

Contribution of Arts and Social Media in Empowerment of Women

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Abstract

“Art and Social media” are powerful tools to express the thoughts and ideas .When concerned with women ,their value increases because what women cannot speak in the patriarchal society, they express through their artistic skills and social media .Women often hesitate to speak or we can say that they are not given enough opportunities to give their opinion. Art helps to express what words can't describe. With the emergence of social media, many people whose voices have remained unheard specially women have found the platform to raise their voices against the different issues specially gender injustice .This paper attempts to highlight the contribution of leading women artists in highlighting the gender injustice and the role of social media in the empowerment of women.

Keywords: - Art, Social Media, Women Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Art has always depicted a mirror of society along with expression. Art completes what nature cannot bring to finish. Art is also an activity through which one can transfuse their own emotions to others. Not only by visually entertaining viewers, art has played a vital role in protesting against injustice, many times in history of human civilization. The artist gives us knowledge of nature's unrealized ends. Art is the queen of all sciences communicating knowledge to all generations of the world. Social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.

Art and social media are the important tools to spread awareness about and ultimately bring to an end charge of horrific gender crimes perpetuating in the name of misguided notion of culture and tradition.

Human beings are curious about everything. They like to get informed as well as entertained .At the same time they also want to share their views on different topics but somehow their voices remain unheard. So ultimately they look for medium to get their message delivered to maximum people without using too many words. Art and social media gives them opportunity to share their ideas, thoughts, creativity in a manner without offending anyone. This paper aims to study the role of Indian

women artists in making people aware about gender issues and discrimination which is still prevalent in India.

This paper also seeks to study how social media has given strength to women and courage to raise their voices. Indian women artists in particular have emphasized gender issues and discrimination in the form of paintings, sculptures and installations since pre independence times. Medium utilized by Indian women to create art has evolved with time and technology. But the social issues depicted in the art have not undergone any change

METHODOLOGY

Content analysis method was adopted to carry out this study. Due to paucity of time 3 leading women artists have been taken for study. The women artists have been selected keeping in mind different time periods. For example Amrita Shergill has contributed immensely to the women empowerment through her paintings before the independence. Neelima Sheikh has contributed to the women empowerment in 1980. An analysis has been done on how social media act as a tool to give more freedom to women to not only raise their voice but also show their talents and skills

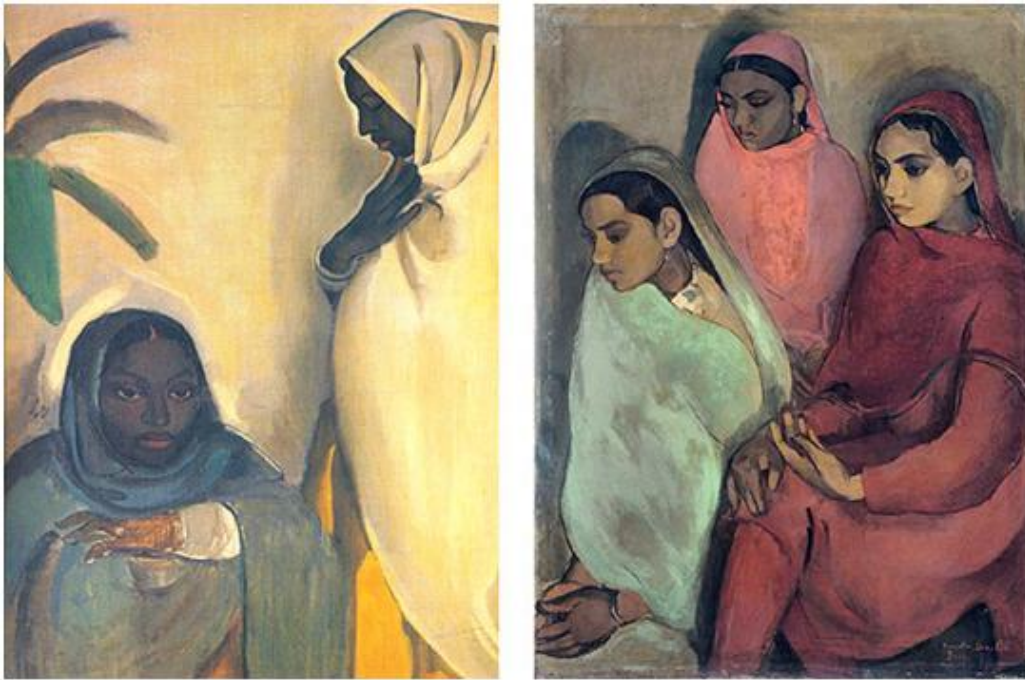
Some of the leading Indian women artists are:

Amrita Shergill (1913-1947): Amrita Shergill in her paintings has laid more stress on women. She is often referred as “India’s Frida Kahlo” for beautifully mingling traditional and Western art form. Amrita’s works were influenced by work of Rabindranath Tagore. In her work “The Ladies Enclosure” she highlighted the poor state of underprivileged and women in India. She was deeply moved with the plight of poor people during her visit to different parts of the country.

She focused on capturing the reality of Indian women and portrayed them in her paintings as inspired from their domestic lives. Her painting style was different from her works in Paris. She introduced the new elements in modern Indian art by using traditional methods. Her painting “Three Girls” won the Gold medal at annual exhibition of Bombay Art Society in 1937.

The painting showed three women pondering on the destiny they cannot change. The other famous paintings which showed her compassion for underprivileged are “Brahmacharis” and “Bride’s Toilet”. She was influenced by her experiences of the locality in which she lived in and her aim was to portray the life of Indian people through her paintings. She encouraged other women to pursue the profession of art and she was ready to go against the existing social norms. Her paintings portrayed the sad reality of women behind the silent faces. In 1976 the Government of India declared her works as National Art Treasures and most of them housed in the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi. She died at a very early age but her work continues to live on. Her range of work was not limited to only one aspect.

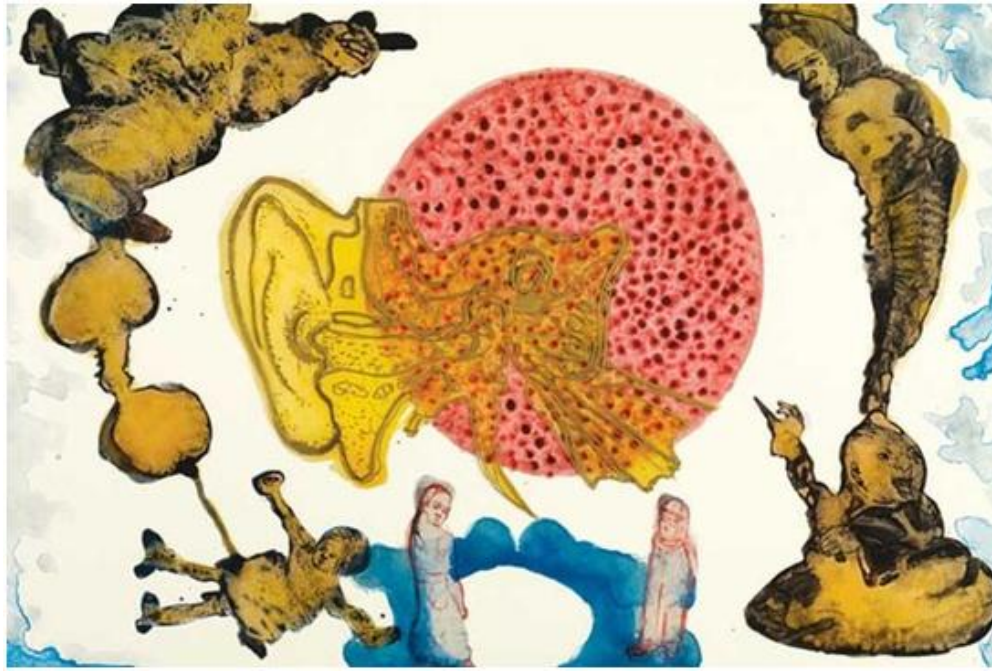
The theme in her works included her servants, tribal women, working women etc. Her contribution to the Indian art will always be looked upon as an inspiration for many existing and upcoming male and female artists and how the art form can be used to depict the existing societal norms and traditions which hinder the growth and progress of women.



Nilima Sheikh: Nilima Sheikh in her paintings focused on portraying the hardships of Indian women. She turned from Western style painting to miniature painting taking inspiration from Rajput and Mughal court painters. Her most famous work “When Champa Grew Up” was a series of 12 paintings which depicted the life of a young girl who died at the hands of her in laws. This series was inspired from the life of Nilima as she knew the girl from her neighbourhood who was killed exactly the same way by her in laws for dowry. She has also done illustrations for children’s books apart from painting sets and backdrops for dramas.



Nalini Malini: Nalini Malini was the first to introduce feminist issues in her work in 1980. Malini critically examines the gender roles and her art challenges the role of women in patriarchal society. She organized the first ever all female art exhibition in India. Her most famous paintings are “Listening to the Shades”, “Despoiled Shore”, “Unity in Diversity”



Women and Social Media

In last few years the number of users of social media in India has increase quite rapidly. According to statistics, the number of users of social media in India have increased from 296.3 million in 2017 to 326.1 in 2018. Social media has proved to be the powerful tool for bringing women's rights issues to the attention of public. Social media is playing the semantic role in changing the mindset of people. Without the social media, Nirbhaya Gang Rape, Kathua and Unnao Rape case and many other cases of women atrocities would not have drawn attention of masses. Social media has become mediator between policy makers and people as it influences the decisions and helps to devise strategies

Following are the ways in which social media has played a key role in women's empowerment

- Bringing those women's issues in knowledge of people which hardly get reported in mainstream media or are underrepresented in mainstream media. Movements such as “#MeToo” and “Bring Back our Girls” have raised awareness about the exploitation of women at the hands of prominent personalities around the world. Women, who were earlier hesitant to report the cases, have now found voice through social media to reach out to large number of people. Social media has helped the marginalized section of society to get justice as today the cases against women even in remote areas also get highlighted on facebook and twitter and it becomes viral in a very short span of time which puts pressure on authorities to act quickly and provide justice
- Not only common people have been able to raise voice against rape and killing of women, the social media has also encouraged women organisations and NGO'S to call for justice for women against domestic violence, gender inequality and other concerns on regular basis. NGO'S like Seven Sisters Development Assistance (SeSTA) and Manav Vikas Seva Sangh has done a remarkable work in ensuring safety and security and also providing financial security to women. After the Delhi rape case, government introduced special Anti Rape Provisions in the Criminal Act. This was

possible because all over the country people demanded justice on social media which pressurized the government to take the strict action against the culprits through fast track courts and by enacting changes in the law to ensure strict punishment. Also social media made people united to come together for a common cause

- Through social media, people specially women have found a platform to show their talent and skills to a large number of people while sitting at home. Facebook and Instagram have encouraged women to now pursue their dreams quite easily. Social media tools have motivated more women to show their talent indifferent areas such as cooking, painting, art and craft, blogging etc. by sharing it with millions of people around the world without any concern of safety. It provides flexibility of working conditions and power to market talent at a very economical cost
- Last but not the least social media has made women more confident to speak on different issues which was earlier not possible due to societal and cultural norms. But with social media, women now are in a position to share their opinions on different topics and also keep their identity anonymous if they wish. Social media has also provided the variety of options to upskill themselves thereby increasing their chances of employment. Experts of different fields are now available on social media also and a number of them provide knowledge for free. Also the employers of different fields are now recruiting women from various social media platforms

Though Art and Social media have empowered women but still there are certain problems which are still prevailing in our country

- Even with technology and Globalisation, many women still face the problem of lack of resources especially in rural areas. For many even two meals a day is a dream. They can't afford even basic needs of life and therefore for them, their dreams are limited to only food, clothing and shelter
- We live in a society where people are becoming obsessed with Instagram. Instagram is filled with influencers who have perfect bodies. This leads other people specially women to question their own bodies and replicate what they see on Instagram. Women start questioning their self-worth. Also fake profiles and fake Id's make social media unsafe for women and uploading pictures on social media also cause trouble to many women which lead to many committing suicide
- Many girls do not get opportunity to complete their education and particularly those ones who are married at early age which further hinders their prospects of fighting for their rights and polishing their skills. They remain unaware of their basic rights and face the atrocities and violence in their homes and outside. For many of them, threat of getting molested and killed which prevents them to raise their voice. Patriarchal system in our society also doesn't allow women to do any other job other than doing household chores. Excessive workload in homes also does not give them time and energy to explore their talent and skills

CONCLUSION

Art and social media are the tools of giving voice to the voiceless people specially women but unless the artists are encouraged either through art fairs or exhibitions, their work will not be able to reach maximum people and many talented artists remain unknown to the world. As we say every coin has two sides if social media can be a informative tool then simultaneously it can also become a matter of concern of safety and security. If the social media is not used carefully it can become a serious threat for women as sometimes their pictures on social media are photo shopped and they are stalked by fringe elements which creates a big problem for women. At the same time people become victim of frauds and cheating through fake advertisements of being provided job opportunity or monetary benefits in which people are lured into easily. Women artists specially rural women artists needs more training by experts which not only can improve their skills but simultaneously also provide employment opportunities to make them self sufficient.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Art exhibitions should be organized on regular basis and rural women in particular, should be provided opportunity to show their skills. More funds should be provided by government to promote art to even remote parts of country and female artists should be provided expertise on how to improve their artistic skills. Special schemes should be launched by the government agencies for the women artists and their financial safety should be ensured.
- Along with smartphones, internet services should be provided not only to the big cities but also to different parts of the country especially in backward and rural areas. Training should be provided not only to men but also to women on how to use social media effectively. Women volunteers should be made in every area and they should be given training on how to further teach other women of their area. Basic facilities should be ensured first and these women volunteers should act as mediator between people and government.
- Women organisations and NGO's should be encouraged to continue to raise their voices on atrocities on women and they should be rewarded not only by applause and financially as well. Social media can play the important role in highlighting these women and helpline numbers of organisations of women should be kept updated and ensuring that the voices of women should not be left unheard.

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