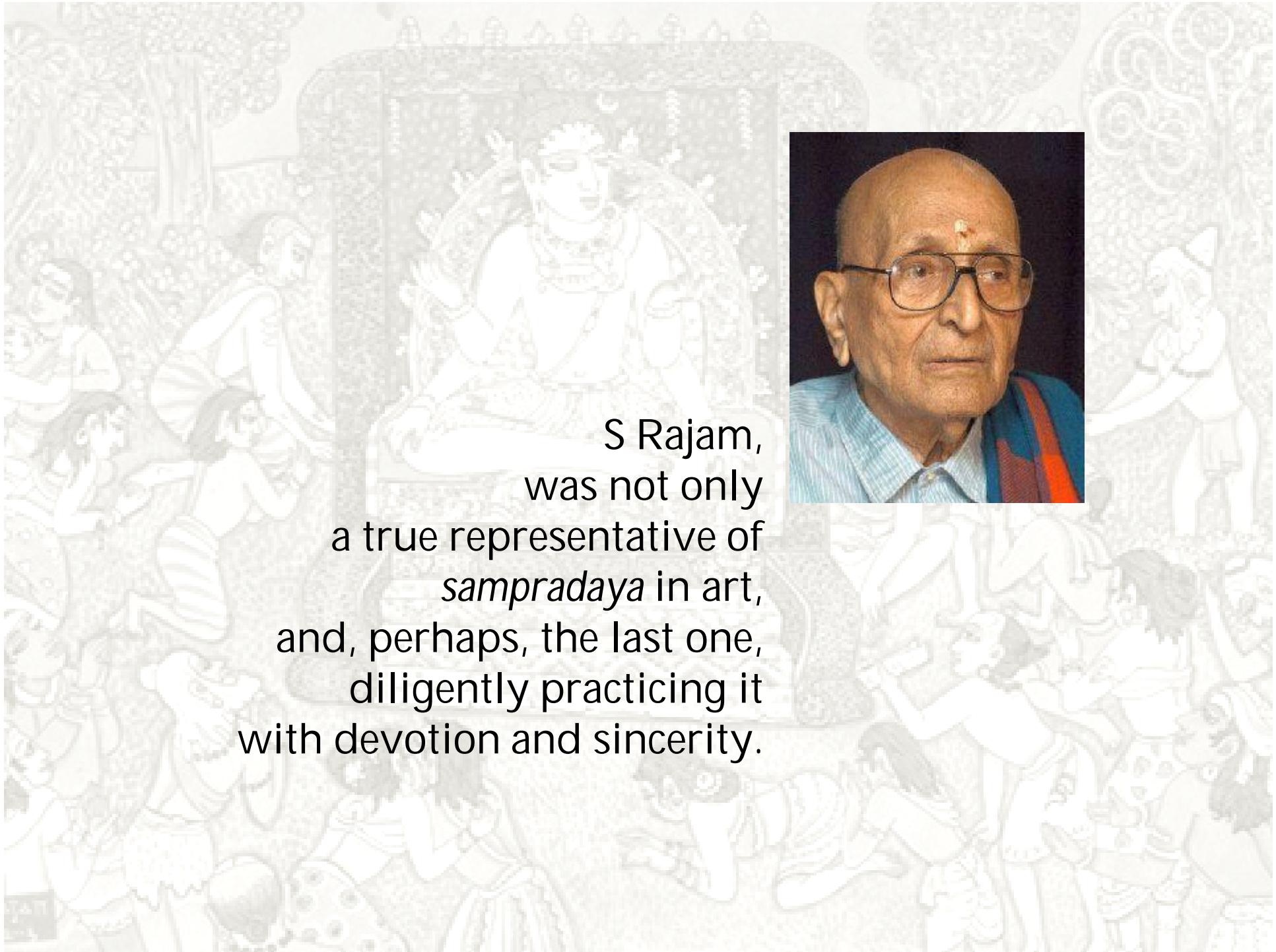


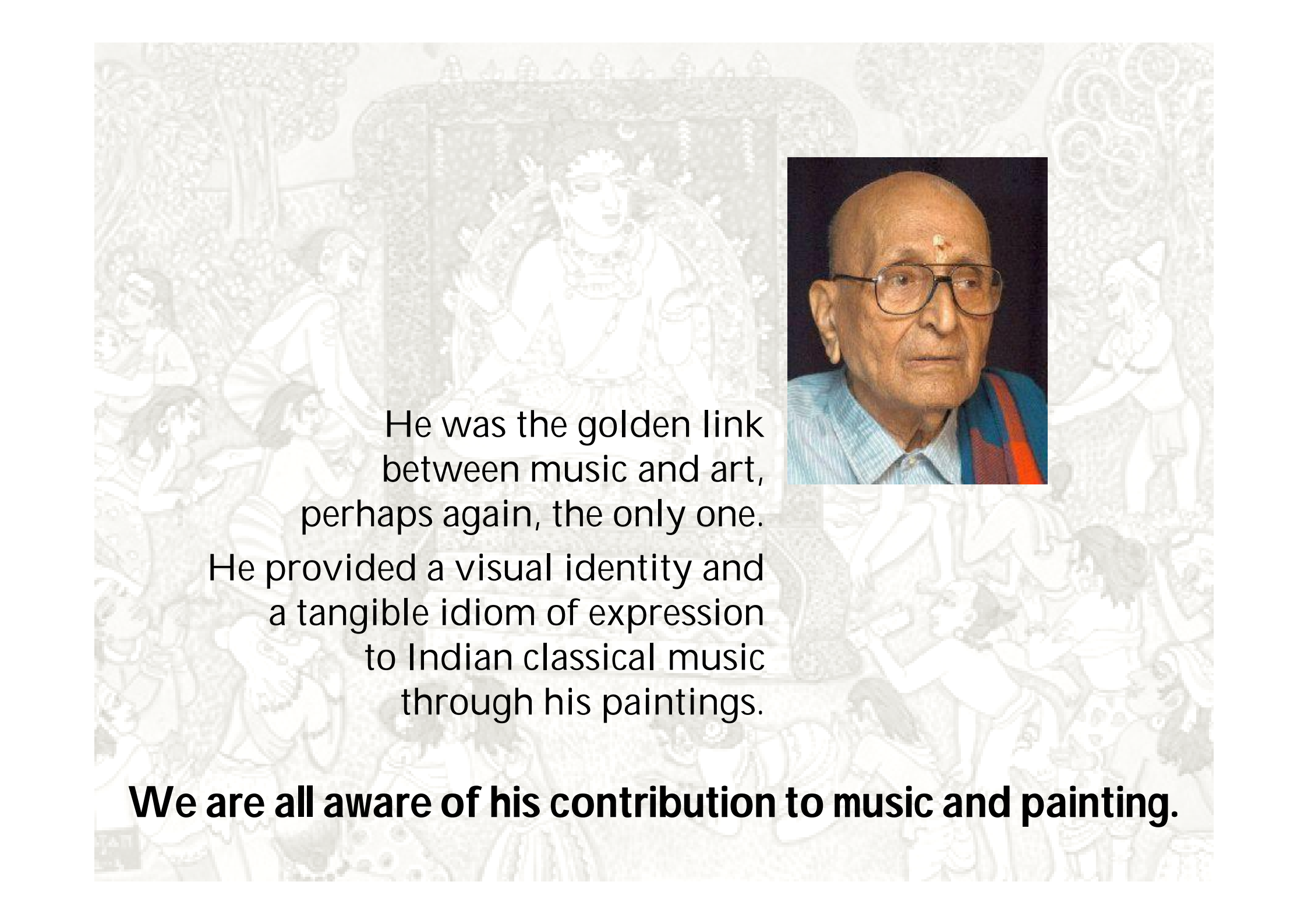
*Indian painting tradition
and S Rajam*



S. Swaminathan (sswami99@gmail.com)

S Rajam,
was not only
a true representative of
sampradaya in art,
and, perhaps, the last one,
diligently practicing it
with devotion and sincerity.

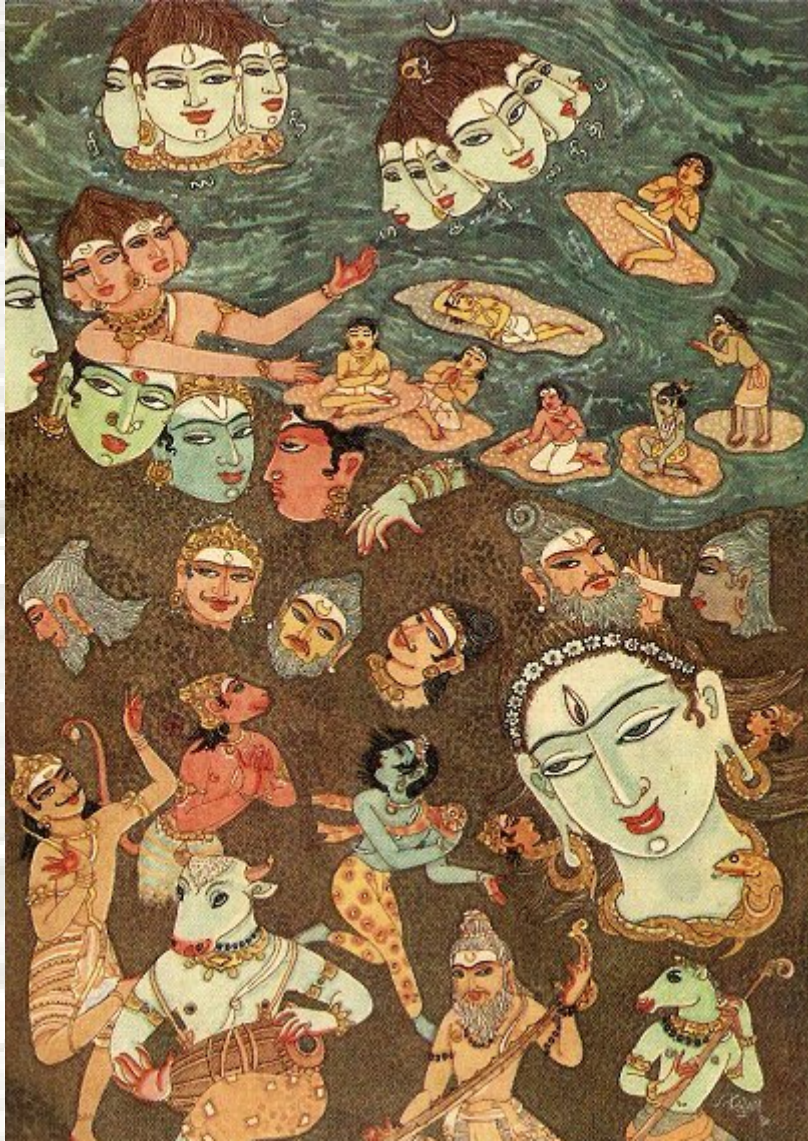




He was the golden link
between music and art,
perhaps again, the only one.

He provided a visual identity and
a tangible idiom of expression
to Indian classical music
through his paintings.

We are all aware of his contribution to music and painting.



His series,
Origin of swaras,
is a visual treat,
bringing out his genius
in these two forms of
creative expression.

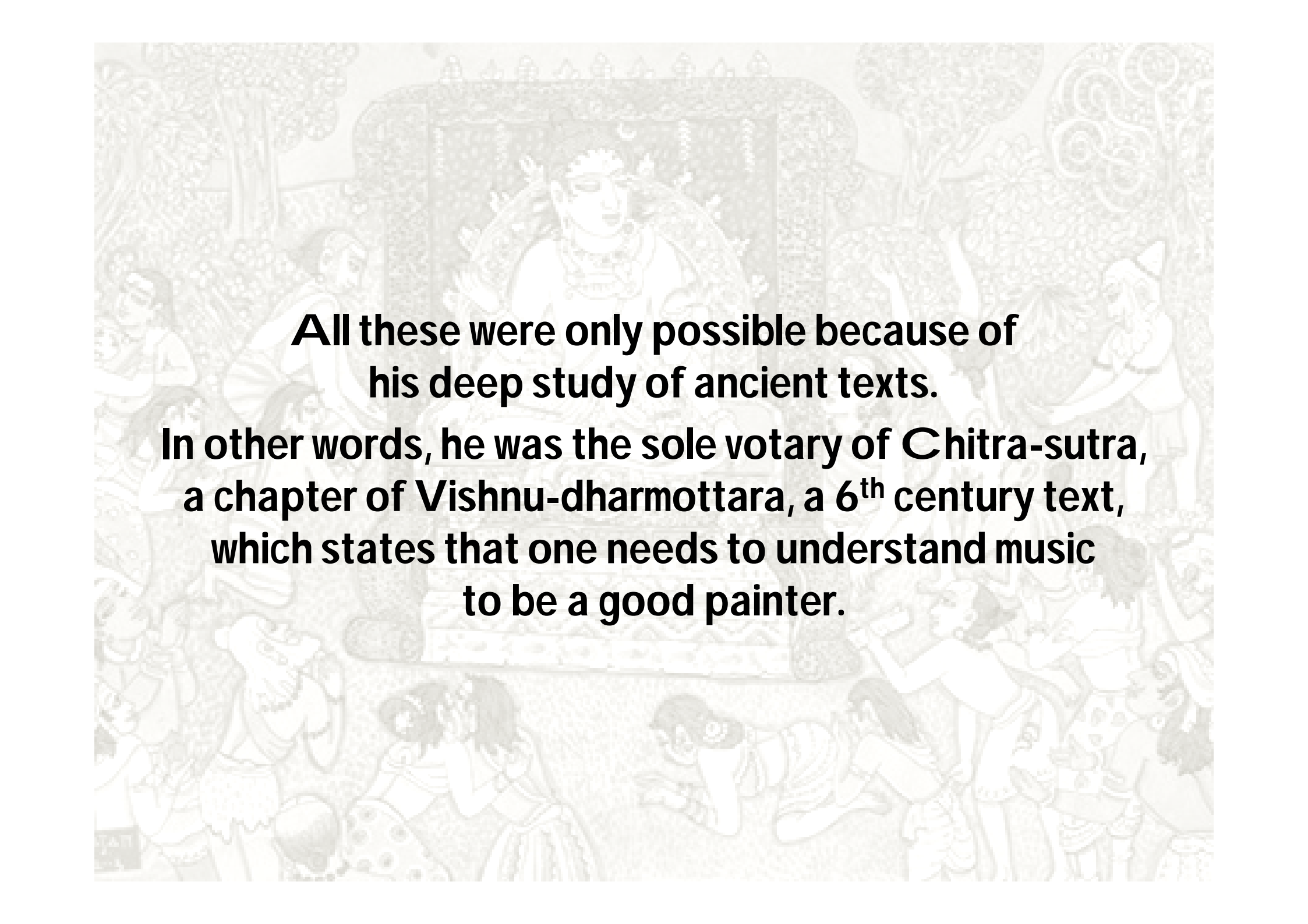
Also is the poetry on canvass, his series on the *mela-karta* scheme.

His humble tribute to Dikshitar's Navagraha Kritis is his rendition through his brushes also.





The last, but not the least, is his portraiture of the Trinity.
He painted this when he was only twenty.
Which music lover does not revere it?



All these were only possible because of his deep study of ancient texts.

In other words, he was the sole votary of Chitra-sutra, a chapter of Vishnu-dharmottara, a 6th century text, which states that one needs to understand music to be a good painter.

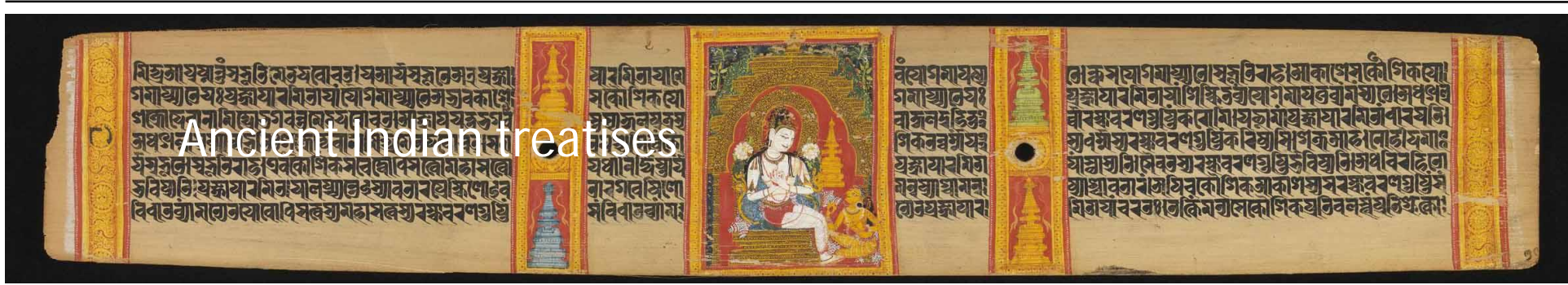


**If I say that he imbibed the spirit of Chitra-sutra
it is not an exaggeration.**

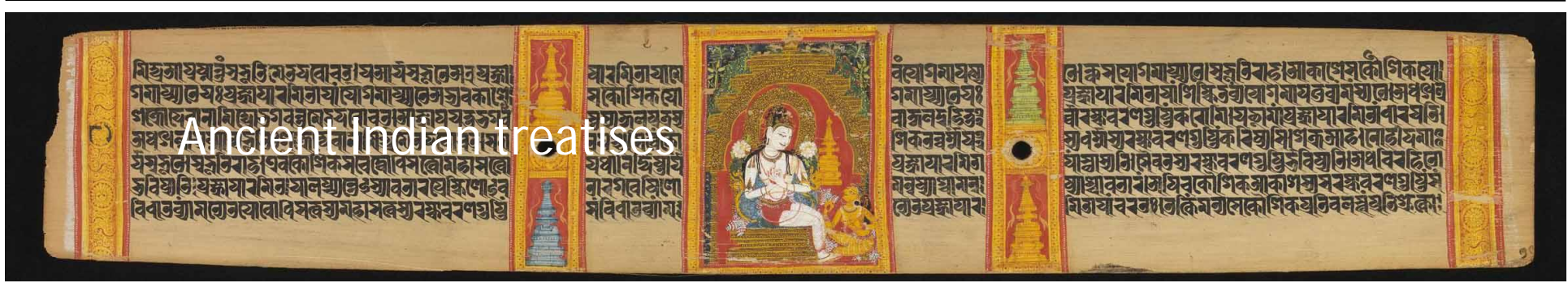
We shall look at what Chitra-sutra itself briefly.



Chitra-sutra
Indian treatise on painting



**Treatises on art and architecture
must have been numerous in the past,
but only very few have survived.**



**Among the survivals are the following
that contain precious information on painting:**

- Brihat Samhita**
- Vishnu-dharmottara,**
- Kama-sutra**
- Silpa-sastra,**
- Manasollasa,**
- Silpa-ratna,**
- Narada-shilpa-sastra,**
- Kashyapa-silpa and**
- Samrangana-sutra-dhara**



**We are very fortunate in having Chitra-sutra,
part of Vishnu-dharmottara,
a treatise that articulates
the artistic expression of the period.**

**This is the earliest exhaustive account
of the theory of painting.**



Chitra-sutra , of unknown authorship, deals with theories, methods, practices and ideals of Indian painting, and opens up a world of joy and delights that only the colors, forms and representation of things, seen and unseen, can bring forth.



**It is a fine example for
what ancient treatises looked like.
It is complete, detailed and specific and,
nowhere does it lose its focus.**



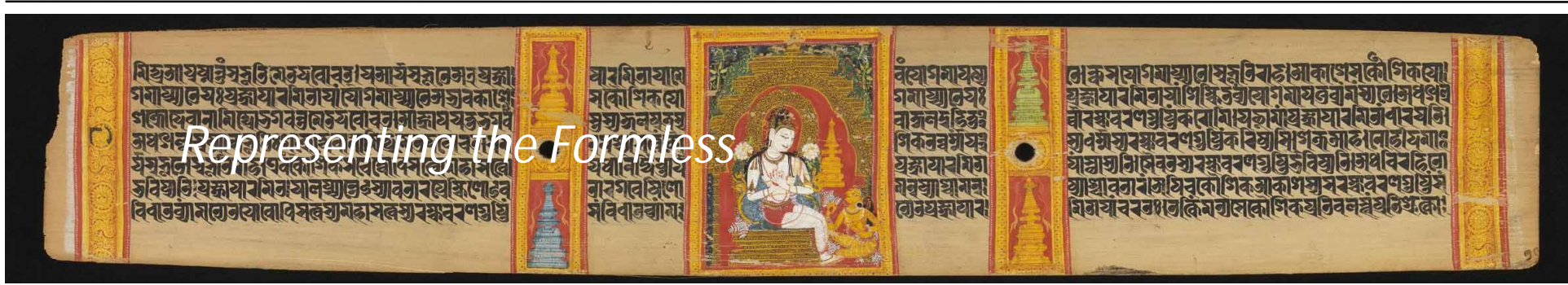
It was inspired and guided by
the **Ajanta** experience,
if written later than **Ajanta**.

If earlier, the **Ajanta** artists and
the later ones were guided by this treatise.



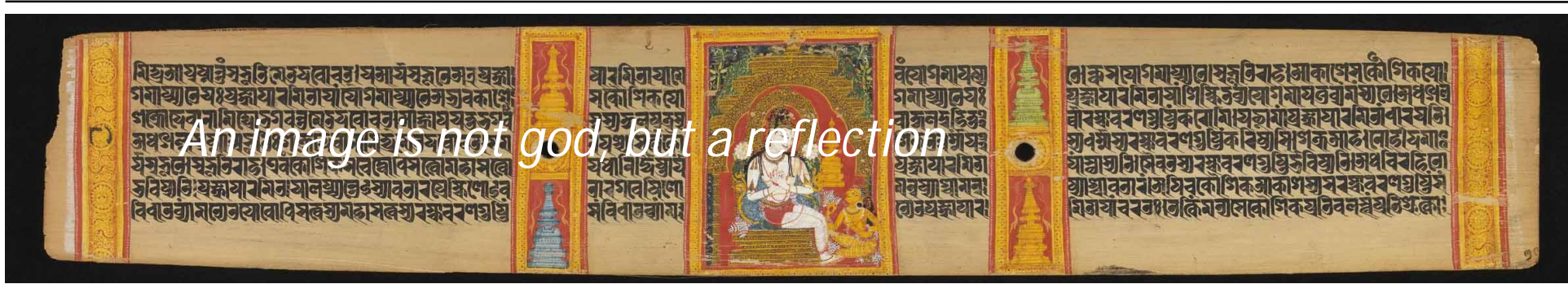
**The work is presented
through a question-answer session
between the Sage Markandeya and
an eager disciple-king, Vajra.**

We shall sample the extraordinary work



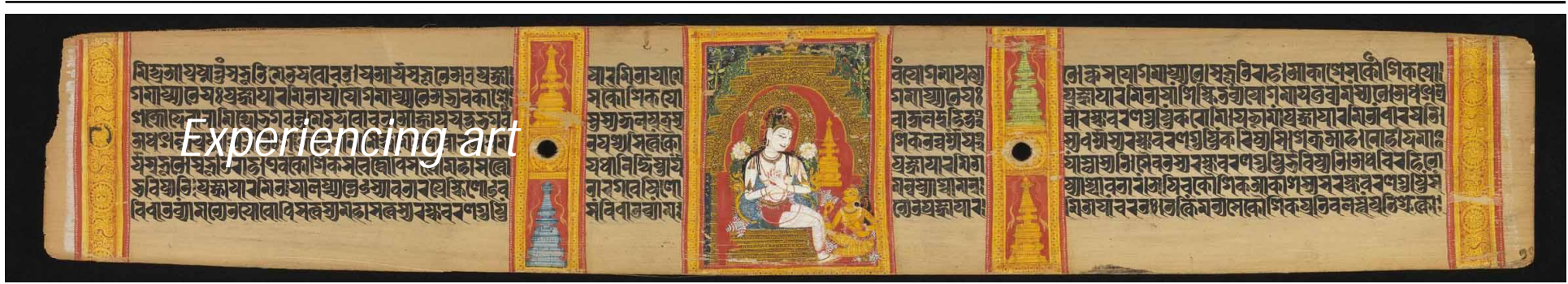
*'Though the Supreme Being is
without form and emotion,
the common people must have it endowed
with form to meditate upon it.*

*'However the best worship of the supreme is
contemplation of the formless
with eyes closed in meditation.'*



An image is not god but a reflection

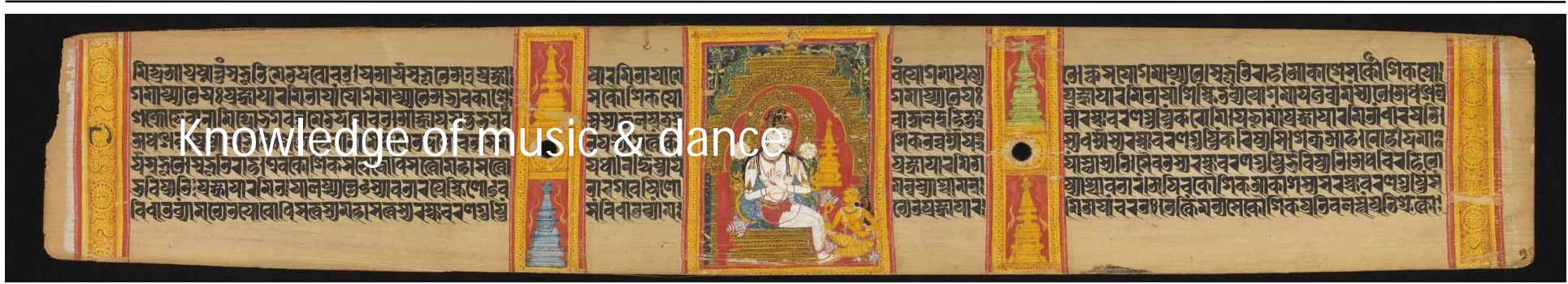
*'Prathima is only a reflection of god.
'The reflection of the distant moon
in a tranquil pool is only
a suggestion (prathima) of the moon.
'In other words, it is one's mental image of god,
translated to a form in lines, color, stone,
metal or wood,
but it is not the god itself. '*



*'When we view a great work of art,
we experience beauty (ananda)
as we let dissolve our identities and
attachments, and
become one with the object of beauty (divinity).*

*'It is a moment that bestows on us the grace
that underlies the whole creation.*

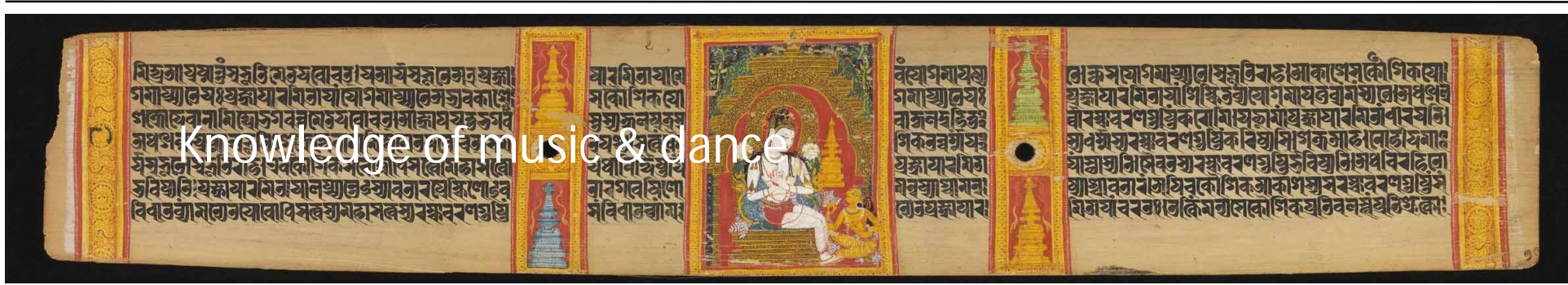
'Art is a liberating experience.'



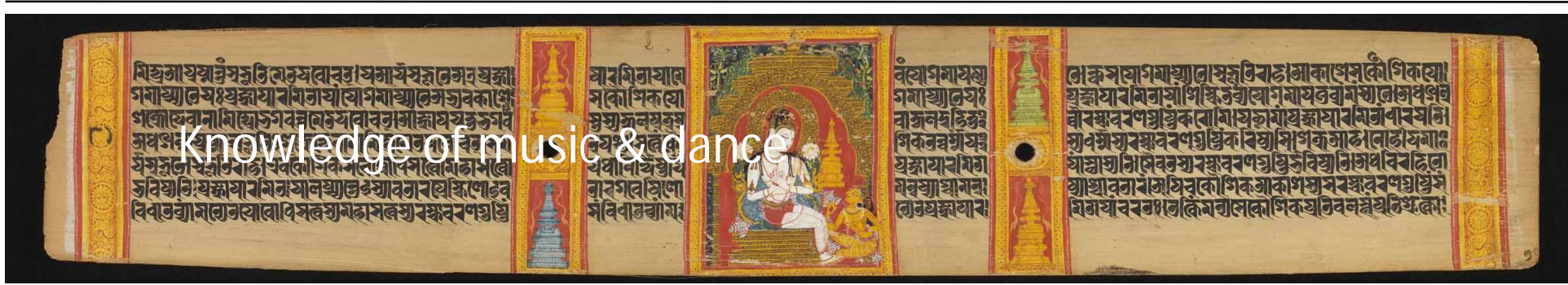
Knowledge of music & dance

**Knowledge of music and dance
is necessary for a painter in order
to bring fluidity and grace.**

**The imagination, observation and
the expressive force of rhythm are
the essential features of painting.**



**A painting or a sculpture is
the frozen versions of the gestures and
poses of dance (*chaari-sand karana-s*).**



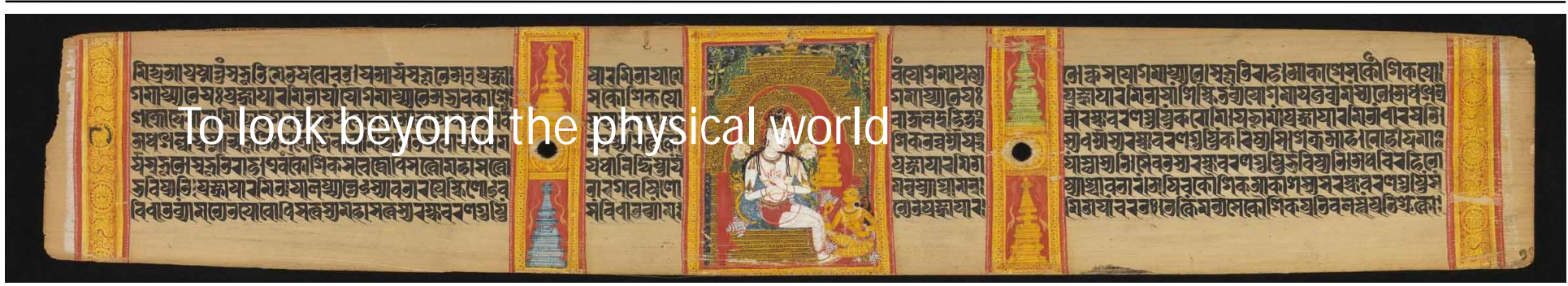
Knowledge of music & dance

Both, like *natya*, are based on a system of medians (*sutra-s*), measures (*maana-s*), postures of symmetry (*bhanga-s*) and asymmetry (*abhanga, dvibhanga* and *tribhanga*); and on the *sthaana-s* (positions of standing, sitting, and reclining).



To be a good artist

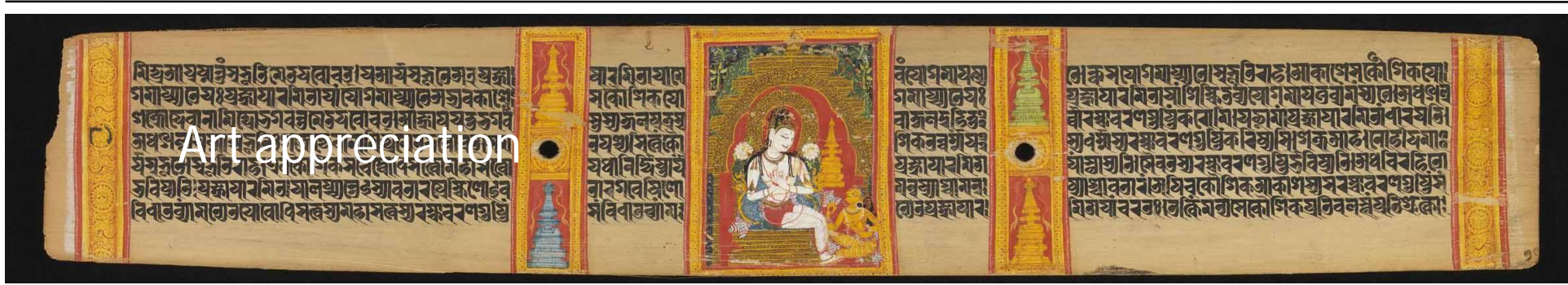
A good painter should be able
to paint waves, flames, smoke and
streamers fluttering in the air,
according to the movement of the wind,
to show the difference between
a sleeping and a dead man,
to portray the visual gradations of
a highland and a low land
etc



To look beyond the physical world

**The artist should try to look
beyond the tangible world and
the beauty of form that meets the eye,
and not just “photographic reproduction”.**

**These instances prove that the artist draws
from his memory when visualizing a portrait.**



Art appreciation

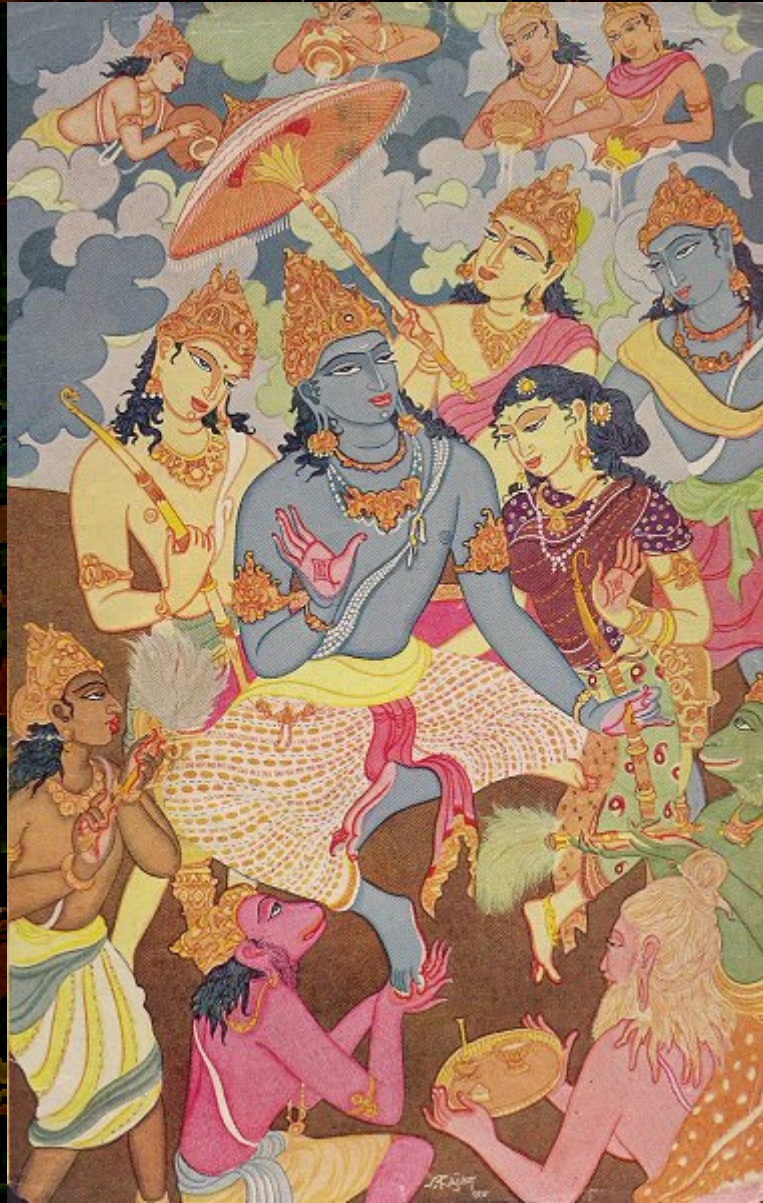
A painting executed with care and with great intelligence and ingenuity is not only beautiful and charming and pleasing to the eye , but is also satisfying refined taste and yields great joy and delight.



S Rajam's Chitra-sutra

A traditional Indian painting depicting a village scene. The central focus is a large, gnarled tree with thick, reddish-brown roots and branches. The scene is filled with people engaged in various activities. In the foreground, a man with a white beard and a red dhoti sits on the ground, surrounded by women and children. A white bull with red spots is in the center. To the right, a man sits on a raised platform, possibly a deity or a person of authority, with a fire burning in front of him. The background shows more people, some sitting and some standing, in a lush green setting. The overall style is characteristic of traditional Indian folk art, with vibrant colors and detailed figures.

S Rajam's technique



He is famous for his technique of 'water-wash', a technique used in India and China.

Each painting may have as much of 25 layers and washed ten to twelve time before completion.

He used transparent watercolour while building the layers and applied opaque colours in the final stages of highlighting and finishing.



His colour paintings have a dreamy quality, due to the presence of the undertones, a misty and toned effect suitable to portray the imaginative subjects.

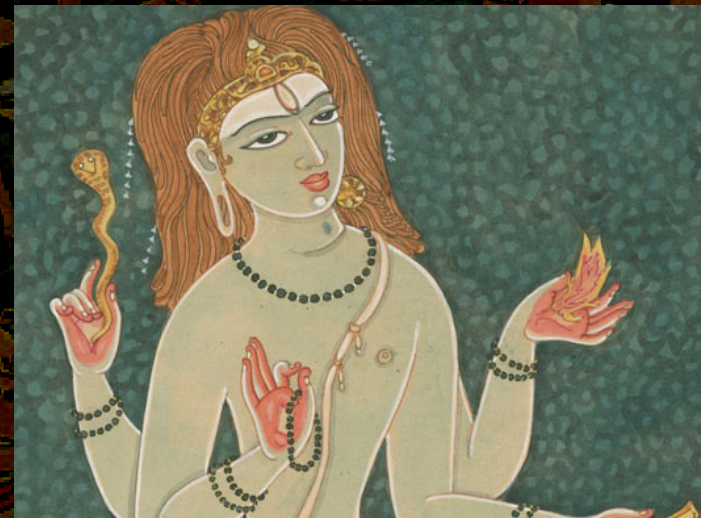


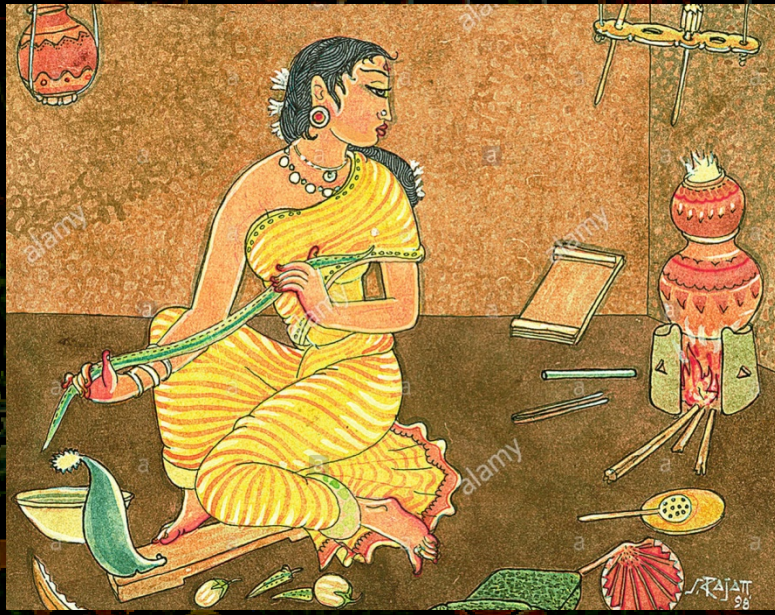
A painting by S. Rajam depicting a village scene under a large tree. The scene is set in a lush, green environment with a large, gnarled tree in the center. The tree's branches are thick and dark, with many small green leaves. The ground is covered in green grass and small plants. In the foreground, a man with a white beard and a red dhoti is sitting on the ground, looking towards the left. A woman in a red sari is standing next to him, holding a basket. A white cow with red spots is in the center. To the right, a man is sitting on a wooden platform, and a woman is standing next to him. In the background, several other people are engaged in various activities, such as washing clothes, cooking, and talking. The overall style is a blend of traditional Indian art and modernist techniques, with bold outlines and a rich color palette. The text "S Rajam's paintings" is overlaid in the center of the image.

S Rajam's paintings



Pleasing, but deceptive simplicity





He painted secular themes also

His chose soft and
subdued colour schemes,
skilful shading
to produce three-D effect,

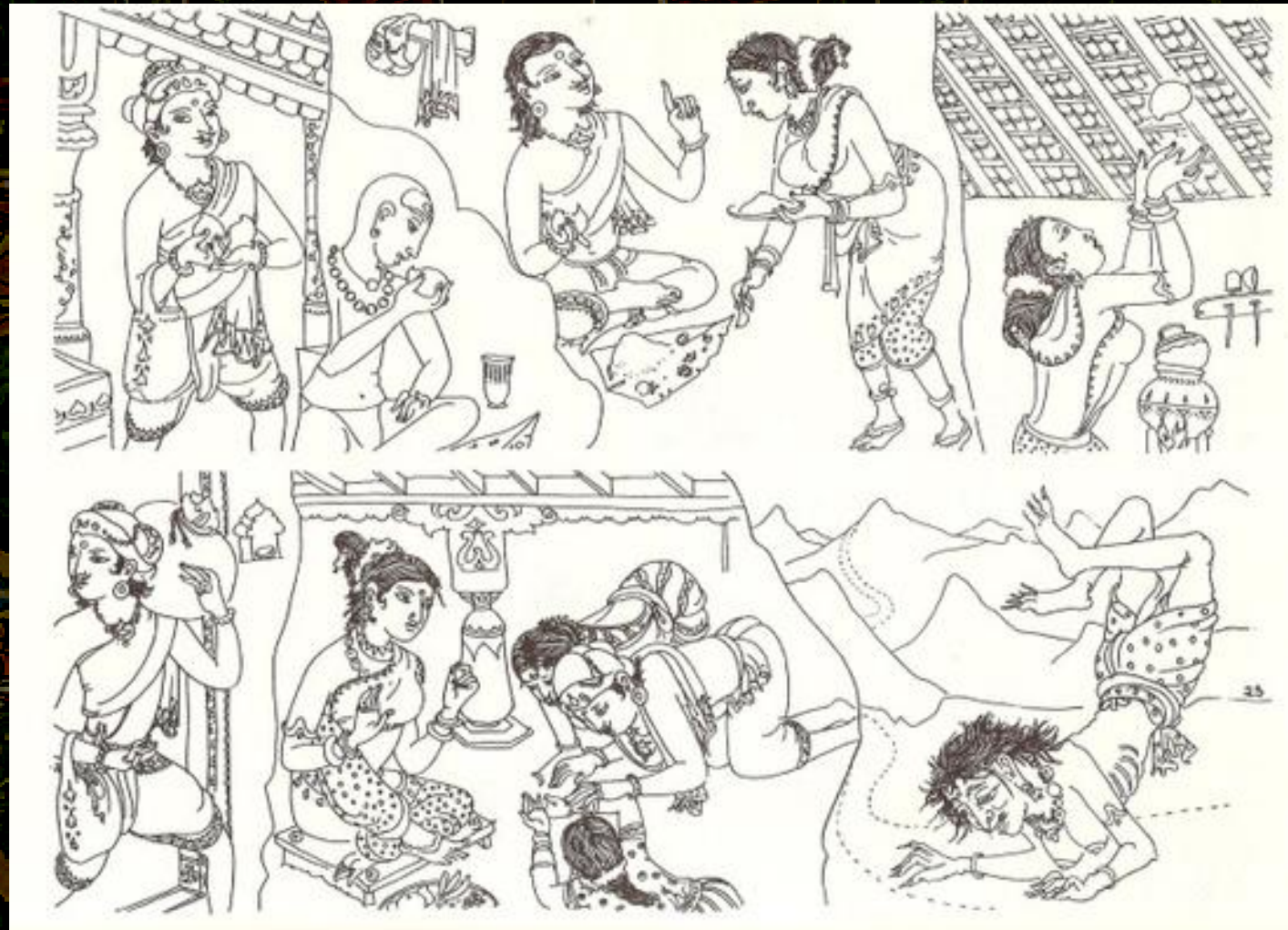


costumes specific
to the context and period,
and cultural touches
to the ambiance.

His figures are
never rigid and static.



Karaikkal Ammaiyaar stroy



His line drawings are very special, full of grace and vitality. Called, *rekha-s*, his is close to the Shantiniketan style