

5. The Language of Art: A Universal Dialogue from India's Perspective

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Abstract:

Art is something that knows no boundaries and languages. It is a form of communion that binds her citizens together based on a common perception and feelings. This is well expressed in Indian art as it brings together people from all parts of the world. Indian art can be exemplified with archaic objects from the Indus Valley Civilization and rock art in Bhimbetka and Ajanta illustrating themes of life and god seen in other cultures too.

In addition to these, through the Indian Visual Arts, there are traditional 'Madhubani' and Tanjore paintings which cradle love, divinity, and art to name a few, becoming part of the world. Indian classical and folk music has all kinds of genres which include Hindustani and Carnatic music, devotional music, folk music, and so on, appealing to emotions and spirituality.

The same goes for the forms of Indian dance and Bharatanatyam and Kathak through performances deal in such subjects. Indian epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana extensions through the works of Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy deal with the themes of dharma, identity and transformation, which cannot be possible without catching the cultural separation. Indian art today is increasingly part of global dialogues on social issues and is becoming more and more visible in international exhibitions. All in all, the scope of Indian art is dynamic in nature as it acts as a unifying tool towards better global comprehension while appreciating the common heritage of all humankind.

Keywords:

Culture, Historical roots of arts, Traditional art, Contemporary art, Globalization of art

5.1 Introduction:

Art, as one of the defining features of culture and enjoyed mainly for purely aesthetic reasons, has always served much bigger purposes than being simple decoration. Art is a means to communicate also and to understand people from different cultures, and it doesn't matter what language people speak, or in what corner of the globe they are situated. Thanks to art, people are able to learn new things from each other and exchange beliefs, and these all resonate with the great value about the world – “the world is one family”. There is more to art in India than a rich cultural legacy; it is a powerful tool of communication as well. This chapter aims to examine how different Indian art forms and practices, including visual arts, music, dance, literature and so on, create bridges among the communities and facilitate cross-cultural communication. The objective of this section is to illustrate that while Indian art derives from specific context and history, it can engage various audiences around the world.

5.2 Historical Roots of Art as a Universal Language in India:

5.2.1 Ancient Indian Art and Its Universal:

Appeal Indian art has a long history dating back to the time of the Indus Valley Civilization. Artifacts from this era, such as pottery, seals, and sculptures, provide insights into the daily life, religious beliefs, and social structure of ancient Indians. These artifacts also touch upon universal themes of human existence and spirituality.

A. Rock Art and Cave Paintings:

The cave paintings found at Bhimbetka and Ajanta are some of the earliest examples of Indian art. The Bhimbetka paintings, dating back to the Paleolithic period, depict scenes of hunting and social interactions. Similarly, the murals at the Ajanta Caves, known for their Buddhist themes, portray Jataka tales and Buddhist symbols. These ancient artworks convey shared human experiences like the struggle for survival and the search for spiritual enlightenment, resonating with audiences across different times and places.

B. Temple Art and Iconography:

Indian temples are known for their intricate carvings and sculptures that showcase artistic expression. Temples like Khajuraho, Hampi, and Konark feature detailed depictions of deities, celestial beings, and mythological stories. The universal themes of divinity, cosmic order, and moral values depicted in these temple artworks reflect broader human concerns and aspirations

5.3 Visual Arts as a Universal Language:

5.3.1 Traditional Indian Paintings:

Traditional Indian paintings like Madhubani, Warli, and Tanjore have unique regional styles but also touch on universal themes. These artworks use symbols and visual storytelling to connect with people from different backgrounds.

A. Madhubani Art:

Madhubani painting, originating from Bihar, is known for its bright colors and intricate patterns. It often shows mythological scenes, nature, and everyday life.

The universal appeal of Madhubani art comes from its portrayal of themes like love, fertility, and cosmic harmony, which resonate with audiences beyond regions and cultures.

B. Tanjore Art:

Tanjore paintings from Tamil Nadu are famous for their rich textures and decorations. They usually feature Hindu deities and are made using techniques like applying gold foil. The universal themes of divinity and devotion in Tanjore art connect with spiritual and religious feelings shared by people worldwide.

5.3.2 Contemporary Indian Art:

Modern Indian artists have expanded Indian art by including contemporary themes and techniques. Their works tackle global issues while keeping elements of traditional Indian beauty.

The Works of M.F. Husain M.F. Husain, a celebrated modern artist in India, is known for his dynamic and expressive style. His paintings often blend themes from Indian mythology and history with current issues. Husain's ability to mix traditional and modern elements makes his art resonate with a global audience, showing the universal nature of his artistic vision.

Subodh Gupta and Global Art Dialogues Subodh Gupta's work often combines found objects with traditional Indian motifs. His installations and sculptures address globalization, migration, and identity, making them relevant to a global audience. Gupta's art demonstrates how contemporary Indian artists use global conversations to explore universal themes.

5.4 Music as a Universal Language:

5.4.1 Classical Music Traditions:

Indian classical music, including Hindustani and Carnatic traditions, conveys universal emotions through its intricate compositions and improvisations.

A. Hindustani Classical Music:

Hindustani classical music, with its rich ragas and talas, is known for its expressive qualities. The music often explores themes of devotion, romance, and nature. Ragas like Yaman and Bhimpalasi evoke universal emotional responses, showing how Indian classical music goes beyond cultural boundaries.

B. Carnatic Classical Music:

Carnatic music from South India stands out for its complex compositions and improvisational techniques. The music often deals with themes of devotion and mythology, using intricate rhythmic patterns and melodic structures to create universal emotional experiences.

5.4.2 Folk and Devotional Music:

Folk and devotional music from different parts of India reflect the country's cultural diversity while addressing universal themes.

Baul Music:

Baul music from Bengal mixes devotional and mystical themes with folk traditions. The Bauls' songs, which often talk about love, spirituality, and the search for truth, have universal appeal because of their emotional depth and philosophical content.

Bhajans and Kirtans:

Bhajans and Kirtans are devotional songs performed in various Indian traditions. These songs, dedicated to deities and spiritual themes, are often sung in communal settings, creating a sense of universal connection through shared religious and spiritual experiences.

5.5 Dance as a Universal Language:

5.5.1 Classical Dance Forms:

Indian classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Kathak, and Odissi are known for their intricate gestures, expressions, and storytelling. These dances convey universal themes of love, heroism, and devotion through their expressive techniques.

A. Bharatanatyam:

Originating from Tamil Nadu, Bharatanatyam is famous for its detailed footwork and expressive storytelling. It often portrays themes from Hindu mythology and religious texts, making it appealing to a global audience through its portrayal of divine and human emotions.

B. Kathak:

Kathak, a classical dance form from North India, combines storytelling with rhythmic footwork and expressive gestures. It explores themes of love, devotion, and historical narratives, offering a universal appeal through its dynamic and emotive performances.

5.5.2 Folk and Tribal Dances:

Folk and tribal dances from different regions of India celebrate local traditions while addressing universal themes of community and nature.

A. Garba and Dandiya:

Garba and Dandiya, popular in Gujarat, are festive dances performed during Navratri. These dances involve rhythmic movements and group participation, celebrating themes of harvest and devotion, creating a sense of universal joy and communal celebration.

B. Bihu Dance:

The Bihu dance from Assam is performed during the Bihu festival, celebrating the Assamese New Year and agricultural abundance. The dance, with its lively movements and festive spirit, reflects universal themes of seasonal change and community celebration.

5.6 Literature as a Universal Language:

5.6.1 Ancient Epics and Their Universal:

Themes Indian literature includes ancient epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana, which explore universal themes of duty, righteousness, and human conflict.

A. The Mahabharata:

The Mahabharata, an epic narrative of the Kurukshetra War, delves into themes of morality, justice, and the complexities of human relationships. Its universal themes of duty, virtue, and conflict resonate with audiences across different cultures and eras.

B. The Ramayana:

The Ramayana, recounting the life of Prince Rama and his quest to rescue his wife Sita, addresses themes of heroism, devotion, and righteousness. The epic's exploration of these themes offers a universal message of virtue and the triumph of good over evil.

5.6.2 Modern Indian Literature:

Contemporary Indian literature, written in various languages and translated into many others, addresses global issues and universal themes.

A. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*:

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* explores themes of identity, history, and political change. The novel's blend of magical realism and historical events connects with readers worldwide, offering a universal perspective on the human condition.

B. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*:

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* delves into themes of family, social hierarchy, and forbidden love. The novel's exploration of these universal themes through a distinct Indian lens provides a rich and relatable narrative for a global audience.

5.7 Art for Social Change in India:

5.7.1 Art and Social Commentary:

Art in India often addresses social issues like gender inequality, caste discrimination, and environmental concerns. By bringing attention to these issues, art encourages discussions and drives social change.

A. Bharti Kher's Artwork:

Bharti Kher's art focuses on themes of identity, gender, and social norms. Through her use of found objects and symbolic imagery, she challenges societal norms and encourages reflection on universal issues related to gender and identity.

B. The AIDS Memorial Quilt Project:

The AIDS Memorial Quilt, which includes contributions from Indian artists, is a powerful example of art addressing global health crises. The quilt visually represents the impact of AIDS, promoting empathy and awareness among audiences worldwide.

5.7.2 Globalization and Artistic Exchange:

Globalization has enabled the exchange of artistic practices and ideas between India and the rest of the world. Indian artists and art forms are now gaining recognition internationally, contributing to a broader understanding of Indian culture and its universal aspects.

A. Indian Art in International Exhibitions:

Indian art has become prominent in international exhibitions like the Venice Biennale and Documenta. These platforms showcase Indian artists and their work to global audiences, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

B. Cross-Cultural Collaborations:

Collaborations between Indian and international artists are creating new artistic forms and dialogues. These collaborations enrich the global artistic landscape and promote a shared understanding of art as a universal language.

5.8 Challenges and Opportunities:

5.8.1 Cultural Appropriation and Misinterpretation:

The global popularity of Indian art raises concerns about cultural appropriation and misinterpretation. As Indian art is adopted by different cultures, there is a risk of losing its original context and meaning.

- A. **Challenges Faced by Traditional Crafts** Traditional Indian crafts, such as handloom textiles and pottery, are at risk of being commercialized and appropriated. The global market often changes or simplifies these crafts, leading to concerns about preserving their authenticity and cultural significance.
- B. **Preserving Authenticity in a Globalized World** while globalization offers opportunities for Indian art to reach wider audiences, it also presents challenges in preserving the authenticity of traditional art forms. Balancing global engagement with the preservation of cultural heritage is crucial for maintaining the integrity of Indian art.
- C. **The Role of Art Institutions** Art institutions in India play a vital role in preserving and promoting traditional art forms while embracing contemporary trends. Institutions like the National Gallery of Modern Art and the Lalit Kala Academy contribute to the preservation and dissemination of Indian art.

5.9 Conclusion:

Art serves as a universal language that can bring together people from different cultures and promote understanding among diverse communities. In India, art goes beyond local and global boundaries, showcasing the country's cultural richness and addressing common themes and issues. As India interacts more with the global art scene, the importance of art as a universal language in cultural exchange and understanding becomes increasingly evident.

Through various art forms such as visual arts, music, dance, and literature, Indian art reaches audiences worldwide, providing a glimpse into the common human experience

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