

HISTORICAL TRENDS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY OF INDIA

WINGS OF SOCIAL DYNAMISM: FACTS AND FACETS

PEER REVIEWED ACADEMIC COLLECTION

VOLUME-II



Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)
Kanya Mahavidyalaya Publication
Geetanagar, Guwahati-781021, Assam, India

Editor-in-Chief
GUPTAJIT PATHAK

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Historical Study of Visual Arts through the Ages

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Abstract

Visual Arts play a very significant role in historical study and research. In the absence of the written records of the pre-historic period, the visual art forms become the only authentic source of information for the scholars. They are mainly concerned with identifying, classifying, describing, evaluating, interpreting, and understanding the art products and historic development of the culture and civilization of different periods. The visual arts can be used as important primary sources in the research of the culture and life style of a particular period especially in the ancient times.

Keywords: Historical, Visual Arts, Through, Ages

Introduction:

Art historical research has main concerns to authenticate an art object, determining whether it was indeed made by the artist to whom it is traditionally attributed, to determine at what stage in a culture's development or in an artist's career the object in question was made and also to gather biographical data on artists and documentation (provenance) on the previous whereabouts and ownership of particular works of art.

The second primary concern of art historical research is to understand the stylistic and formal development of artistic traditions on a large scale and within a broad historical perspective; this chiefly involves the enumeration and analysis of the various artistic styles, periods, movements, and schools of the past. Art history also involves iconography which is the analysis of symbols, themes, and subject matter in the visual arts.

India has a rich and complex history spanning thousands of years. India was the only major Asian culture known to be visited by the ancient Greeks and Romans and has caused fascination as an exotic and mysterious land ever since. Indian art is a term used in art history to study the different artistic expressions created in the historical regions of the Indian

subcontinent, including modern-day India, Bangladesh, and areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Objectives:

1. To study the various Art forms of Ancient India to study the culture and artistic expressions of that period.
2. To study the influence of religion and social practices on the various Art forms of Ancient India.
3. To study and consider the Visual Arts as important primary source of research in History.

Hypothesis:

- Traditional Indian art usually had a religious character.
- In spite of the complex mixture of religious traditions in India, generally, the prevailing artistic style at any time and place has been shared by the major religious groups.

Methodology:

Sources in a wide variety have been utilized in the collection of material for the study. The methodology followed for this paper is based on the material available on the subject. This is followed by the critical analysis of the same. The sources consulted for this paper include material available in museums, archives and e-libraries. The material collected during visits to the historical monuments and heritage sites is also considered for the study.

Limitations:

Most of the visual art forms of ancient India are not in good condition. They are either destroyed or lost due to negligence and lack of awareness. Proper records are not available in the archives and libraries.

Findings:

Indian visual arts consist of a variety of art forms, including painting, sculpture, pottery and textile arts etc. A strong sense of design and concept is the main characteristic of Indian art and can be observed in its modern and traditional forms.

The origin of Indian art can be traced to pre-historic settlements in the 3rd millennium BC. The people of the Indus valley civilization on the border of modern India and Pakistan produced the earliest known Indian Art Sculptures from between 2500 and 1800 BCE. They were small terracotta and bronze figures depicting animals and humans, like cows, monkeys, and dancing positions.

Buddhist artists produced magnificent examples of Indian cave art, with entire temples being carved in stone and decorated with Greek-influenced columns and sculptures. By the 5th century CE, sculpture was a common practice among Indian Buddhists and Hindus.

Historical Trends and Cultural Identity of India

Hinduism continued to be the focus of art creation for centuries, sculptures of Shiva and other deities, and huge stone temples like the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple, built in the 11th century in northern India. The art pieces often feature mythological, human, and animal forms and had elaborate ornaments. Unlike other areas influenced by Islam, Indian art didn't abandon figurative representations. During Muslim period also we find beautiful pieces of traditional art and architecture in different parts of India. However, on its way to modern times, Indian art has had cultural as well as religious influences such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam.

The history of art in ancient India begins with prehistoric rock paintings. Such rock paintings can be seen in the Bhimbetka paintings, belonging to the prehistoric age. Thereafter, an advanced town planning is seen in Harappa and Mohenjodaro, with their centrally planned cities indicating a highly developed architecture. Another remarkable example of sculpture from Harappan civilization comes in the form of the dancing girl from Mohenjodaro.

The use of symbolic forms in India is as old as the Harappan seals. The fire altars of the Vedic period, with their astronomical and mathematical significance also play an important role in the evolution of the later temples. It was followed by a period in the history of Indian art that is important for rock-cut caves and temple architecture. The Buddhists initiated the rock-cut caves, Hindus and Jains started to imitate them at Badami, Aihole, Ellora, Salsette, Elephanta, Aurangabad and Mahabalipuram. The rock-cut art has continuously evolved, since the first rock cut caves, to suit different purposes, social and religious contexts, and regional differences.

Alongside the art forms like architecture, paintings and sculpture, there have been evolving, changing, transforming, folk and tribal art traditions in India. These art forms are expression of people belonging to different cultural and social groups of India. It is the expression of people whose life is tuned to the rhythms of nature and its laws of cyclic change and whose life is knotted with natural energy. It's been a tradition in India that gods and legends are transformed into contemporary forms and familiar images. Fairs, festivals and local deities play a vital role in the development of these arts forms.

It is an art where life and creativity are inseparable. The tribal arts have a unique sensitivity, as the tribal people possess an intense awareness very different from the settled and urbanized people. Their art is an expression of their life and holds their passion and mystery.

India's artistic traditions are ancient and deeply rooted in religion. India is the birth place of three of the world's great religions Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism and these three faiths have inspired most of our Indian art. The ultimate aim of life, moksha or release from the cycle of birth and death is the common theme in these religions. While at various times in her long history, foreign races and cultures exercised some influence on Indian art forms, the main aesthetic currents remained predominantly Indian.

India occupies a prominent position in the realm of art of the ancient world. If the Greeks excelled in the portrayal of the physical charm of the human body, the Egyptians in the grandeur of their pyramids and the Chinese in the beauty of their landscapes, the Indians were known for transmitting the spiritual contents into their plastic forms incorporating the high ideals and the common beliefs of the people. The richness of the Indian artistic heritage was not restricted to the palaces of the nobility but flourished in the handicraft and folk art traditions which are still vibrant and alive in India today. Some examples are the painting traditions represented by Madhubani, Kalamkari and Phad; the bidri work of Hyderabad; the inlay work using precious and semi-precious stones that is represented so superbly in the Taj Mahal; the colourful Jaipur pottery; the complex designs and motifs in Indian textiles; and many other objects of daily use, from furniture to toys. Examples of the works of the painters of ancient India can be seen in the wall frescoes and mosaics that have survived the ravages of time. Some ancient illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts have also survived. But it is from the 11th and 12th centuries onwards that we begin to see a plethora of evidence of the skills of Indian painters, mainly through the illustrated manuscripts produced by the various schools of miniature paintings that developed from then on - the Mughal school, the Rajput school, the Pahari schools such as Kangra and Guler. These schools represented a fusion of Islamic and Hindu influences.

Indian art may well be said to bear in itself the greatest lesson an exemplary continuity from pre-historic times to the present age, together with an exceptional coherence. Indian artists historically followed and spread Indian religions out of the sub-continent especially in Tibet, South East Asia and China. Traditionally, the artist remained anonymous as an individual, the focus being on the spirit and essence of the artist's creation, on idealism rather than realism. In the process, Indian artists revealed a mastery of space, form and colour that has been retained over the centuries and still illuminates the work being done by modern-day artists.

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About the Book

A noteworthy facet of ancient Indian culture has been the commingling of cultural aspects from the north and south, and from the east and west. Ancient India perceived the birth of Brahmanism or Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism, but all these cultures and religions combined and amalgamated.

India is one of the most devotedly and ethnically diverse nations in the world, with some of the most intensely spiritual societies and culture. Culture plays an essential and perfect role in the life of many of its people.

The present title **Historical Trends and Cultural Identity of India, Volume-II, Wings of Social Dynamism: Facts and Facets** is a Peer Reviewed Academic Collection from Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Geetanagar, Guwahati, Assam, India. The authors and researchers of 34 (thirty four) selected chapters of the title has massive impact towards historical development and cultural identity of India.

About the Editor-in-chief



Guptajit Pathak, IQAC Co-ordinator and Assistant Professor, Department of History, Kanya Mahavidyalaya (Affiliated to Gauhati University), Guwahati, Assam, India is a trilingual contemporary poet, story writer, script writer, lyrics writer, author, translator, reviewer, resource person as well as a prominent editor. His poems, songs, stories, articles, reviews and research papers are published in many regional, national and international journals of repute & ezines and translated into different languages. Mr. Pathak has begged the honour of "Outstanding Researcher in History" Award for his contribution in historical research conferred by Global Outreach Research & Education Association in the 3rd Global Outreach Research and Education Summit on 31st July, 2019 at Bengaluru. He has acted as a resource person in National Seminar titled "Literary Emperor Anna Bhau Sathé" on 1st & 2nd May, 2020 at Arts & Commerce College (Affiliated to University of Mumbai), Phondaghat, Maharashtra, India. At present, he is a Doctoral Research Scholar in the Department of History, Assam University (Central), Silchar, India and the convener of National and International Workshops, Seminars, and Conferences and is working as a Section Editor of *INSIGHT: An International Multilingual Journal for Arts and Humanities*, Peer Reviewed and Referred, ISSN: 2582--8002, University Research Publications, Ernakulum, Kerala, India.

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