



Indigenous Art And Aesthetics (Madhubani/Mithila Art)

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Abstract

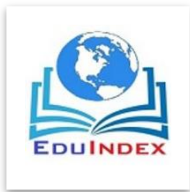
Indigenous is a term we associate it with the native people, to the language, culture, and ethic tradition of the land before the coming of colonization. Art and aesthetics are the elements which widen the horizon of the people (daily life), in the Pre-Raphaelite movement the idea of “art for art’s sake” was emphasized while the native people emphasize on “art for life’s sake” it’s a part of their life/community.

Art is never limited to a particular form, but it’s a field which includes painting, sculpture, music, literature and in the present we have films and aesthetics is the study of philosophy of beauty sees these artworks as an element of beauty from the past to the present we have multiple histories and its artistic impact of the oral stories to its varies expression of art. The paper will concentrate on how the indigenous culture as a language and as art survived through the years with a translation of the work and about the difficulty of understanding the native language and its aesthetics with the coming of the colonial and their idea of civilization which subverted the identities of the people and their tradition. When political turns out personal, the imitative effort of humans to alter the work of nature and supplement it with his own ideologies for his own gain of power. Another sphere the paper focuses on is the women who were objects in the patriarchal culture and denied from being part of their own culture of art. It was not just the women but men were also subjugated but the difference was that women were doubly oppressed. Through the years men made their art/literature with the absence of women from it. The imitation to alter nature reached the peak of gender roles, but women created the alter ego through art, this idea shall be considered through the lens of Madhubani/Mithila art.

Keywords: *Colonial, Life/community, Madhubani/Mithila art, Power, Subvert, Women*

1.Introduction

Indigenous is a term we associate it with the native people who are related to the language, culture and moral tradition of the land before the influence of colonization. Art and aesthetics are the elements which widen the horizon of the people portray their daily life, in the Pre-Raphaelite movement the idea of “art for art’s sake” was emphasized while the native dwellers emphasize “art for life’s sake” it’s a part of their life/community. The paper will concentrate on how indigenous culture as a language and as art survived through the years with the translation of the work and about the difficulty of understanding the native language and its aesthetics with the coming of the colonial their idea of civilization which subverted the identities of the people and their tradition. Another sphere which the paper focuses on is the women who objectified and denied to be part of their own culture of art, they were doubly oppressed unlike, the men who weren’t subjected to the ‘otherness’. Through art, women created an alter ego which will be looked up through the lens of Madhubani/Mithila art in the paper.



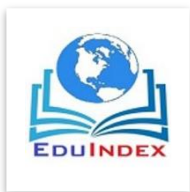
Art is never limited to a particular form it includes painting, sculpture, music, literature and from the recent past we films. These artworks are looked through the aesthetics as a study of the philosophy of beauty which varies from historic to the modern, artistic impact with its multiple histories from the oral tradition to the expressive art. The translation is the recreation of art, a translator is not the author of the text but a co-author since the translator makes a “sense for sense translation”. The idea of a translation is to convey a message from the source language to the target language the process becomes a complex form since culture differs from place to place. As St. Jerome stated:

Now I not only admit but freely announce that in translating from the Greek - except of course in the case of the Holy Scripture, where even the syntax contains a mystery - I render for word but sense for sense. (qtd.in Haider, 1.3)

Two languages never share the same style of grammar, or symbols to arrange the phrases and therefore, exact translations are not possible. The sense translation allows both the author and translator to use original words and the imitation involved adapts new and free translation yet keeping in mind the cultural aesthetics of the text. But it is not always that the essence of the original comes in the translated version, in the process of translation it loses the original flavor of the text and ‘alienating’ the source from the target language. Knowledge is transmitted in a few languages and one of the powerful languages is English. In the colonial era, the orientalist worked on translation only to ‘improve and polish’ what they considered inferior and barbaric. In Macaulay’s “Minute” he suggests the use of English over Oriental language. With the rise of nationalism the attempts to revive the native language, tradition, art, and dialects boosted up.

In the seventeenth century, the British theorists “attributed gender roles of father/husband and child/wife to that of the text and translation” and this brought in the idea that the original text is the “strong generative male, translation is the weaker and derivative female” (qtd.in, 6.2-6.3). The feminine became the visible language of translation as they subverted the tradition and became an individual of their will. The narcissistic sense of self was developed through the indigenous art and aesthetics, Madhubani art being part of the indigenous culture helped the women to express their “thoughts, hopes and dreams”.

The paintings were originated in Bihar and the region of Mithila has the history of being the birthplace of Sita and of Buddha and Mahavira. The history of the art goes back to the Hindu epic Ramayana when Sita’s father wants the painters to create the Madhubani paintings for his daughter’s wedding. The painting was practiced by the women of the house on the walls and these paintings became part of the cultural events and festivals in the village. The art was not limited to any particular caste but practiced by all the women. The domestic artwork of the house was not popular until 1934 when Bihar was extensively damaged by the earthquake. It was Archer who came across the ruined houses and saw the paintings he went on to study the paintings and later wrote an article “Mithila paintings” in 1949. Scholars who came to explore more about the paintings were Yves Vequaud, a French journalist and filmmaker he wrote the book *The Women Painters of Mithila* which made the Mithila art worldwide known another scholar was a German anthropologist Erika Moser. Many scholars who came founded groups for the continuation of the Mithila art, some were the Ethnic Arts Foundation (EAF) and Master Craftsmen’s Association of Mithila (MCAM). The influence of the painting went to an international forum and few Mithila painters at the global level are Sita Devi, Ganga Devi, Mahasundari Devi, Bharti Dayal. Tokio Hasegawa, a Japanese who has his Mithila Museum in Japan displays the art and researches on it has been a support for the Mithila painters. The art had five different styles namely Bharni, Kachni, Tantrik, Godna, and Kohbar among them the first three were made by Brahmin and Kayastha women and depicted religious themes while the other two



styles were commonly used among other castes showing the daily lives of the community. The traditional styles evolved with the global connection and translated its styles through the ages and these were not limited to any one caste. By the late 1960s, the art was transferred to the paper which helped as a source of income at the time of drought and before that the wall was the canvas for these Madhubani artists. And the government provided the opportunity to represent the nation in the cultural fairs and galleries across the world. In contemporary times we have an online and offline store that promotes Madhubani art, one such is ‘Get Pampered’.

Conclusion

Mithila art did not just subvert the power of the traditional patriarchy but also the idea of the inferior status given to the colonial, by its position at the international level through its indigenous art and aesthetics. Through the Mithila art, we can say that the personal turn political and the always already notion is only a constructed idea. The art gives the community an opportunity for economic success, for preserving the art the textile ministry is providing with e-learning. The modern-day artists of Mithila art are using their work to create awareness about various issues. The art survived over the years, through its aesthetics and the process of transferring and styling it through time.



Figure 1 Dupatta with Madhubani art



Figure 2 Sita Devi. Krishna and Radha



Figure 3 Kohbar painting indicating the married couple



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