

WOMEN IN INDIAN CLASSICAL AND FOLK ARTS: PRESERVES AND INNOVATORS, THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE EVOLUTION OF INDIAN CINEMA AND THEATRE, EXPLORING FEMININE SPIRITUALITY THROUGH ART AND PERFORMANCE, CONTRIBUTION TO CLASSICAL ARTS AND LITERATURE

Anushree Pratikkumar Bhatt

{B.COM, LLB (GOLD MEDALIST), LLM}
Assistant Professor
KES Shri Jayantilal H. Patel Law College

Abstract

Theatre with regards to Indian Classical and Folk Arts in India has a long way tradition of understanding with an association of women with various dramatic art forms and maintaining the significance of old and ancient form of institution. While taking Lasya into consideration is a form which is been performed by "GODESS PARVATI"- Betterhalf of "LORD SHIVA" and which is mentioned by Bharatmuni in chapter twenty of his Natyashastra. The women's' dance style lasya, is replete with shringar rasa, while the male performance is been performed by tandava movements. Natyashastra- first Indian treatise on dramaturgy portrayed men as taking up a good deal of space whereas women are portrayed as shrinking from the space and enclosing themselves, whereas dance and romance are involved by taking tradition and folk rituals perseverance to the community at large. The role of females were played with more efficacy and hard work portraying the ideology of women during that time. Traditional media, also have a separate ideology and have gained a lot of credits to input a new form of art. They played a major role in improving the mentality of society by focussing on traditional culture of India and changing the same towards modernization, wherein maintaining the old outcome. Folk media, wherein new ideas were taken into consideration and a new system of communication and reflecting the message important for the betterment of community is always portrayed.

Keywords: Classical Art, Folk Art, Development, Modernization, Role of Women

INTRODUCTION

Women are considered as a role model for maintaining the development and nurturing life in family as they play a vital role in family as Daughter, Sister, Wife, Sister-in-Law, Grandmother with specified ruling in family by performing certain criteria wherein she manages and control as an administrator, manager, leader, controller, financier etc. wherein she also admits herself to invoke her hobbies such as singing, dancing, artistic and literary works, dramatic work etc. Therefore a women is not only responsible for development of her own family members but also plays a significant role in the development of the country.

Significance of Art and Literature in society:

INDIA – always been known and referred to as the "SONE KII CHIDIYA", the Golden Sparrow. The evolution of Art in India is originated its way back around 3500 BC and the history of all these well known types have been playing a role of influencers by way of adopting the rich cultural and traditional heritage. The country has always been a renowned name in throwing an impact of all exquisite art forms in all field of arts such as dance, painting, writing, theatre, drama, musical and literary works. Apart from been illustrious and preserving the history, India is blessed to have art and culture from divine eternity with a combination of spiritual essence and perseverance to achieve that spiritual and divine saga.

Attributes to Indian Culture:

Persistence and immutability, Acceptance, Liberality, Unity in Diversity, Belief and Values, Etiquettes, Ceremonies and Rituals, Endurance, Spirituality.

Indian Society's Characteristics: Cultural Diversity, Caste system, Patriarchy, Kinship, Multilingual society, Family, Tribes, Diversity, Religion, Marriage, Education, Festivals and celebrations, Co-existence of traditionalism and modernization

Traditionalism and modernity coexist– Traditionalism is the sustaining or preservation of essential values, ethics and principles. Modernity, on the other hand, refers to challenging tradition, upholding and striving toward rational thinking, social, scientific, and technical advancement on behalf of entire commitment of the community towards maintaining the relevancy of all customs and beliefs.

Achieving a balance between spiritualism and materialism– Spiritualism promotes an individual’s spiritual experience with eternal divine blessings and achieving the path of traditional customs and beliefs. Materialism, on the other hand, is a prerequisite materialistic option which emphasize all understanding towards spiritualism and and society’s belief towards all the spiritual values.

Individualism, custom, values, belief and collectivism are balanced – Individualism is a moral, political, or social attitude that emphasizes personal individuality, self-reliance, and liberty. Collectivism, on the other hand, is the practice of prioritizing a group over each individual within it. In Indian society, there is a delicate balance between them.

INDIAN ART:

Indian art comprises various art forms like paintings like warli, kalamkari, miniature, tanjore, patta chitra, madhubani, ceramics, sculpture and textile arts such as woven silk. Indian art is acknowledged for its immense sense of design and artistic coverage which can be seen and reflected in both modern and traditional forms of art and culture.

Indian art can trace its origins to antiquity and long years back in understanding its core and traditional values. It has been influenced by cultural as well as religious elements such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam. Despite this diverse mix of religious and being secular country, all traditions, the major religious groupings have generally shared the dominant creative style at any given period and place, which brings an eternal value of understanding the importance of one art form with connection towards each custom and traditional belief.

Sculpture, another art form in stone and metal, primarily religious, has fared better in the Indian environment than other media, and provides the majority of the best outcome and results keeping an ideology of traditional values and customs. Indian art forms have a long history of following Indian faiths not only in India but also outside of India, with a stronghold in Tibet, Southeast Asia, and China. Indian art has absorbed influences from Central Asia, Iran, and Europe at various eras in regards to the architectural aspects in shaping the design and style of any construction pattern.

Importance of Art in Indian Culture:

- Art has an impact on society and community by altering people’s minds, behavior, instilling ideals and transmitting experiences across time and distance, from ancestors and all customs and beliefs.
- According to studies, art and culture has an impact on one’s core sense of self observance and rational thinking in one’s absolute personality and shaping one’s ideology in observing the importance of art and culture.
- Painting, dancing, drama and literary work, sculpture, music, literature, and other forms of art are frequently regarded as repositories of a society’s collective memory taken and received from all traditions followed by customs and beliefs of society at large.
- In ancient India, good art symbolized as the wealth of several empires and also they are worshipped as a symbol of many living aspects such as Agni Dev for Fire, Vaayu Dev for Wind, Ganga Mata for Water, Saraswati Mata for education and music etc.
- The majority of the artworks promote religious activity and cultural ethnicity. Homage and respect for the learned class was expressed via art and through various sculptures.
- Art and literature serve as a pattern for human life, dignity and civilization since they are intensely personal while yet being broadly universally acceptable by society at large and been recognized by society and common man in achieving the role played by such art and culture in preserving the values and ethics.

How often we deal Indian Heritage:

Heritage is what we have been received from our ancestors and from past what custom and ritual we are following. Since India is a secular and a democratic country, the same is a land for many castes, faith and creed. Every religion follows its own belief and customs and stories to influence and marinating to achieve its perseverance of each religion in its own sect of tradition and culture. Our identity is highly influenced by our heritage because it is a part of who we are. Our presentation of our identity communicates what we value to others. It emphasizes our values and priorities. Our history and evolution may be traced through our ancestors.

Every religion has its own traditional values and beliefs and hence have various art and cultural forms such as dancing and singing styles, festivals, architectural construction design and pattern which throws its particular distinctiveness and diversity.

Unity in diversity:

'Unity in diversity' is an apt description of India. As a result, Indian heritage is highly diverse in marinating its artistic and cultural values preserved from ages. In India, the diversity of religions, as well as the diversity of heritage monuments, is enormous. Various historical heritage sites can be found in India (basically every state) which represents each religious core values and importance of their culture and significance of the art form presented in achieving that spectacular monument as a world heritage site.

India demonstrate and elucidate a society that is secular and democratic ideological characteristic of any nation. Many cultures mingle at the given time to maintain that transparency and values of that particular religion while simultaneously attempting to show the importance of their community and religion. India

Cultural heritage is available because of the society at large living in cordial and congenial relationship with each other in the community at large, while simultaneously attempting to achieve unity and also maintaining individuality. Indian cultural heritage brings the citizens together. Ancient scriptures like Gita, Vedas, Upanishads and Yoga practice have contributed greatly by providing correct knowledge, humane behavior, right action and practices as they enrich our civilization and leading to its development.

History of Indian Art: Styles and Pattern:

Traditional Indian Art consists of religious characters (Gods, Goddesses and their Idols) in Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism which have been a common theme throughout centuries to make community and society aware of India's deep cultural and ethnic surface of society at large. Sculptures and cave paintings which are found in ancient times mainly featured human, mythological, elaborated ornaments and animals forms. In the medieval period, Islam and their various Arabic art and cultural form as well as the Indian art didn't relinquish figural representations but also elaborated their ethnicity among the community at large. Each style of art is unique in its own way and each art and culture is influenced by their ancestors and are greatly admirable and significant with the exist traditions and rituals and beliefs. Traditionally, these art styles existed only in wall paintings or murals. But today, they are also found in canvas, paper, cloth, etc. Here is a list of different Indian art styles, some still in practice and others not but depicting that how women are still showing their ideology by keeping the traditions, cultures and all rituals embibed in today's modern world.

In the tapestry of Indian narratives, the celestial love saga of Goddess Radha and Lord Krishna emerges as a timeless hymn and effective way to express love and to learn the epitome of the various saga to the boundless, metamorphic influence of love and eternity. The eternal love and profound narrative of Radha and Krishna—a tale that transcends mortal constraints, encapsulating the quintessence of devotion and spiritual communion. Radha and Krishna are inseparable names, embodying the epitome of divine love, yet intriguingly, they never wed this envisaged the importance of love and how the same was been depicted in the various art form and accepted by the society and community at large. Various stories of Radha and Krishna has been depicted in various art form and the same was been appreciated by various community and interpreted its significance in the modern society too.

Madhubani Painting

This art is also known as Mithila art, and it originated in the kingdom of Janak in Nepal and in present-day Bihar. This art form was not known to the rest of the world until the 1930s when it was discovered after an earthquake. Mostly practised by women, these paintings or wall murals depict gods, fauna and flora. Characterised by geometric patterns, this art form is greatly admired for its evocative portrayal of traditions and cultures. Madhubani craftsmanship also takes motivation from nature and Hindu strict themes, and the subjects by and large spins around Hindu divinities like Krishna, Rama, Shiva, Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. Natural objects like the sun, the moon and strict plants like Tulsi are also common.

Sita Devi was among one of the most legendary Madhubani artists who bagged Padma Shri in the year 1981. Other prominent women artisans in this field include Mahasundari Devi, Malvika Raj, Godavari Dutta, Dulari Devi, Pusha Kumari, Ganga Devi, Usha Mishra and many more.

Warli Painting

This form of art dates back to 2500 BCE, and it was practised by the Warli tribes belonging to Thane and Nasik in Maharashtra. These paintings mostly illustrate the nature and social rituals of the tribe. It portrays daily activities like farming, praying, dancing, hunting, etc. Geometrical patterns in white against a yellow or red background are some of the main themes. Warli paintings were usually made by married women to celebrate a

wedding, and they were also used to decorate huts of the Warli tribes. **The Warli Tribesmen and women are traditional storytellers; they follow the oral practice of passing down traditions, knowledge and culture.**

The **Women Artisan Skill Enhancement Project (WASEP)** works with tribal communities in Mumbai and Thane districts of Maharashtra with the aim to generate livelihoods for women in the area by reviving a traditional form of art – Warli. This is an area based focussed intervention which intends to enhance the capacities of women artisans and link them with the market with the objective to enhance their household income.

Miniature Painting

The miniature paintings illustrate a combination of Indian, Islamic and Persian art styles. This art form dates back to the 16th century, and the themes are usually centred on battles, court scenes, portraits, wildlife, receptions, hunting scenes, legendary stories etc. Natural stone colours are used in a paper-based “wasli” for the creation of these paintings. The miniature paintings have developed into several distinct schools of miniature like Mughal, Rajasthan, Deccan, Kangra, Malwa, Pahadi, etc.

Kalamkari

Having a strong connection to Persian motifs, this art has been in practice for more than 3000 years. Kalamkari derives its name from kalam or pen, and it means ‘drawings with a pen’. This organic art of hand and block printing has survived generations in Andhra Pradesh. Kalamkari art involves earthy colours like green, rust, indigo, mustard and black. Today this art is used in ethnic clothing and depicts anything from fauna and flora to epics such as Mahabharata or Ramayana. **Anita Reddy , founded Dwaraka (Development of Weavers and Rural Artisans in Kalamkari) in 1999, is one of a not-for-profit organisations that aims to revive Kalamkari and empower the artisans behind the craft.**

Tanjore Painting

First painted in the 16th century under the Chola regime, this painting originated in the Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu. It is known for its magnificent embellishments, vibrant colours and rich surfaces. The themes are mainly centred on the Hindu gods and goddesses. These paintings are made on wooden planks, and the main subjects are always painted in the centre. The styles of this painting are similar to that of the Deccani and Maratha art, as well as to the European styles. **Jaya Thyagarajan (born at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India in 1956) is a traditional Indian artist noted for her Tanjore paintings. Jaya was born in Madras State where these paintings originated.**

Women playwrights did not write any play till the twentieth century. “As playwrights, women scarcely figure on the literary map. They seem to have shied away from writing plays though they have excelled in all other genres” The women playwrights who are remembered for their remarkable contribution are Dina Mehta, Manjula Padmanabhan and Polie Sengupta. They have introduced new subjects affecting the feminine psyche in their works. Deena Mehta is a playwright and an editor from Mumbai. Her first full length play was *The Myth Makers* (1969). Her play *Brides are not For Burning* (1993) won the first prize in worldwide competition sponsored by BBC in 1979. Some of her well known plays are *Getting Away with Murder*, *When One Plus One Makes Nine*, *Sister Like You* etc. Next is Manjula Padmanabhan who won the inaugural Onassis Prize for her play *Harvest*. She has written powerful plays, comic strips, short stories, novel for children, travelogue, picture books, autobiographical novel and Illustrator. Her well known plays are *Lights Out*, *The Artist Model*, *Sextet* and *Harvest*. Poile Sengupta was born in Kerala in 1948. She has won the Sandesha Special Recognition Award for Children’s Literature in 1994. Her first play is *Mangalam*. Apart from this, she wrote *Keats was a Tuber*, *Samara’s Song* etc. She is also a founder of theatre club. Recently, she published her novel titled *Inga*. Women writers in India keep on writing about complex issues such as sensuality, subjugation, alienation, migration, identity crisis, free sex etc. The contemporary women writers were always considered inferior to their male counterparts their canvas was narrow and they largely confined themselves to the depiction of the enclosed domestic space and their experience within it. In spite of the limitations, they have definitely raised the consciousness about the woman’s role in the society. The portrayal of women characters by a women writer is always realistic and as such authentic. Portrayal of women and their issues by a male playwright tends to be a little unconvincing as he fails to understand the female psyche and perspective. Only a woman playwright like Manjula Padmanabhan could write a play like *Lights Out* about women’s objectification and victimization. This play poignantly depicts an incident like gang rape and captures the reaction of both the males and females of the house over the incident. Absence of women playwrights could be accounted for by the fact that theatre was a public space along with the problem of publication, public performances etc. If woman as a playwright entered the domain of theatre, she was considered a woman first and a writer next. Now that women have entered the theatre as playwrights, they have shaped theatrical techniques which have no author defined consciousness, no resolutions, even tried to build a new class of audiences who would not expect to be

entertained. After successfully establishing themselves as accomplished artists, women playwrights have now created plays which are critical the institution of marriage and family hierarchy. They have written plays with strong, complex female characters that demolish the cultural barriers which are discriminatory in character. Theatre can take measures like sponsoring workshops for play readings to develop playwriting skills and encourage female playwrights.

Feminist theatre is a creative theatre that challenges representation of our dominant culture. The goal of almost all feminist theatre groups is to subvert expectations, to enable or initiate positive changes in women's lives through political and theatrical representations. Feminist theatre is a cultural representation made by women and is informed by the perspective of its makers, its performers, its spectators and its critics whose aim is positive re-evaluation of women's role and/or to effect social change. Theatre as a mode of intervention on women's behalf has meant departing from the conventional way of producing and staging plays. It has also meant addressing modes of performances, idioms of expression and representation of women, and using training in theatre for articulating the perception and aspiration of women. From creation of the script through improvisation and visualisation on to rehearsal, right up to performance and relating to the audience, the emphasis has been on collective function. Feminist theatre aims at empowerment; it enables women to speak out, giving them voice. It is considered as being at the intersection of art, activism and social relevance. Feminist theatre is seen as an instrument of real change in women's lives.

History of English Literature:

- *Old English (Anglo-Saxon Period):* 450–1066
- *Middle English Period:* 1066-1500
- *Renaissance:* 1500-1600
- *Neoclassical Period:* 1600-1785
- *Romantic Period:* 1785-1832
- *Victorian Age:* 1832-1901
- *Edwardian Period:* 1901-1914
- *Georgian Period:* 1910-1936
- *Modern Period:* Early 20th century
- *Postmodern Period:* Mid-20th century.

The first wave and of feminism started in the 19th and early 20th centuries and was mainly focused on how women are deprived of their legal rights wherein women are not clearly aware about their legal rights. This wave include and invited writings on legal rights for women that included the right to vote, the right to work, the right to fair wages, the right to education, the right to property, right to marriage, right to maintenance, right to maternity benefits, right to adoption among many more. Gradually, the past works of women started gaining interest in the world of literature. The most significant works which talked about more representation of women authors were Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Mary Ellman's *Thinking About Women* (1968), Kite Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969) and various others. Simone de Beauvoir, a French writer, philosopher, and feminist activist is considered as one of the major female writers and feminists of the twentieth century. Her work, *The Second Sex*, is regarded as a ground breaking work of feminist philosophy in which she brought forward the idea of gender being different from sex and gender being an aspect of an identity that is gradually acquired. Her quote "**One is not born, but rather becomes a woman**", describes how gender is socially constructed by the values and culture of the society.

CONCLUSION

Women at times incorporate innovative and new artistic forms and various techniques with the touch of that traditions and customs which are still prevailing in the society and keeps on improving and getting it channelized in today's modern world. Women keep on working hard to strive their level best to renew the existence cultural aspect while sustaining its creativity which are necessary for the survival of that particular art form and technique. In today's modern world women are trying their level best to preserve the ancient touch and feel of that particular art and dance form. Women are always a face of change and follow the legacy of every futuristic value of any traditions and customs.

REFERENCES

- [1] Forte, J. (1996). Realism, Narrative, and the Feminist Playwright - A Problem of Reception. In H. Keyssar, *New Casebooks: Feminist Theatre and theory* (pp. 19-32). Malaysia: Macmillan.
- [2] Mukherjee, T. (2005). *Staging Resistance: Plays by Women in Translation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- [3] Indu Pandey is a Research Student at Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi, India.
- [4] Biswas, Praggnaparamita. "Semiotic Encryption of Women, Violence and Hysteria In Indian Women Dramaturgy" Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities. Vol 5 No. 2: 314—328. Oct. 2013. Web. 24 April 2018.
- [5] Bayeh, E. (2016). The role of empowering women and achieving gender equality to the sustainable development of Ethiopia. Pacific Science Review B: Humanities and Social Sciences, 2(1), 37–42.