4. Landscape of the Soul (Hornbill

STUDY MATERIAL:

1.Chinese paintings are abstract in nature as they can’t be defined and have to be felt or experienced.

2.In contrast, there is illusionistic likeness (technique of using pictorial methods to deceive the eyes).

3.Their contrasting nature is explained through the anecdotes about

\*Chinese painter Wu Daozi, who disappeared inside his painting.

\*Another Chinese painter who did not want to paint the eyes of the dragon for fear that the dragon may attack him on seeing him.

\*Belgian painter Quinten Metsys; who painted a realistic (looking real) fly to marry the girl he loved.

4.Chinese paintings are based on the philosophy of Daoism, which says that life has no meaning unless we undertake the inner, spiritual journey.

5.Chinese painters want the viewers’ active participation, not only physical but also mental, while viewing their paintings.

6.According to Daoism, the interaction of two complimentary (combining to form a complete whole) poles-------yin (feminine) and yang (masculine) makes the universe.

\*Man is the medium of communication between the two complimentary poles, i.e. their meeting point, and you can see his presence too in Chinese paintings.

SHANSHUI: means ‘mountain-water’, which when used together represent the word ‘landscape’ (painting of countryside or rural scenery). It reflects Daoist view of universe including more than two elements of an image-----yang, the mountain; yin the water and the third element----the middle void, the two interact.

Q: Explain the concept of Shanshui painting.

A: Shanshui painting is not a normal kind of painting. First of all, when Chinese painters work on a Shanshui painting, they don’t try to present an image of what they have seen in nature but what they have thought about nature. Shanshui painting does not use colour, light and shadow, or personal brush work with conventional ( traditional) paints. Instead, Shanshui painting uses a brush and ink. Mountains, rivers and also waterfalls are prominent (important) in this art form.

In Shanshui painting, the two elements of an image represent two complimentary (combining to form complete whole) poles, just like the Daoist view of the Universe. The mountain is yang, means it is active and masculine. It is a stable, warm, and dry in the sun. The other pole is water or yin, means it is horizontal, resting on the earth, fluid, moist, and cool. The interaction of yin, the receptive (willing to receive or willing to accept), feminine aspect of universal energy and its counterpart ( a thing that corresponds to has same function as another person at different place) yang is a fundamental notion of Daoism. The essential element in the Middle Void ( space between two elements of an image where they interact) where yin and yang interact is man, as he becomes the conduit (means) of communication between both the complementary poles.