

ing amounts of white or black, weakening it or making it muddy. When, for instance, Winifred painted shadows in her Indian sketches, she did so in strong and fresh colours (including violet), not dull neutrals. Thus, even her shadows were filled with light. The whole picture is expressed in luminous colour, giving out an effect of quite fierce brilliance.

Her colour sense was greatly heightened by her Indian experience. It was as if a door had opened. She felt no constraint in using untempered red and blue; rich yellow; sharp, zesty violet; and acidic viridian in direct contrast with hot golden-green. Her colour explorations in India did not stop on her return home. On some pages in the sketchbooks she brought back with her, she painted Cumberland landscapes in a kind of Indian afterglow. The English landscape in front of her was quite different, of course, and now her tart hues look surprisingly like a Pre-Raphaelite palette. It was a slightly startling approach. Inevitably, it was temporary. Her acute sensitivity to the particular light in different places – a characteristic that was to mark all her future landscape paintings – soon became

36  
Page from an Indian sketchbook, 1919  
Watercolour  
20.3 x 25.4 cm (8 x 10 in)



37  
Cumberland landscape painted at the end  
of an Indian sketchbook, 1920  
Watercolour  
23 x 30.5 cm (9 x 12 in)

evident. The softness of Cumberland's light, percolated through mistiness, was hardly Indian dazzle. All the same, there is little doubt that India had given a daring to her colour. She must have realised that it is no good trying just to reproduce the colours in nature. A painting needed its own colour-key. It had to 'lie' in order to be 'truthful', or at least exaggerate in order to even hint at the actual light seen in sky, hill and valley.

Winifred seems to have had a remarkable memory for colour. Both she and Ben Nicholson – whom she was to marry soon after her return from India – were never to forget an astonishing green they once saw in a painting by Picasso. It became a kind of gauge for the potency of their own colour feelings. And in her 1944 colour notes, Winifred suddenly harked back to a combination of colours she had seen in India a quarter of a century earlier. She was thinking about indigo. She associated it with a variety of things like 'intensity, faith – sorrow ... impending change – hyacinth – mountain and sea' and then she remembered 'in India blue worn by chocolate faced men'.<sup>35</sup>







