

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S DEPICTION IN MODERN INDIAN PAINTINGS

Ph. D. THESIS

by

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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE
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A THESIS

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MANDAKINI



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE
ROORKEE – 247 667 (INDIA)
OCTOBER, 2018**

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work which is being presented in the thesis entitled “**CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN’S DEPICTION IN MODERN INDIAN PAINTINGS**” in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and submitted in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee is an authentic record of my own work carried out during a period from July, 2011 to October, 2018 under the supervision of Dr. Ila Gupta, Professor, Department of Architecture & Planning and Dr. P. Jha, Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee.

The matter presented in this thesis has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree of this or any other Institution.

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the diverse approach of male and female artists in the portrayal of women in the context of Indian paintings. Until the early 20th century, women have been executed in paintings to serve a stereotypical imagery in socio-religious context. They have been displayed as the patriarchal society wanted them to be displayed. Historically, the artists behind representation used to be male-only, because women had been deprived of and neglected from, painting. The female bodies have been manipulated and dominated to channelize the exiting display of male power through such representation. The projection was prevalent until the arrival of female artists and, after that; a sudden change has come in that stereotypical image of women. The concept of the female body was subjugated and overpowered by female artists to question the prevalent imagery. Subsequently, both the male and female artists are creating two opposing identities of women in their paintings which is taken as a research problem for this study. Four Indian modern artists have been taken as a case study to observe the portrayal of women from Pre-Independence to Post-independence period. The difference has come through the intervention of Amrita Sher-Gil when she relocated female identity with her conceptual themes without giving emphasis on beauty and erotic appeal alone. Contrary to it, Ravi Varma offered a new stereotype of popular female imagery through his paintings, which is followed till the contemporary age. The imagery is only meant for beauty and seduction and sometimes gives an impression of European influence. In this context, the paintings of Ravi Varma and Amrita Sher-Gil have been analyzed to observe the origin of an identity crisis in the depiction of women in modern Indian paintings. Additionally, the paintings of Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal have been observed through a comparative analysis. Gogi Saroj Pal is a contemporary feminist artist. Her paintings represent a radical approach in the projection of women. Francis Newton Souza is known for the depiction of his voluptuous and sensuous nudes, covered with highly erotic and seductive lure.

The thesis has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter gives the introduction to the topic of this thesis in respect of female representation by male and female artists. It also describes the adopted research methods, objectives, and future scope of the study. The second chapter examines the previous studies in the chosen area and then shows the existing gap in the reviewed literature.

The third chapter is based on a survey on the representation of women from pre-historic to contemporary Indian paintings. The chapter basically shows the changing roles of women as a subject of paintings. Women have been mainly associated with non-significant roles until female artists came forward to criticize or to subvert this universal notion of female sexuality. The chapter also helps to understand the ideology of male and female representations after focusing some of the major male and female artists of modern Indian art. In the fourth chapter, a comprehensive evaluation of the paintings of Ravi Varma and Francis Newton Souza has been carried out to trace the impact of gender, sexuality, subjectivity, and objectivity in their execution of women. The fifth chapter seeks to observe the paintings of Amrita Sher-Gil and Gogi Saroj Pal through a critical approach. After comparing their works, it is observed that Amrita Sher-Gil helped to construct an identity of women which left a deep impact on various female artists, including Gogi Saroj Pal. Although they have a different style in their respective field, they are connected on the same platform of feminism and gender politics. The sixth chapter represents the basic difference between the works of Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal in the depiction of women. The differences have been found in the body postures of the figures, backgrounds, and compositions; selected themes; gesture and attire; physical appearance and visual communication etc. The seventh chapter concludes and briefly restates the major findings of the thesis.

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(Mandakini)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE CONTEXT

The subsistence of society is exclusively depending upon the feminine facet, in which the imagination of the endurance of all human being is inconceivable. The status and connotation of womanhood can be defined appropriately through the visual art of the particular time period. In this context, the literature, art, architecture, and religious manuscripts can be included because visual representation is the reflection of society. Hence, paintings can be used as a medium to revisit the role of woman in society because art is always being related with the socio-cultural tendencies and strongly connected with the taste and demands of the individual. There is always a continuity which is found in religious art and culture (Kak 2014). The premises of contemporary paintings are surrounded by the portrayal of various female figures. We can see a majority of female forms, who are subjugated or subverted under the weight of feminist beliefs. Women as a subject of art are not an issue, for they have been executed as a piece of art since the pre-historic times. They have been made to be beautiful, seductive, elegant, heavenly and charming and true representatives of their physical and moral image and identity, originating through certain codes and conducts for the female sex to spend their lives in a society. This identity is often used as a stereotype to articulate their womanhood i.e. how much feminine they are? The societal perception of a female is her appearance and physical beauty whereas in the case of a male, his attributes are depicted majorly through his actions. In the art, this complexity of both the sexes has become a vexed phenomenon because the art of painting is a way of visual communication. The women, who are associated with the domain of beauty and sensuality, have become a major source of male-gaze in the pictorial language of painting because this art stands for visual pleasure and women are a major source of it. Their bodies have been more sexualized after coming into the hand of male-made art. This perception gives origin to the vulnerable imagery of female and presents them as a weaker being than male. In this very notion of association, women need to be feminine first, then human beings. The same phenomenon of the representation of the feminine has been depicted again and again in the artistic representation until the arrival of female painters as the majority was belonging to the male group. From the recent past, in art, we can see two opposite approaches in the depiction of the female body. There are women who are being projected as a component of beauty and sexuality like the previous ones. At the same time, there are women too who are opposing these sexualized bodies through

their artworks and want to present the power of their inner spirit or identity. The second category of women has been projected through the brush of female artists. In this discourse of opposition, the female body has become a tool for political representation. The study is an attempt to trace the reasons behind the depiction of female bodies in the work of male and female artists. Why have female bodies been used as an equipment of gender politics?

1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The women had been an essential part of society and culture, because of the social infrastructure of mankind cannot be balanced without women. Female is the creator of life in the world in the form of mother. In societal structure, the primary roles of women have been connected to their bond with men as a mother, sister, wife and beloved. Instead of this, there are other secondary roles like slaves, mistress, and servants etc., which are not shared through biological connections.

Furthermore, the female deities also have valuable significance in society, and religious values play an important part in the paintings. From religious factors, the artists have borrowed the supernatural association of Goddesses, but they are far from realistic encounters. The impact of this essential and needed existence of women can also be considered frequently through other creative activities of mankind. The creativity of human beings is much influenced by their surroundings and belongings; so, the creativity is often a result of such kind of mixture either in the form of reality or imagination. This very imagination or thinking is also derived from the irony of gender. Gender plays an important role in encountering the difference between such creativities due to the individual perception regarding the depiction which varies in different aspects. Painting is based on the interest of the particular; for instance, the religious iconography is often drawn for the ritualistic representation and the way of representing thing is based on the taste of the individual or on the taste of the patron or viewer. In this context, the art and poetry of ancient India can be observed on the basis of the beauty and charm of women. These things have remained a strong inspiration for the creator. The other aspects of womanhood are also intermingled with the representation, but the frequently adopted aspects are the beauty and erotic grace of the feminine.

The portrayal of women has been a very significant aspect of painting from the ancient times. The body of women has been frequently used in almost all kind of narratives. Female forms have been associated with physical beauty and sexuality from the earliest time. If we look into the pictorial depictions of any time, first we see the standardized body and beautiful face. The other

associations have come after this standardized body. On the contrary, in the depiction of the male body, the power and dominance have come first, then their physical appearance. The difference, which represents women with their physical beauty and represents men with their power and strength, has emerged as the biggest problem in the field of painting. This difference appropriately defines the social construction of gender due to which a woman must be beautiful and appealing and a man must be powerful and dominating over a woman. This difference has been imbibed everywhere by everyone since the ancient times and has increased gradually in the artistic representations.

Women in the paintings are mostly meant for beauty and sexuality before the arrival of female artists. They were represented as tools for the man-made art and depicted as a server of man's desire. The very subject which used to be made in the hand of male artists suddenly changed its representation after coming into the hands of female artists. We cannot say that the objectification entirely has gone almost. The objectivity is still found in the work of some male artists with the advancement of modern trends. This particular difference has been noticed in the field of painting through the revolutionary essay of Linda Nochlin, titled 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists' (1971). This essay was an accomplishment in the narration of gender and sexuality in the context of paintings. In the arena of Indian paintings, the politics of gender has been first explained by Vidya Dehejia and then followed by various art critics (**Dehejia 1997**).

Apart from art writings, if we calculate the contribution of Indian female artists, we can see that a significant difference has come after the arrival of Amrita Sher-Gil because she represented a strong subjective approach in the depiction of women (**Kapur 2000**). In this way, it can be clearly observed that without the contribution of female artists, we can never understand the ideology of the subjective and objective approach to the portrayal of the female body. The very difference which has been created through the subversion of prevalent imagery by Sher-Gil (**Lutzker 2002**). The female artists, who depict women on their surfaces, have an extraordinary ability to capture the realistic encounters of womanhood rather than artificial ones. Going back to the observation of modern Indian paintings, we can see the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma. In his paintings, beautiful and sensuous women are seducing their onlookers through a direct eye-contact. They are more like posing for their onlookers as if they have been offered for that visual delight.

If we go through the work of prominent modern male artists, it can be considered that they mostly portrayed the physical and moral values as per the social construction of patriarchy through the

body of women. Sometimes, the body of women has been depicted for political and religious promotions; for instance, the imagery of Bharat Mata or Devi, have been depicted to evoke emotional sentiments among the people. All these representations have been particularly adopted in the work of male artists, where the body of women has been used as an object of other's desire, particularly male's desire. She (Bharat Mata or Devi) is depicted in the form of Goddess, but her beauty and well-proportionate body is the most preferred thing in that painting. Apart from this Goddess imagery, the common forms have also been served to the onlookers in the attire of sensuality and erotic appeal. This very display of female sexuality has been continued till the contemporary times. This continued and emerging stereotype of man-made art has been opposed by numerous female artists. They are far from such hangovers of beauty and sexuality, which is being followed since the ancient times.

In the work of female artists, we can see two kinds of basic approaches; one is the subversion/opposition/sarcasm/rejection of those male-made identities on the painted surface. Another is to celebrate the womanhood through the depiction of the female body. In the second approach, they try to portray the body of women as per the perception of the women only. This includes a variety of subjects, like personal experiences, realistic encounters of women's lives, their spirit to become powerful or to gain equality and some hidden issues of their life etc.

In such binaries, the representation of the female body has been problematized between the genders of both the sexes through their paintings. This complexity is increasing day by day and it is very essential to observe the work of both the genders in a comparative and comprehensive way. In the course of observation, we can use the frame of subjective and objective approaches of both the artists (male and female). Gogi Saroj Pal, a feminist painter from India, is reproducing her female imagery in a feminist way (**Lutzkar 1997**). She is working on the female project since the time of Post-Independence.

Francis Newton Souza is one among the modern precursors of Indian paintings and he has focused on female imagery in his work. Among modern artists, if we look at the painting of Francis Newton Souza, we can see the overemphasized nudes with their strong erotic appeal. Contrary to it, if we go through the paintings of Gogi Saroj Pal, we see a strong radical feminism in her painted themes. These two artists are great instances of extremeness in the portrayal of women. Pal is a born feminist while Souza is an anti-feminist since the time of his childhood. He also admitted in a conversation with prominent art critic Vinod Bhardwaj that "his work is anti-

feminists, and he is doing very wrong with the women, that he paints them like this” (Bhardwaj 2014, told during the interview to the author). According to him:

“In the mid-1980s, in the course of an interview, I had asked Souza about feminist ideas. I was surprised when he confessed that “Yes, lately, after coming face to face with feminist ideas, I have experienced a little change in the way I look at women... I am changing the way I think.” In subsequent years, though, one doesn’t notice much of a change in Souza’s art or personal life in relation to women (Bhardwaj 2015, 2017).

In opposition, Pal does not accept that she is a feminist but she opines that she works for those issues which bother her, so she takes them as a subject of her painting and tries to solve them through her canvas. When the question of feminism opted she suddenly replied that “I am not a feminist but a socially conscious person; even I don’t follow any ism. I just represent my disagreement or rejection of such unequal elements, which are programmed by injustice” (Pal 2015). On the preparation of her new series called Altar for Nirbhaya, she made a woman again in various forms and after being asked about it she responded that 'meaning of art is statement' and she mentioned that she just paints issue and also stated in respect of woman that. "Our body is our property and not belongs to anybody” (Pal 2015).

1.3 AREA AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The study examines the comparative portrayal of a woman in the paintings of male and female artists. To observe the significance of female execution, four artists have been selected for a case study, including Ravi Varma and Amrita Sher-Gil, Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal. The observation has been carried out through a comparative analysis and Sher-Gil and Varma have been taken as a base study. The purpose of this study is to bring forth the juxtaposition in representing the female body and to find out how this difference will influence the future representation of Indian art. This study can be used further as a framework to evaluate the work of male and female artists and to assume the symbolic significance of their work. This research deals with the concept of representations of women in paintings, which can be further extended to the study of other contemporary artists. The study will also be helpful to understand the gendered approach in the representation of the female body through art.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to make a critical analysis of the work of male and female artists in the depiction of female figures. Previously, the body of women had been painted to serve the patriarchal hegemonies and gender politics because women were deprived of the professional art world. After their arrival, the representation of women (by male artists) has been entirely opposed by female artists, and now their works constitute their powerful artistic representations. The basic purpose of this study is to trace the symbolic significance of their works and the factors responsible for this opposite representation in respect of women.

1.5 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The present work is an attempt to analyze the depiction of womanhood in modern Indian paintings between male and female artists of India. In modern Indian art, gender politics and eroticism has been defined by many researchers. There are numerous studies which have been focused on feminism in modern art. When the researcher came across the literature regarding feminism and gender issues in art, the researcher also became familiar with the male-gaze and eroticism in art; suddenly the researcher started analyzing the work of male and female artists. In the reviewed studies, there are plenty of researches, which are based on individual male and female artists, but the lack of an appropriate comparison between the work of male and female artists is still there. There are various studies which show that the work of male and female artists is different from each other, but none has explored the reasons and factors behind this difference.

Few questions (mentioned below) came to my mind that needed to be answered.

- What is the difference between male and female artist depicting the female body in their paintings?
- What is the main cause of inspiration and influence of both the artists?
- What are the basic elements which have the effect on artist's work and painting?
- How much does gender affect their work?
- Why are female artists opposing the male-gaze through their works?
- Is historical art responsible for such complex issues?
- What kind of message do the female artists want to give through manipulating their strong and powerful female figure?
- Has feminism inspired the work of female artists?
- Why did Amrita Sher-Gil and Ravi Varma take the image of women in a very opposite

manner?

- How does Gogi Saroj Pal depict her female protagonist?
- Why has Francis Newton Souza portrayed women as an object of sexuality?
- Why do male and female artists represent two opposite forms of the female body?

During the course of this study, some of the answers have been found prior to the above-mentioned questions, which are as follows:

- The overall portraiture including body, gestures, angles, and postures are different between the paintings of male and female artists.
- Both the artists are somehow influenced by their life experiences, childhood memories, and surroundings of their society.
- Gender plays a crucial and complex role in shaping the mindset of artists with regards to the portrayal of women; they are bound to act as per the hierarchies of social constructions, whether it is intentional or unintentional.
- The female artists are shifting the male gaze and erotic stance through their representations because they are victimized (directly or indirectly) by the politicized representation of gender.
- The gender difference has come down from the historical representations, but it has changed its forms as per the advancement of modernity.

The female artists, who are constructing reverse identities in the form of female protagonists, are somehow opposing or reinvestigating the sexualized imagery of women; and through their work, they are shaping their ideas and views to present women as a strong and powerful being.

There are strong feminist aspects in the works of female artists because this movement helped them to understand the existing norms of gender politics and to protect the vulnerable body of women in the art.

Male and Female artists are taking the female figures in a very opposite way because both are derived from the social construction of gender politics.

1.6 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this project is to study the depiction of female figures by modern artists and to find out the basic difference between the painting of male and female artists in respect of subjective and objective approach.

1.7 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The objectives of the study are designed as:

- To study the portrayal of a woman from the ancient to modern Indian paintings.
- To find out the basic difference between the paintings of male and female artists.
- To evaluate the work of Ravi Varma and Amrita Sher-Gil and their influence on the works of Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal.
- To do a comparative analysis between the works of Gogi Saroj Pal and Francis Newton Souza in respect of the depiction of the female body.

1.8 METHODOLOGY

The study has been based on primary as well as secondary surveys. For the primary survey, the interviews of the professionals (artists and critics) were taken by the researcher after following the interview guide style. The interview of Gogi Saroj Pal and Vinod Bhardwaj (a contemporary art critic) has also been taken by the researcher. The photographs of paintings and catalogs have been collected through visiting the prominent art-galleries of Delhi. The solo and group shows of contemporary and modern artists have also been visited to collect the primary information related to the contemporary trends. In the secondary survey, the existing literature has been collected through the visit to libraries where books, journals, periodicals, newspaper, magazine, and other web sources have been gone through. Two male and female artists, Ravi Varma and Amrita Sher-Gil, have been selected from the pre-independence time for the base study because they are one among the precursors of Modern Indian painting. Both of them played a major role in the construction of feminine identity, which is prevalent in the contemporary trends. They also influenced the numerous prominent contemporary generations of male and female artists profoundly. Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal are among those artists, who took this stereotype of female imagery in their paintings with new advancements. Gogi Saroj Pal and Francis Newton Souza also belong to Post-Independent India and taken as a study to observe the role of women from pre to Post Independent period.

1.9 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The study is basically focused on four Indian modern artists because it is not possible to evaluate the works of all artists in one thesis. In the first segment, the oeuvre of Amrita Sher-Gil and Ravi Varma has been taken into consideration. The basic outline of the proposed research cannot be observed without mentioning their names. The oeuvre of Gogi Saroj Pal and Francis Newton Souza has been taken as a case study because they belong to pre-modern to contemporary times. Another reason for taking them is that we can find a clear insight into the proposed study in their works. Souza worked on erotic and sexual encounters in the life of women, while Pal worked on feminist and gender-sensitive issues of the life of women. Both the artists are extremists in their respective approaches. Women depicted by them are equally strong and powerful and channelized through a reverse paradigm of women's desire but in a very opposite frame. Both are equipped for shocking the onlookers of their works through their sensational nudes and self-portraits.

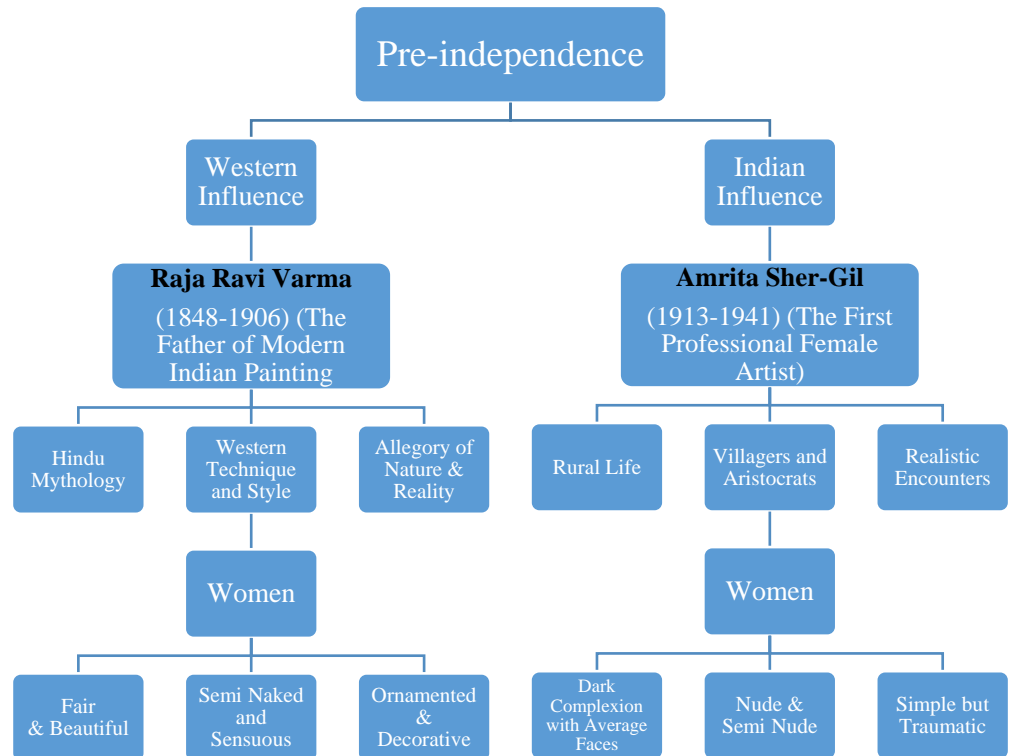


Fig. 1.1 Artists from Pre-independence time

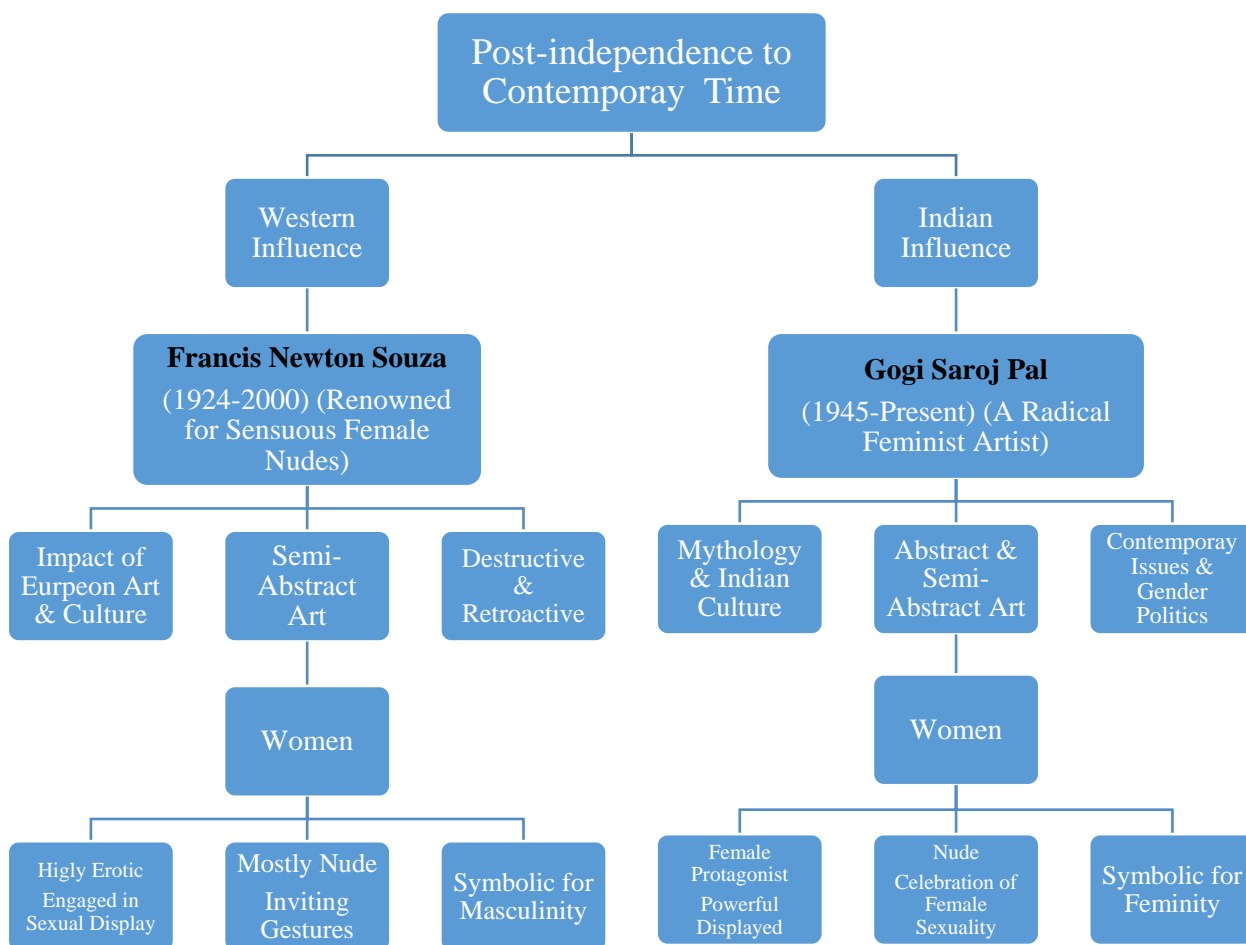


Fig. 1.2 Artists from Post-independence Time

1.10 LIMITATIONS

Most of the artists and art critics are not accessible for an interview. The study is limited to the assessment of four because it is not possible to cover their entire works in one study.

1.11 HYPOTHESIS

The representations of an artist often belonged to their personal encounters of life and the social infrastructure of artistic status. Gender plays a major role in the representation of the female body.

1.12 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis comprises the following six chapters covering the discussion of the portrayal of women from prehistoric to modern Indian paintings in respect of male and female artists

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Review of Literature
- Chapter 3 From Caves to Canvases: Mapping the Portrayal of Women from Ancient to Modern Indian Paintings
- Chapter 4 Ravi Varma and Francis Newton Souza: The Prevalent Stereotype of Sensual Display
- Chapter 5 The Foremother and Her Successor: Amrita Sher-Gil & Gogi Saroj Pal
- Chapter 6 Differentiating the Female Body: The Irony of Subject and Object
- Chapter 7 Summary and Conclusion

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the existing literature on the depiction of the female figure has been discussed. The study is largely focused on Indian paintings. The chapter gives an overview regarding the portrayal of women from ancient to modern Indian paintings and also examines the female figures in the paintings of modern artists.

The chapter has been divided into six sections. The second section gives emphasis on the portrayal of women from pre-historic to pre-modern period. It presents the role and status of women from prehistoric rock paintings to miniatures. This section is helpful in developing a historical framework of the present study. The third section includes studies related to modern Indian paintings in respect of female portrayal. The section also has some studies related to gender politics, feminism, and other related issues have been included to explore the impact of socio-cultural issues on the works of the artists. The fourth section is based on some major studies to observe the paintings of Ravi Varma and Amrita Sher-Gil to get a comprehensive evaluation of their works. The fifth section of this chapter traces the studies on Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal to observe the difference between their works. The sixth section gives concluding statements of all the sections and shows the existing gaps in the studies.

2.2 STUDIES RELATED WITH EARLY INDIAN PAINTINGS

In ancient Indian paintings, women were frequently adopted as a decorative motif. Their sensual body and physical beauty were the main concern for almost all the artists. The history of mankind has been divided into two periods: the prehistoric and historic. The prehistoric period is related to before writing and historical is related after writing. The period has less evidential accounts, unlike the historical one. The prehistoric period further divided into stone, bronze and iron age. The Stone Age has been classified into Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. The evidence of the prehistoric period can be traced through the artistic production and non-literary substantiation. The rock paintings were a remarkable feature of the Mesolithic period, which has been particularly found at the Vindhyan sandstone hills in central India. These paintings have the reflection of the Mesolithic cultural voyage with strong aesthetical sensuousness and artistic innovation. The relation of those

people with hunting and gathering activities has been intermingled with their social and religious life. These impressions have been found in their art (**Misra 2001**). The Bhimbetka rock shelters have many depictions of pregnant women, including various aspects of day to day life. In those paintings, two drawings of spider-shaped woman can be identified as mother Goddess; in which the first figure has been portrayed with a newly born infant below her genitals. Another one has been portrayed in geometrical lines. In many shelters, the working women have also been exhibited; for instance, in one scene, a person is climbing on a tree with a basket on his or her back and the other person to the right (a woman) is carrying a basketful of fruits. This may be related with the involvement of women in food-gathering activities. There are other depictions of dancing and playing too which show the involvement of women in amusement activities (**Malla and Sonawane 2013**). In prehistoric cave paintings, a well-known historian, Yashodhar Mathpal, found various scenes which show the dominance of fertility and procreation rather than other significant roles of women. During his observation of the site of Bhimbetka he observed various scenes, in which women have been displayed as involved in sexual activities, for instance, he stated that in one of the scenes a reclining woman has been depicted with five men as involved in sexual activities (**Mathpal 1984**). The fertility concept has been aroused through the Venus of Willendorf, with her broad anatomical structure and this concept came from Austria. The procreation and fertility aspect is the harbingers to produce children for the survival of the generations (**Gardner and Kleiner 2009**). It is stated by **Kamat (1997)** that women have been portrayed as representing her procreative power and sexuality in some of the sights of the pre-historic period. Going through the evidence, fertility and Mother Goddess cult has been focused on the pre-historic period and started to develop in the Indus Valley civilization. (**Wakankar & Brooks, 1976, Mathpal, 1984, Kamat, 1997, Nagar 1998**). In the Indus Valley Civilization, women have been depicted in the form of clay figurines, bronze sculpture, and on the seals in a symbolic manner (**Kak 2005, McIntosh 2008**).

In the Indus Valley, that the male sex has been represented exclusively through animals with the semiotics of their genital parts and body. This may be a way to enhance and accomplish their sexual powers after creating such animate imagery through visual representation and communication. In this culture, numerous terracotta figurines of women have been exhibited with broad hips and heavy breast to support the hyperbolic imagery of female sexuality. The sexuality has been particularly executed rather than other subjects of representation. These female figurines are interrelated to the mother Goddess phenomenon on the one hand and also to the idea of displaying their power of fertility on the other. Furthermore, female sexuality in the form of the Goddess can be a

representation of magical rituals for the divine assistance (**Muesse 2011**). The Goddess of sexuality or Lajja Gauri or shameless woman (legs apart showing her vulva) is a universal icon of fertility throughout the world. The name 'shameless woman' has been given by H.D. Sankalia in 1960 through an article titled, 'The Nude Goddess or "Shameless Woman" In Western Asia, India, And South-Eastern Asia'. This nude Goddess has been represented for the sexual worship or for the promotion of fertility cult too. Martin agreed that the images of Lajja Gauri have been found in Indus Valley civilization on the seals of Harappa. The Goddess has come through the trade routes from Mesopotamia to Medieval India after changing its various names and forms. Lajja Gauri is a generic name for the iconographic representation of the nude Goddess of procreation and fertility cult and associated with Indian mythological terms too. Although Lajja means 'shame', 'in the actual painting she is depicted as 'shameless'. In the Sumerian period, she is called *Inanna*, the Goddess of love and the multiplication of the sacred prostitution temples devoted to her (**Martin 2012**). These ideologies have been transformed in the form of mother Goddess in ancient India. The term motherhood is also closely associated with the glorification, but the empowerment cannot be gained through it. Matriarchal domination can be found in the anthropological texts. The matriarchy was in dominance in the earlier times but gradually patriarchal domination had taken its place. After taking the words Bachofen, Krishnaraj has represented the universal significance of fertility and mother Goddess. In Indus Valley Civilization, the same mother-Goddess cult has been found in a symbolic manner. There are also some other imageries like Lajja- Gauri, dancer, Goddess with a bull, which show such associations of gender and sexuality. The concept of Aditi or Lajja-Gauri had been discussed in the *Rig-Veda*. She is known as the unbound Goddess and the mother of all living beings, including Gods. There are two types of Goddess: the autonomous (or un-husbandry) Goddess and consort Goddess. The virgin and unmarried Goddesses are represented more forcefully than the married Goddesses. This stereotype of both kinds of Goddesses has been echoed in various paintings. This particular aspect has been taken as a prototype for the adjustment of female sexuality in society. For instance, Lakshmi is related with the auspiciousness or benevolent and Kali is considered as the sinister Goddess of anger (**Krishnaraj, 2012**).

It has been observed that in South Asia gendered representations are common, particularly in the depictions of paintings and sculptures, which is often concentrated as an issue of gender politics but not these are not entirely explored. The gendered issues have been focused by many art historians through the analysis of sculpture and images of women in art from ancient to the Colonial period. The question of sexuality has been raised after including the elements of paintings. It has been further

added by Nelson that the full breasted, nearly nude Goddesses (*Yakshis*) and the erotic display of couples on the temple were prevalent. They have been called ‘Sublime and Sensual’ and as a component of arousing visual pleasure. He focused his narrations on two categories of evidence, which have been considered by the Indus specialists: first is gender representations in figurines, sculptures, and seals, and the second is mortuary data (**Nelson 2007**).

After that, in the Vedic period, art was a medium for worship and spirituality, in which the holy scriptures of the Aryans have been initialized. The very first linguistic record has been found in the Rig-Veda (**Khanna 2007**), the holy writing of the Vedic period (C.1500-900 BCE), and its hymns were used for the guidance of human beings. In this age, the artistic productions were very limited as per the account of evidence. The tradition of classical paintings of India, which was a prototype for the Buddhist mural tradition in Asia. The classical tradition started during the Gupta Empire (4th to 6th century AD) which is considered as a golden age of Indian art, culture, and literature too, like the Renaissance in European countries (**Wimalagnana 2011**). The murals of Ajanta and Ellora were also beautified with the sensuous and sublime figures of women, but the core theme was only related to the promotion of religious ideologies. The painting tradition in India was started from the mural paintings of Ajanta, where Buddhist legacy was depicted with other related concepts. Afterward, this influence spread in too many regions like Ellora, Bagh (Malwa), Badami (Deccan) and at the nearest places. The miniatures have been illustrated from the eleventh century at Bihar and Bengal, and then it flourished in the numerous places of India with various singular styles (**Deneck 1967**). The artists of Ajanta portrayed feminine forms beautifully. The gestures and grace of women are quite fascinating with their charming physical appearances. The women in full ornamented form with transparent clothes and attractive postures have been depicted in Ajanta. In other Indian mural traditions, this sensuousness of the feminine has also been portrayed (**Chaitanya 1976**).

In Gupta age, the significance of Goddess has also been found in many depictions. The essence of Goddess imagery and the reflection of it on art can be seen in various artworks. Coburn has found relevant finding of some old small texts regarding the personification of Goddess. He argued about the *Devi Mahatmya* of the 5th century, which includes Sri Sukta, in an appendix to the *Rig Veda*, or the Durga Stotra that Krishna teaches Arjuna in some versions of the *Mahabharata* just prior to the *Bhagavad Gita*; or the hymn to the Goddess of Sleep in the *Harivamsa* and other early accounts of the infant Krishna’s birth. But the *Devi Mahatmya* is the first comprehensive advancement of *Devi* (Goddess) related accounts. According to the hymns, the Goddess has the same overwhelming

masculine grace as the image of Michelangelo of the Sistine Chapel. The Goddess is also associated with Tantric cult and related as a counterpart of some major Gods too in the form of their *Shaktis* or inner power. He also argued about the instances of the documentation of this ritualistic text, that written by man only and universally adopted by all (**Coburn 1994**). Pal also explained the role of Goddess in Indian culture describing her different forms in Hindu religion. According to him, *Devi* is also known as Nanibibi to Muslims and being worshipped in other religions too. He stated that prehistoric archaeology yielded plenty of material evidence to conclude that among the inhabitants of the subcontinent popular piety was directed to Goddesses rather than Gods. The very concept of *Devi* broadly explored with its proper rituals and application in paintings. The role of *Devi Mahatmya* cannot be avoided for gaining the knowledge of Goddess cult in art and architecture. Moreover, in Bengal, the Goddess has been aroused as the greatest deity during the colonial period but her form of Bharat Mata was popular in the cult of patriotism in India (**Pal 2009**).

The Indian sub-continent has also seen the flourishing of the marvelous miniature paintings, which originated during the Pal dynasty in India. Although its versatile enhancement has reached its highest peak during the Mughal period, other dynasties also gave their significant contribution to the production of miniatures. The earliest illustrated manuscript's evidence of India has been found during the 11th and 12th century. The Eastern Indian manuscripts were originated in Assam, Koch Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, and Nepal, belonging to the Buddhist tradition. The major schools were Bihar and Bengal. In Bengal, the manuscript tradition has been divided into two phases i.e. earlier and later. In the earlier phase, the Jain manuscripts like *Astahasrika Prajnaparamita*, has been illustrated during the 11th century. These illustrations belonged to the Jain deities. The later school of this style was developed in Murshidabad in the early 18th century, which gave birth to the provincial Mughal School. The later style is containing the folk Bengali characteristics with the primitive approach. In the later style, many subjects, including the portraits of noble persons and Viceroys of Bengal, have been depicted. In Bihar, the *Prajnaparamita* has been illustrated again at many places and other illustrations were also depicted with many Hindu subjects (**Gupta 1972**).

The existing evidence of the paintings of the Pala period are very few but the palm leaf paintings have been illustrated to promote Buddhism. The theme of the paintings was Buddhism and its narratives. In one painting titled, 'The Birth of Buddha', a semi-naked figure of a woman has been portrayed in a joyful mood (**Huntington et. al. 2016**). The manuscripts tradition is associated with Western India and found in the illustrations of Jain style. This style was continued with the religious-

secular poetry of Jainism. It came into the influence of Rajput and Mughal style after some time, in which Krishna and other deities have been represented. In the reign of the Muslim ruler, Husain Shah of 16th century, the passionate love poetry was portrayed in paintings. The feminine forms have been depicted with full charm and sensuality with the domination of romance (**Bhattacharya 1966**). Khandalavala and Chandra discussed the *Kalpasutra*, painted in Jaunpur and also gave the interpretation about the various versions of this manuscript of Jain and later Jain style with *Kalakacharya Katha*. The illustrated Jain manuscripts tradition has been originated in Western India (Gujarat) in an earlier phase and after that flourished in Rajasthan and Malwa. The major illustrated and ornamented manuscripts were *Chaurapanchasika* and *Laur-Chanda* in later phases of the Jain period (**Khandalavala & Chandra 1962**).

The miniature painting has originated in the Pala dynasty on the palm leaf for the depiction of stories related with Jain religion. Moreover, Randhawa also described the themes of various Indian School of miniature paintings including Rajput and Pahari style. He argued that the heroism of Krishna has been dominating throughout the themes and Krishna has been used as a medium to depict the courtly life and love stories of kings. The kings can be seen as surrounded with by various women or making love to them. In the Mughal tradition, the amalgamation of courtly depiction and kingship with war and hunting scenes has been preferred rather than women-centered themes (**Randhawa 1959**). In miniatures, women have been mostly depicted in an objective manner, either in the form of male consort/lover or as the representative of patriarchal hierarchies, particularly in Rajput paintings. The Rajput paintings of the major kingdoms can be divided into two sections geographically; the first one is called Jaipur School, and the second one belonged to the Himalayan Valleys of Punjab (or Hindu portion of Punjab). The Rajput style has flourished with the amalgamation of naturalistic ambiance and the depiction of love scenes of Lord Krishna. The paintings have also been decorated with the deities and epical tales as well, but the main concentration was on the heroic depiction of Lord Krishna either in the form of a lover or in the form of almighty God. In this period, despite the hegemonies of Krishna, the powerful imagery of *Devi* has still triumphed as the fighting Goddess or as the savior of the world (**Coomaraswamy 1912**).

The paintings of Basholi School (of Rajput style) have some elements of folk art with the fusion of passionate color scheme. The paintings have focused on the heroic cult of Lord Krishna and the cult of Vaishnavism. The story of *Ramayana* or *Rasamanjari* had also been depicted through the miniatures. This regional style originated in Basholi and then reached the other nearest regions of

Himalaya. The paintings of Basholi are highly charged with boldness and vitality of romance with the portraiture of sensuality. The symbolic adjustment of love-erotica is everywhere, like the application of particular colors, natural elements, and surroundings of all the elements. The Vine-vessels, flowers, and fruits have been equipped to display lovemaking scenes of princesses with their attendants. The outfits and body structures have been constructed for creating a sensuous approach for the viewers. Krishna is the main concern and his utmost intimacy with women has been depicted in numerous paintings (**Randhawa 1959**).

Reiff (1959) states (original statement) that the Indian miniature can be divided into two groups: Rajput and Mughal style. The Rajput style is belonging to Western India and the regions of Punjab and Himalayas (mainly Jammu and Kangra). The theme is based on native aspects and the musical modes (*Raga* and *Ragini*), religious antiquity, romance and the epical fables. In the depiction of Ragamala, 36 modes have been depicted, in which the man refers to raga and woman refers to *ragini* in the harmonious love of music. Krishna was portrayed as a hero and the icon of love and passion among women in these paintings. The central theme, which occupied his daily-life, encountered with the cowherd girls. He is represented as making love with the married women and stealing the clothes of women at their bath. He was mostly associated with his main beloved Radha. The other deities, like Shiva, Kama, Vishnu, Durga, and Kali, have also been represented in the paintings, but the chief attraction of depiction is based on Krishna. The manuscripts traditions have been still continued in most of the places which have been particularly influenced by other contemporary styles of miniatures.

WG Archer discussed the miniature style and fifteen color plates of ancient Indian paintings through appreciation. He also defined them as influenced by foreign cultures. He suggested the two forms of expression in Indian paintings; the first one is linked with the Western norms from the Renaissance to the mid-nineteenth century. In which, the art of sensual encounters has been depicted. Another was inspired by Irish and Northumbrian miniatures of the 7th and 8th centuries and the Romanesque influence (12th and in the 20th century), particularly the painting of Picasso. The women have been illustrated in seductive form like the love-poetry of Kalidasa, a Sanskrit poet flourished around 5th century C.E. in India. After the decline of Buddhism in other parts of India, the religious sentiments had changed their form in manuscript traditions. Then, in 1347, the Muslim kingdoms were established in Deccan and during the 16th century, the Indian art got divided into three major styles. The Jain tradition was in the Western, middle and Eastern India and the Krishna love-poetry was the

major concern for the Hindu majority. In the second style, the wall painting style of the South, influenced by Ellora, was initiated. Third one belonged to Orissa, where the Kama-sutra and *Gita Govinda* texts had been illustrated (**WG Archer 1956, 2012**). The Krishna and Radha related theme of was popular in Indian paintings. As per Levine, the social restriction, i.e. the sexual love and physical attachment, was like a threat to an ordinary man. The ordinary people were not allowed to display these feelings in society, but it was not forbidden for Lord Krishna. The Lord was frequently depicted and narrated as surrounded by the group of cowgirls in all manuscripts (**Levine 1971**). However, the love depiction themes, are not so forbidden in the ancient Indian art and architecture as Nath added that the artist of Mithuna couples of Khajuraho was not involved in the depiction of divinity. He was eager to capture the realistic work of art with its actual uniqueness. In this course of realistic depiction, he depicted the nude and erotic posture of women for the production of aesthetic appeal. Nath further stated that the Mithuna couples of Hindu temple cannot be considered as a shameless exhibition of sexual union, because they are the representatives of aesthetic pleasure. The temples have been depicted throughout India from the 2nd century BC to at least 17th century AD at the religious shrines of all sects of India (**Nath 1986**). According to him, all these depictions were not meant to be done to evoke sensual ecstasy but it has been opined by Nath too that they have been made for an aesthetic appeal. The Rajput paintings have further been divided into two categories by Coomaraswamy viz. Pahari paintings of Punjab hill state and Rajasthani paintings of Rajasthan. In Rajput paintings, the heroic form of Krishna has been painted with the erotic display. In Kishangarh paintings, the magical love of Radha and Krishna has been exhibited with romanticism. In Indian poetry, women have always been appreciated as the most enchanted entity on earth and in heaven too. The influence of Mughal courtly scenes can also be observed on these paintings. The mistress of King Sawant Singh, *Bani-Thani* or Indian Mona Lisa, was the major theme of Kishangarh style. The eroticism has been portrayed in the under the garb of the religious shrine (**Randhawa 1981**). The depiction of love poetry was the most enchanting expression of Indian paintings from the very ancient times. The beauty of women has been described by the poets and even by the sages too and further, it was celebrated as the most depicted thing. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the female depiction was particularly followed by the projection of beauty and sensuousness. In Rajasthan, a place named Kishangarh has the same depiction of beauty in the manuscripts of that time. Krishna-lila was the favorite subject of this place and Radha was depicted with graceful charm. The king Sawant Singh has been depicted in the form of Lord Krishna and his mistress, the so-called *Bani-Thani*, has been depicted in the form of Radha.

This woman has become the ideal for the artists and an icon of beauty and charm for centuries **(Randhawa M & Randhawa D 1982)**.

The romanticism was on its zenith in the court style paintings of Rajasthan and Punjab regions during the twentieth century. The women have been depicted to set the erotic quest on the artistic space with their enchanted desire and seductive postures. The lord Krishna was more focused and defined as an absolute God. He represented as engaged in sensual scenes with many women. Most of his beloved, Radha and the other cowgirls have been exhibited as performing intimate display at many sites. In numerous paintings, Krishna has been shown as carrying extra-ordinary power in the form of warrior, divine God, lover of all women, and the killer of demons from his childhood itself. Although he had other major qualities too, i.e. a good director of war, the preacher of the *Bhagavad Gita*, and a good politician as well, his sensuality has been more highlighted in the Rajput style of paintings **(WG Archer 1956)**.

After that, the Mughal miniature or Islamic miniature have been flourished under various patrons. The Islamic dynasty can be classified into three parts; the Ottomans in Anatolia and the Middle East, the Safavids in Iran, and the Mughals in India. After giving a brief about the Ottomans, Hogarth stated about the Harem, which refers to a forbidden place. The place was particularly made for the king and forbidden to female household and the family of the king. In the harem more than thousands of women used to live as a slave of the king. Space was also occupied for the unrestrained pleasure and entertainment for the physical intimacy of king with his queens and concubines. In this category, most of the women were non-Muslims, who were offered to the king after winning the war in the form of a gift to the victor **(Hogarth 2014)**. Thus, the situation of women in that society can be judged through such documentation and the painting was the reflection of the very same status of women. The Mughal emperors were particularly interested in the narration of manuscripts. The manuscripts were illustrated to express their legendary life and the paintings have been painted for the narration of their stories under their patronage. The subjects of these stories have been located to define their courtly life, heroic deeds, and self-portraits. The fusion of Persian and Indian influence was carried out by the group of Indigenous painters. In the time of Akbar, the illustrations of Indian mythological manuscripts, like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, have also been depicted **(Lewis 1976)**.

Apart from the major dynasties, there were other provincial styles too, in which miniatures have been made. During the period of Akbar, there were three major provinces in Deccan, in which

paintings of women have been depicted. In these provinces, the three main Schools of Deccan painting were Bijapur, Golkonda, and Ahmadnagar during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. In Golkonda School there is a manuscript named *Diwan-of-Hafiz*, which contained many paintings of women. In one painting, a prince has been depicted as carousing and watching a dance performance. In other painting, there is another dancing scene with some differences. We can see a plenty of women, who has been portrayed as performing a dance or pressing leg of the men. Such themes were very popular in the Deccan style of paintings (**Barrett 1960**). In later Deccan paintings, women have been treated both as a stately creature and an ordinary person and men have mostly been shown like a prince (**Goswami 2004-05**). In the Imperial Mughal style, a woman has been again depicted frequently as a thing of decoration.

The famously illustrated manuscripts of these schools were *Tarif-i-Husayn Shahi* and *Najum-ul-ulum* of Ahmadnagar, *Niamat-nama* of Mandu (Malwa). The *Ragini* paintings were also made at Bijapur. In the reign of Jahangir, the paintings of courtly scenes and natural beauty have been portrayed with some European subjects. Portraits of many beautiful women have also been depicted for amusement because Jahangir was fond of beautiful women. Govardhan was an eminent artist of Jahangir period around the 1620s. He was particularly known for his proficiency in the portraiture of women. The beauty and graceful gesture were the remarkable features in his portrayal of women. He painted a series of seductive females on various aspects of the courtly and social life of princes and their beloveds. He was more skillful in such productions than the previous artist of Mughal court, named Bishan Das. Bishan Das was an artist, who was considered a genius in depicting feminine charm and delicacy at that time when women were usually avoided for the depiction. The brilliant examples of Govardhan's feminine icons were the paintings named 'Jahangir playing Holi', and 'Jahangir embracing Nur-Jahan'. At this time, some European figures of semi-naked women have also been portrayed. The Mughal paintings of the time of Akbar were related to many narrative themes like *Razmnama* and influenced by Persian style. The portrait of Akbar and other royal persons were also painted by the artists. In Rajput style, the Ragamala series, *Nayikas* and other love poetry have been captured in the paintings. Radha and Krishna have been portrayed with a full erotic passion (**Okada 1992**).

During the time of Muhammad Shah too (1719-48), the emperor and nobles were often portrayed as surrounded with many graceful women, drinking and making love, enjoying music. The women have been depicted as feeding pigeons or flying kites, dancing and involved in other activities. The

much-depicted theme was based on a heroine surrounded by many female-servants and preparing for the bed-chamber of man. The passionate love depiction was the favorite theme of this time. In provincial Mughal style, women were portrayed as engaged in romantic scenes, smoking Hookah and so on. In Rajput style at Mewar, Kotah, and Bundi the love poetry was on its full form during the sixteenth century. The heroic amalgamation of Lord Krishna and the natural elements were unified with many subjects. The women were also depicted as associated with animals. They were also painted as playing the role of famous characters of the historical tales of lovers, Ragamala forms, Nayika Bheda and various scenes of the daily routine. At other places like Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Kishangarh, women were depicted with the fusion of Mughal and Rajasthani styles. At these places, the facial beauty and gestures of women have been developed in more delicate and graceful manner than those in the other Indian styles. The paintings of emperors in the form of Krishna and their concubines and queens as *Gopis* have been depicted in various romantic postures. In Basholi, Kulu, and Chamba, the paintings were again based on Krishna legends. The Rasmanjari has been illustrated as showing the erotic desires. The *Gita-Govinda* and other Sanskrit love poetry were also illustrated with full sensuousness. In Pahari paintings, this erotic feminine lure was still continuing in nude and semi-nude conditions.

The spectatorship and the projection of women in the miniatures of Kangra style painting can be taken into consideration. The *Nayika* or heroine has been portrayed with the group of women, which constructed to represent the heroine or main female figure as an object of male-gaze. The *Sakhi* or female friend of the heroine has always remained a medium of communication between the heroine and her lover. The female friend used to express the feeling and affection of heroine's lover to the heroine. In some paintings, the heroine has been constructed as an object of attention through the background settlements and the placement of figures. In this context, the heroine's beauty has been portrayed as a part of her lover, friends, viewers and her own gaze too. The toilet scenes have been exhibited mostly with detailed ornamentation. The heroine has been represented as surrounded by attendants in naked and semi-naked condition, which again indicates settlements of women as an object of spectatorship (Aitken 2002). The status of a woman which used to be celebrated in the form of Goddess imagery has been moved into other sensual display of beauty and projection. The Shakti which was prominent in earlier times has been replaced with Radha or mistress of King. In modern Indian art, the depiction of Goddess is still continued by some of the artists but if we look through a comparative analysis we can see a different picture in the works of male and female artists. Term *Shakti* (a synonym of Goddess Durga), who is the most powerful deity among all. The

paintings as containing the features and virtues of *Shakti* are also found in Contemporary Indian art. These Goddesses are referred to invoke the religious and spiritual cults from the Vedic time to present day. Mother Goddess is known for the fertility aspect and to protect the children and mothers from evils. The Goddess of sexuality was worshipped for the bliss of love-making and childbearing. The seven Mother Goddesses are also considered as the protector of a child from all evils. They have supernatural powers as per the mythological narrations. Earth Mother is considered as the mother of nature, through which all human-beings get food and water and other things for their survival (**Nagar 1998**). All the earlier forms of womanhood are somehow responsible and inspire the works of almost all modern artists of India. In the artworks, the irony of subject and object has emerged as a strong component in the depiction of womanhood in the works of both the artists.

2.3 STUDIES RELATED TO MODERN PAINTINGS

The Indian modern period can be seen from the time of 1920 when some Bauhaus artists had exhibited their work in India at Calcutta but Gaganendranath Tagore was the first Indian artist, who exhibited his cubicle paintings alongside them. Cubism was just a wind, which passed through the Indian art; but the primitive art was the major medium for changing the artistic endeavor of Indian modern art in the 1920s and 30s. In term of the development of modern art, Das critically examined the statements of various critics regarding the paintings of Jamini Roy in the context of art and modernity. The basic significance of Roy's paintings and style has been provided by the author that how Indian art got rid of colonial and other alienated consequences of bizarre in artistic experimentations. Roy was strongly inspired by the folk primitive art of Sunayani Devi and the Kalighat paintings of Calcutta. He contributed a new kind of Indigenous aura, which was a combination of ancient Indian subjectivity with modern techniques (**Das 2011**). Ukil discussed the first solo exhibition of Jamini Roy, initiated by Mukul Dey (the first Principal of art school in India) along with the reasons of its avoidance by other scholars. Their exhibition was a great success and appreciated by the foremost admirers and art critics in India and abroad too. There are also some arguments, which Ukil made through examining the statements of some published work regarding Jamini Roy and his unique par-excellence. The artistic resemblance of his style was much related to the folk traditional style, but the concept of representation was undoubted novel and impressionistic (**Ukil 2012**). The term modern has various significances in the context of Indian paintings. It also has some contradictory approaches, but some precursors helped to shape its authenticity and liability in a precise manner. The modern art in India fostered in the hands of Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore, Jamini Roy and Amrita Sher-Gil. Among these precursors, Amrita Sher-Gil was the one

who gave a unique contribution to inspire women artists for taking art as a serious profession. Before Sher-Gil, we can see a clear gap of generations where we find no professional female artists of Indian background. Although in term of art, the woman is everywhere from the earlier times when we talk about the artists we hardly find out one before Sher-Gil. It is mentioned by Uberoi that women have been and still is excluded from the production and representation in many social and cultural activities, but even when they are included they do not receive their due recognition. In many genres of representation, however, women are not only visible: they are prominent 'objects of attention'. "The issue is then transformed into one of the correctness or incorrectness of the representation, or of the socially constraining nature of the stereotypical imagery, or of the relationship between women's subjectivity and objectivity. Commercial advertising uses essentially the same language and also exploits images of women and displays of women's bodies, whether or not the product concerned is gender-type" (Uberoi 1990). This very commercial advertising came into existence with the effort of Varma, whose approach was modern but subject's representation was entirely taken from Indian mythology.

During the initial time, when East India Company has established its roots in India, the Company style paintings have been patronized in the reign of British people, in which the Indian genre scenes have been implicated by local artists for the European clientele (Branfoot 2007). Jamini Roy rejecting the Western prospectus of paintings and developing an initial style after getting inspired by the folk paintings of Kalighat. His paintings were mostly bought by foreigners rather than the Indians for the remarkable aesthetical approach (Banergie 1987). Kalighat paintings have emerged as a great resource of non-religious and Islamic themes, along with the mythological subjects of the rituals of Hindu deities. The Cosmopolitan Group, English rulers and the elite group of Bengal were the topic of concentration for the productions of paintings. The mythical characters of *Patuas* (painters) had often been intermingled with the western terminology and style; for instance, Goddesses have been depicted with the Victorian crown, playing Western musical instruments instead of *Veena*. These paintings have been collected through various people of different countries including Britain, Russia, Czechoslovakia, France, and the United States and preserved in the Bodleian Library and Victoria and Albert Museum (Ghosh 1926). Furthermore, the paintings have various scenes from the life of local women. In many paintings, women have been depicted with all sentiments of sensuous desires, somewhere waiting for their lover with a peacock in their arms or sometimes have shown killed or beaten by a man. Contrary to it, their heroic nature has also been exhibited, in which they have been shown as dominating over men. The list goes on in which depict a man, directed by a woman and

treated like a slave of her, i.e., engaged in massaging her legs, sitting at her feet, being beaten with a groom by her, etc. Women are also associated with domestic tasks, playing with musical instruments, engaged in dancing, in the semi-nude and bare breast state with full ornaments in their heavy curly locks of hair and typical hairstyles. All these images were influenced by the European fashion as the people of Calcutta were more involved in adapting the British culture. So, the artists have drawn such images to represent the social stereotype of that time **(Nandi & et al. 2005)**.

The Kalighat paintings have been remarkably able to represent the rising culture of Bangali *Babu*, the elite class of Calcutta, who were exposed to the state of full leisure through chewing betel and smoking *hukkah* or engaged in love-making with women. The Tarakeshwar affair has frequently been portrayed in the paintings; this incident was based on a true story of a woman named *Elokeshi*, who was killed by her husband due to the extramarital affair with a priest. The *babu* culture was also drawn in the paintings, in which the elite class is shown as engaged in their own pleasure in the form of caricatures. The fashionable style of their dressing and appearance can also be caught, which defines their high-class society. The paintings are also based on mythological theme basically because they were sold near the Kalighat temple of Goddess Kali to the pilgrims visiting that temple **(Sanyal 2013)**. Kalighat paintings also have British influence and these paintings have indigenous roots and origins. The artists of Kalighat paintings lived in slums and practiced Hindu culture and traditions, and so they did not belong to any elite or British class of that time. The subject of Kalighat paintings was based on Hindu mythology and contemporary social life of the people of that time. They often painted their dissatisfaction regarding the British rule and the elite group, who adopted the modern culture of European traditions. The *Elokeshi* scandal, which was portrayed frequently in the paintings as subject matter, was also a way of removing their frustration regarding the British rule and its impact on society. They wanted to sketch the drawbacks of Westernized society, in which such incidents happened in India. This was entirely an ironical settlement to make a mockery of that kind of upper-class people and also a way to alert the generation about the degradation of the social and moral values. The Kalighat painters had shifted towards modern premises from the mythical world of images to secure themselves in the market but sarcasm was still prevalent in their depiction **(Slaughter 2012)**.

During the Colonial period, the mark of Westernization in paintings has been initiated through the paintings of Ravi Varma, who equipped his theme with Indian mythological and classical advancement in oil technique. Aftermath, the so-called Bengal School triumphed over the

nationalistic semeiotics with the reconfiguration of the indigenous theme under the patronage of Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951). The Renaissance artists of India (of Bengal School) have also generated their nationalist vision through art. The basics of inspiration of Bengal School are taken from the Indian miniature style because the miniature has always remained a huge resource to create something novel for Indian modern artists. The postmodern artists are also somehow inspired by the indigenous style of miniature because the impact of miniatures is very mesmerizing that neither fully prevailed nor entirely excluded till the contemporary times. The image of women in Indian miniature paintings has mostly been portrayed with the fusion of societal aspects and sensuous appeal, and this stereotype of portrayal has prevailed till pre-colonial period.

But, the real modern genres in Indian paintings can be identified with the mark of Gaganendranath Tagore (1867-1938) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Jamini Roy (1887-1974), including Amrita Sher-Gil. Amrita Sher-Gil was the first and foremost artist, who led the ancient Indian miniature milieu after constructing it in Indigenous style. She was, indeed a great female artist who carried the fellowship of feminine encounters for the establishment of women-oriented art or feministic roots. Jamini Roy had explored the figures of women in the form of Radhas, *Gopis*, *Pujarins*, and mother and child figures (**Thakurta 2005**).

The art of Abanindranath Tagore is similar to the characteristics of Ajanta murals, in which women have been portrayed with astonishing gestures and grace. In Nandalal Bose's paintings, the Natir Puja is considered the best example of his art, in which beautiful women have been depicted. The paintings of Sunayani Devi have been introduced by Stella Kramrisch. Devi originated her own style taking inspiration from primitive elements of folk and rural culture. She was the first female artist who adopted such themes in paintings but her artistic journey was very short (**Venkatachalam 1927**). Women always being depicted as a popular motif in the artistic representations in both the Buddhism and Brahmanical paintings. The images of women in the paintings of Tagore certainly belonged to Indian miniature elements, in which the poetic relevance has been materialized in the display of mythical beings. The characters have been occupied with the expertise of pointed fingers, relaxed eyes and buoyant drapes, which can be easily differentiated from the Mughal miniatures. On the other hand, Jamini Roy's feminine icons exclusively belonged to the rural stereotype of Bengal and can be easily identified by their facial details and appearance (**Chatterjee 1987**). Jamini Roy has been called the father of folk renaissance in modern Indian paintings and had the artistic ability like Picasso, Van Gogh etc. (**Mitter 2007**).

When the male artists were engaged in executing woman as a thing to be projected or celebrating the manhood over womanhood, the female artists like Sher-Gil and many of her followers chose to subvert that politicized imagery. The feminist art or art of female artists has been taken into consideration in the Western art world. In this way, it can be observed that the politics of gender has been questioned in the West and then the same has been followed in the East by a group of art critics and art historians. According to **Griselda Pollock**, the history of modern art has been basically seen through the exhibition of cubism and abstract art at the Museum of Modern Art. The work of female artists had merely been considered for display. The contribution of female artists had been entirely ignored and forbidden due to patriarchal hegemonies in the history of the art world. The world of Western modern history was particularly shaped by the hands of men because women had no right to do so. She also raised many issues for approaching the contradictions behind such political conflicts of modernity. The premise of modernity has been fixed in the semiotics of major myths of a new Paris for recreation, leisure, pleasure, and the spectacle and money. Furthermore, the paintings like ‘Olympia’ and ‘A Bar at the Folies-Bergère’ have been compared with the paintings of Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt to define the space of feminine exposure between the paintings of both the artists (**Pollock 2003**). Thomson discussed the role of women in early American Graphic Design. He added the first critical approach of Nochlin’s article ‘*why have there been no Great women artists*’ and then narrated the avoidance of women in all the creative sectors including paintings too. Afterward, the other scenarios of artistic reproductions have been explored to frame out the barriers to their success and fame. The social conflicts regarding gender and educational disparities have played a major role in the configuration of such kind of avoidance of women artists (**Thomson 1994**).

In term of modern Indian art, the same hierarchies of gender politics have been observed by numerous art historians. **Garimella** concludes that the historical representation of Indian art is full of gendered metaphors, which was politically manipulated to decrease its originality. The institutional practices cannot be ignored for reckoning the reduction of historical creations. The colonial perception was imposed by the British people for gaining supremacy over Indian culture. This political prototype, thereafter, was adopted after some modifications by some nationalist scholars in order to establish an authentic Hinduism. Such political prototypes were the reasons for the degradation of Indian art and it framed Indian artistic creations as an offensive art. Art did not only became offensive but it was also considered as ‘immoral; gendered at that time’, through the efforts of both colonial and nationalist scholars. The cultural and social binaries are also responsible

for setting the roots of gender in the historical representation of Indian art during the time of Colonial India (**Garimella 1998**). In the feministic approach, there are two female artists, who invented their own style after being influenced by the folk primitive themes. The first woman is known as Sunayani Devi, a relative of Tagore family who took the initiative to promote the primitive culture. Another is Amrita Sher-Gil, a professional with the strong feminine appeal. Sunayani Devi was a housewife and managed her artistic procedure with her personal life and faced many barriers, but she had the striking talent for the revival of female artists in the field of modernization (**Mitter 2007**).

On the other hand, to conclude the works of major studies, it can be assumed that Ravi Varma is known as the father of modern paintings; but his work is quite opposite to that of Sher-Gil. He represented a sensuous imagery of women and put their beauty and erotic forms on his painted surface. These two opposite representations have been further taken by various emerging artists and extended as per their understanding and interest. This very approach became strong and sophisticated in the painting of Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal; so, their work has been evaluated through deep observations.

As per the critical observations it has been found that the objectification or sensual depiction of women has been found in the paintings of some of the Indian male artists (**Thakurata 1991, Kapur 1978, Chawla 2010, Mago 2001, Illath 2010, Chandra 2012, Tagore 1982, Uberoi 1990, Kumar 2003, Parimoo 1998, Saffron Art 2012**). In objectification, the woman is often depicted as an object without any important significance. It is also found through some scholarly writings that some significant or subject narrative paintings have been made by feminist artists against the male gaze, in which most of the female artists have celebrated their freedom through ironical arrangements and celebration of their sexuality (**Ananth 2007, Bawa 2011, Geeta 2002, Pande 2009, Kapur 2000, Sen 2002, Kumar 2008, Wojtilla 1981, Farooqi 1986, Tagore 1982, Gupta 2011, Lutzker and Ann 2002**).

The role of Sher-Gil is very much important because she changed the overall significance of women portrayal into strong feministic approach (**Kapur 2000**). Ravi Varma, modern Indian artists of the pre-colonial era, was a perfectionist in creating female beauty and charm on the surface. These two artists have major significance in the construction of two female identities on the painted surface. One belongs to beauty and sensuality and another is related to strength and complexity. A famous art critic, Geeti Sen, compared Ravi Varma's famous painting 'Reclining woman' with Sher-Gil's

similar painting 'Woman Resting on Charpoy. She found a powerful attire of women in the painting of Sher-Gil as compare to Varma's (Sen 2002).

After these two major artists i.e. Varma and Sher-Gil, the modern artists of India have given this particular subject, female to their uttermost priority. Husain, one of the prominent modern artists, is also known for the frequent depiction of the feminine in his works. M. F. Husain is also known for the love and fascination for the female beauty and his various love affairs (Kapur 1978, Nadkarni 1996). In Husain's painting, there is a strong representation of geometry in the depiction of the female body. This representation is strongly connected with symbolism. The art of geometry particularly belongs to signs and symbols where we can see a connectivity of a symbolic language (Dua 2006, 2010). The language somehow shows the longevity and lyrical continuity towards the very subject and this very geometry also has been used to create a strong composition of the women imagery in the work of Husain. Although, M.F. Husain was a lover of beauty that was manipulated in his painted world with nudity of female figures. Most of the paintings of Husain dealt with women-related issues as like, Bharatmata, Draupadi, kali, Madhuri etc (Tagore 1982). M. F. Husain went to Khajuraho in 1954 and made a series of drawings "which are a landmark in terms of Husain's stylistic development, probably made his hand hesitate while depicting stark nudity but he did so" (Kapur 1978). Nadkarni showed his worry over the declaration of Husain of painting Madhuri Dixit for another five years. He further argued that "Won't it be a big bore! Husain must not only turn away from this alluring subject but also return to a non-posterity style, he should return to the classic greatness" (Nadkarni 1996). For Husain, a woman is an object of attraction because he is always attracted by the physical beauty of women. He is also inspired by Mother Teresa and Goddess Shakti too, but nudity played a major role in his extraordinary paintings. Chandra has written the essence of womanhood in Husain's paintings by discussing his muses and his love affairs. He also discussed the attraction of Husain towards Shakti and Mother Teresa and his love and affection for Marie (his beloved). Husain belonged to PAG and faced many controversies due to his nude paintings for which he had to leave India and settle abroad. He also contributed his art to some social themes like Mother Teresa series and the Mahabharata story-narratives. The enigma and attraction of Husain towards women can be seen in his own words where Husain added in his conversations, "I will sign off my search for Indian womanhood and Shakti with a painting... and I will call it *Yeh Kon Sa Moh Hai*" (what is this emotional attachment) (Chandra 2012).

In these artists, Ravi Varma was exploring European perceptions for his neo-classical concept of Indian myths and was conveying it to the elite group. Moreover, his paintings were also popular in all classes; but he remained in controversy due to the nude depiction of Hindu deities. He became an icon for the artistic inspiration. Abanindranath Tagore is known as a renowned artist of Colonial time. He was a true follower of nationalism and worked for the betterment of nationalistic spirit of Indian art and culture. His occidental approach played a major role in opposing the oriental approach of the Colonial period. Amrita Sher-Gil and Jamini Roy had emerged as true torchbearers for showing the path of modernistic intercession in the darkness of colonial hangover. There are several dominant groups, which are known for their contribution to the enhancement of a very modern culture of Indian art. Among those, Progressive Artistic Group (PAG) (established in 1948) played an essential role in the comprehensive progression of the modern Indian paintings. F.N. Souza and M.F. Husain were part of the PAG and they channelized Indian context of modernity with a powerful stance. Francis Newton Souza is one of the most influencing persons and, he is often being compared with Picasso for his bold images and progressive style. A. Ramachandran is an artist of great vision and narrative style; he mostly decorates his paintings to produce a sense of visual delight through the projection of women's bodies (**Kumar 2003**). If we see the paintings of all the prominent precursors of modern Indian art, in all of them, Abanindranath Tagore has always remained a major source to build the nation of modern art in Indian paintings through various approaches. Bengal School was the basic fundamental for the improvisation of Indian paintings. Amrita Sher-Gil was more focused on the Western academic impressions than Bengal School. PAG was also a unique experiment to bear the fellowship of the new artistic invention in paintings (**Reynolds 2006**). **Banerji** speaks of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's poem *Vande Matram* and the painting of Bharat Mata (Mother Goddess) by Abanindranath Tagore, inspiring a huge mass of the nation, including Muslims too. The Goddess icon has emerged as a great source of patriotism and sacrificing spirit for the nation. Tagore has been marked with an astonishing international recognition and tried to reestablish the native roots of the paintings. The paintings of Abanindranath Tagore were filled with the amalgamation of miniature paintings, in which he equipped the indigenous theme with his own sense of reinforcement. The miniatures were typically based on religious and courtly scenarios and often quite secular, particularly in the Mughal dimensions. The subjects of Tagore's paintings were also formed in the figures of an actress of Bengal, Folk ritualistic performance of women, and the series of Krishna with the women (**Banerji 2010**). Abanindranath led the Indian art into a metaphysical direction and freed it from the colonial channels. The subjects of his paintings are

related to some traditional and cultural stories like Bharat Mata, Passing of Shah-Jahan, and some series on Krishna Leela, Ummar Khayyam, Mughal stories etc. During the twentieth century, Abanindranath Tagore and his students were known for their participation in the Nationalist movement. According to many post-independent art critics and artists, the modernization has been initiated during the forties by the Progressive artists in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras through their practice of Western techniques (**Kumar 2013**).

In Modern Indian art, most of the contemporary male artists are executing the societal aspects or physical attributes in the depiction of the female body as Jatin Das, one of the contemporary male artists of India is executing a masculine nude prototype of the female body in his works. Jatin Das's paintings are filled with creative energies. The subjects of his paintings are totally involved in the expression of man-woman relationship, in which he creates sensational female nudes with masculine body type (**Mago 2001**). Another artist A. Ramachandran is known for his sensuous and erotic semi-naked images of a woman who is very similar to Indian miniature styles. The paintings of Ramachandran present the awesomeness of the female figure in sublimated eroticism. In them, the artist has tried to capture sensuousness by giving colors through the quality of textile sensation (**Kumar 2004**).

Contrary to it, one of the feminist artists, Rekha Rodwittiya is executing the domestic and playful imagery of woman after imbibing woman empowerment and freedom. Rekha Rodwittiya's paintings have a feministic approach with iconic standard female characters as having an oriental attitude. They are standing against the fundamental aspects and are bold to represent the nudity in art, which is frequently considered as immoral since ages. In this context, all kind of depictions containing nudity, eroticism, homosexual encounters is entirely taken as immoral. Rodwittiya stated that women have been used as an object of sexuality for the viewers in paintings and this objectification was needed to transform into feministic representation. She configured the female site with this potential of nudity. The direct frontal approach of her paintings is very rigid in itself, which binds the viewers for making appropriate distance rather than inviting them (**De 2004**). Rekha Rodwittiya is a feminist artist, whose female protagonists are displaying the sphere of women empowerment in various icons (**Art Trust, 2011**). Farooqi quotes Rekha Rodwittiya as stating that the root of all her motivation and strength has come from her feministic beliefs. Her attraction towards colors has been explained by her as it has always evoked and signified sacrifice, passion, desire, and protest for her (**Farooqi 1986**).

Seema Kohli (life), an Indian female artist is also giving the reflection of procreation and fertility through her female protagonists. Pande described the essence of Seema Kohli's paintings and creative work, defining the term of *Swayamsiddha* in which ferries, myth, mind, and movement of abstract forms fill her work. The work validates a woman's spirituality, emerging against the male dominating society (**Pande 2009**). Although the icons in the paintings are almost depicted in naked form, the nakedness of each image cannot be taken for granted, because the female figure is more occupied in her own dimensions of life rather than offering her body. Unlike the other naked images, they are unaware of any gaze and denote a relevant spirit of feministic sensation through the reverse encounter of their performance and gesture. Smith finds the paintings of Arpana Caur are much similar to the paintings of Amrita Sher-Gil, like the patterns of embroidery and earthly colors of miniature effects, are everywhere in most of her paintings (**Caur and Poovaya-Smith 2011**). In this way, it can clearly observe how the politics of gender is taking shape in the works of Indian modern artists.

2.4 MAJOR STUDIES ON AMRITA SHER-GIL AND RAVI VARMA

Amrita Sher-Gil was so much connected with the vulnerable state of an Indian woman and this particular connection has been observed through numerous art critics. She was very fond of writing and discussing her thoughts with her contemporary. She used to write almost all major incidents in her diary. There are numerous incidents which have been written in her diary, narrates her concern regarding the gender inequality in society and the art world. She described a child bride. She is going to be married at a very young age to an old man who is already married three times. The girl is entirely unaware about the bitter side of this marriage. Sher-Gil's sympathy towards such vulnerable women or girls can be seen through this mention in her diary (**Wojtilla 1981**). Besides of it, Sher-Gil was herself very observant for such kind of premises of the life of woman due to her own mysterious avenues and controversies related to it. The life and artistic journey of Amrita Sher-Gil were very controversial due to her self-portrayed nude paintings, which are against the social norms and regulations at that time (**Tagore1982**).

If we look for a closer connection in term of subjective and objective approach, Ravi Varma has also executed woman frequently as a subject but the very same subject turned towards a different kind of meaning. The approach became objective as the woman has been displayed to arouse sensual pleasure. Varma has not always been criticized for his paintings through his erotic art has been severely criticized form the initial days of his career. He was a great artist who learned oil technique

from Theodor Jenson (a Dutch painter of that time) and made his initial paintings in it. Ravi Varma's art was a fusion of western academic model and Indigenous characters and had the extraordinary attraction for the viewers of all classes. He was fully successful to set up his western academic realism and popular stereotype in his own terms. But his Indigenous characters were overburdened with the quest of European gestures and appearance rather than Indian influences (**Chawla 2010**). **Thakurta** added about Ravi Varma that the paintings of Ravi Varma are a combination of sensuality and middle-class pedigree, which came to characterize the large output of studies of pretty women that issued from the Ravi Varma press. They also became the source of seductiveness and romance in the field of advertisement and media. He is the founder of Calendar art in India and has been known as the father of modern Indian paintings. His numerous paintings have been filled with Indian religious theme but he also portrayed his paintings on other themes too. For instance, he rendered his paintings for elite and low caste people. In which, the elite group has mostly been portrayed as enjoying or in a resting mood but the low caste women have been portrayed in bathing position, selling fruits, going to temple in semi-nude condition and so on (**Thakurta 1991**). **Parimoo** finds, in the paintings of Ravi Varma, the seductive feminine structure represented to satisfy the male gaze. Ravi Varma succeeds in signifying the two meaning in allegorical relationship to each other, "namely spiritual feeling and emotional surrender" (**Parimoo 1998**). Ravi Varma created fashion in dress, ornament, and form, and his heroines become models, in the dress department to the young womanhood of modern India. These images are only a part of ornamentation for the viewers (**Illath 2010**).

It is mentioned too that the painting of Amrita Sher-Gil and the reality of her life behind the paintings are somehow correlated. Furthermore, it is added that her paintings bridge the distance between the standard masculine gaze and her own feminine view that seeks to be move compassionate equalizing one (**Geeta 2002**). **Ananth** focused on the life and family of Amrita Sher-Gil. According to him, the models of Amrita were not foolish virgins and neither was she when she painted them. The open statements of Amrita about sensuality and male-gaze were given by her (**Ananth 2007**). It has been frequently described that Amrita Sher-Gil was one of the modern precursors of Indian art and had a keen interest in the rural and traditional elements for paintings. Her paintings are a unique combination of Indo-Hungarian quest and also reflect her bisexual and bold character through her radical professionalism. She had criticized the Bengal school and its followers many times and to some extent, her paintings are similar with her contemporary Mexican artists Frida Kahlo. The two major features of her paintings were aesthetic emotions with the significant forms. She has painted

'Two Girls', in which, the objectivity has been represented through the medium of two identities of Sher-Gil like the painting of Kahlo untitled 'Two Fridas'. The two identities can be considered as her Indian and Hungarian personality. Another painting, 'Child Wife' is also a result of her accounts of a child bride in her diaries, whom she met during her journey. The painting, 'Professional Model' depicts the tension and stress of an old woman in the form of the model. She has found beauty and aesthetic in the ugly and real faces of the miserable women.

According to **Gupta**, Amrita Sher-Gil is known for her strong feministic icons of paintings in Indian sub-continent and also known as the most significant artists of the pre-independence time. She had a mixed parentage like her contemporary Frida Kahlo and was much influenced by the ancient and medieval art of India. She concluded after analyzing Two Girls, a famous painting of Amrita Sher Gil; in which Sher-Gil used the nude female body as a potent site for the representation of the self upon which she posed the complexities of selfhood. As per Gupta, the painting is a mirror of Sher-Gil's intense and frank attitude and a symbol of her two hunted identities of two worlds. She gave a tremendous attitude to these painted girls as they are staring into the eyes of their onlookers. She painted 'Two Girls' and created an Indian and European lineage of herself, in which, she also represented the bisexual phenomena and the couple-based theme of the figures. She painted many female nudes and subjected gender phenomena through the complexion of self-exploration, which is a radical presentation for that time (**Gupta 2011**). Kettenmann has given a lot of descriptions about the life of Frida Kahlo and her controversial married life with Diego Rivera. He also stated that after the accident, Kahlo neglected the study of medicine and started her painting career. She started painting to engage herself during her temporary immobilization. Her self-portraits were a dominant part of her life when she was immobile for three months after her accident (**Kettenmann 1999**). The self-exploration which has been shown in the paintings of Sher-Gil is very much similar to that of Kahlo. This self-centered and gendered depiction has been shown by many prominent artists who are working under the same umbrella of feminism. **Kapur** concluded that the eroticism in the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma and his attraction for the beautification and ornamentation of lady figure. The paintings have also been described by her through a feministic angle where she started his study from Amrita Sher-Gil and then followed various female artists till the end (**Kapur 2000**). Thus, both the artist has become a trendsetter in their depiction of a woman and their ideologies are still influencing the mind of the artist and onlookers.

2.5 MAJOR STUDIES ON GOGI SAROJ PAL AND FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA

The established feminist artist Gogi Saroj Pal invented various icons including Hat-yogini Shakti, Kamadhenu, Kinnari and many more to show the supremacy and potency of female power. Her female protagonist is opposing the male-centered society (**Sen 2002**). On the contrary, Francis Newton Souza has been known as an executioner of sensuous nudes full of the sexual display (**Tuli 1997, Kapur 1978, Mago 2001**). Souza typically chose to portray his women as full-figured nudes with vicious nature. It has also written about a painting of him that the nude of 'Souza seems almost restrained in comparison, appears to be a modern adaptation of a handsome female image (**Saffron Art 2013**). **Kapur** observed that the reason behind Francis Newton Souza's destructive figures is his mental dissatisfaction towards womanhood due to his tragic life. He suffered for his plain appearance and strange looks from his childhood. She also described the attraction of Souza towards the nude body of women in vamp form and his pornographic drawing on the walls of the school lavatories due to which he was expelled after two years. Souza joined the J.J. School of Art in 1940 but was expelled from there too, and later on, he had to leave India due to his political participation in anti-British movement (**Kapur 1978**). On the other hand, **Lutzker** observed the paintings of Gogi Saroj Pal, Rekha Rodwittiya, Navjot Altaf, Anupam Sud, and Rummana Hussain. These artists are using their art as a way to critique contemporary conflicts of female injustice. She argued that the artists are questioning the issues that are usually ignored, particularly related to the gender. She also states that Amrita Sher-Gil is the mother of all feministic interventions in Indian modern art. The feministic approach of Gogi Saroj Pal can be seen in her Nayika and Hat-Yogini series where the female protagonists are performing the way of their own freedom and self-satisfaction. All these artists have earned international acclaim in the art world (**Lutzker 2002**). Souza was also acknowledged on the international platform prior to Pal but it has been keenly observed that his work was highly influenced by the norms of man-woman physical union and his work reflects such hegemonies. **Aziz Kurtha**, a renowned critic, also contributed a book on Souza. He explored the Indo-Western approach of Souza's work and discussed the work of various Western artists and their impact on the work of Souza. He also described the meaning of the cross-hatching lines, which are everywhere in Souza's paintings. The pattern of these lines has been further connected by Kurtha as a symbol of male and female sexual organs after mentioning the words of Alkazi, a Delhi based curator (**Kurtha 2006**). This very male and female union has been observed by **Tuli** and, according to him, it was told by Souza during an interview that "the nature of sex itself, this piston activity, it is very vigorous, one might call it violent, and the very construction of the female, that is so tender

and delicate, and yet it can take such a lot of friction is one of the miracles of nature, unbelievable”. This very statement shows the interest of Souza towards female which can be seen in his numerous paintings (**Tuli 1997**). In the work of Pal, the hegemonies are juxtaposing the very idea and confronting the very roots of it through the projection of power, the power of feminine force. **Kumar** defined the work often creative female artists of contemporary Indian art. He acknowledged them as ten creative forces or *Das Mahavidhyas*. The contemporary female artists like Seema Kohli, Gogi Saroj Pal, Amrita Sher-Gil and many more have been focused on the book. He also discussed their inner conflict regarding womanhood and its relation to their painted themes. The work of these artists is somehow opposing the patriarchal construction through signs and symbols. Their work also has the metaphors of female force against gender politics (**Kumar 2008**). The very norms of existing imagery have been reconstituted by Pal like her contemporary female artists. **Sen** explored various forms of Indian womanhood like *Bharat Mata*, Goddess- Laxmi and Durga in her book ‘Feminine Fables’. She also observed the paintings of Gogi Saroj Pal and Amrita Sher-Gil on the bases of these icons (**Sen 2002**).

Vinod Bhardwaj and Brij Sharma, in the recently published book titled, *Trends and Traditions*, stated that the depreciation of religion and celebration of sexuality in the paintings of Souza gave a shock to the onlookers and buyers. His chemical paintings were very innovative and coincidentally all were sourced from pornographic magazines. Jag Mohan also accounted some of the highlights of the career of Souza during the time of the forties. This book also contains the essay of **Yashodhara Dalmia** titled, “Volte-Face: Souza’s Iconoclastic Vision,” and the lines of interview of Souza, taken by Dalmia. In this essay, Dalmia argued that the women of Souza were “frankly sexual” and “bared themselves in a shocking manner”. They were gradually becoming more voluptuous in the unreal frames. They are representing his belief in women “as objects of sexual gratification”. During the interview when Dalmia asked about women, he replied that his paintings are products of his libido, but when he paints women he does not exhibit his sexual desires. He opines that the sexual encounters are real, and he considered that if he is having any sexual encounter with a woman, he respects her because she is not a painting, she is really like him (**Bhardwaj and Sharma 2015**)

The collection of Words and Lines of Souza (1959) was published as a second edition, in which the writings of Souza have been compiled. In this book, there are major lines of Souza on various aspects of his life including art and other experiences related to it. He stated that “Painting for me is not beautiful. It is as ugly as a reptile. I attack it. It coils and recoils making fascinating patterns”.

Likewise, during the depiction of the woman he has adopted the same process of making them ugly and like a reptile. He has also described his interest and fascination towards sexuality and homosexuality in the text. He described that how curious he was to watch her mother during her bath and his desire to pain images within her womb. This very detachment and attachment as well show the connectivity of Souza between the real and the unreal world. This feeling has been articulated in the depiction of a woman too. **Mago** opines that for Souza ‘sexuality has not been raised to a pitch of religious ecstasy; it, nevertheless, is a source of his strength as also his weakness’ (**Mago 2001**).

Vinod Bhardwaj also edited another book on Souza; he successfully explored the artistic world of Souza from his initial days. This book is a collection of various essays on Souza and his artistic style. The book has various views and essays written by prominent critics and in one of the essays, it has been written that “Instead of allowing the logic of painting to dominate his purpose, he is inclined to use painting to resolve his personal problems...It is this fog of egocentricism which overhangs Newton’s work” (**Khanna 2009**). Bhardwaj also added in his discussion that “his painting or sketches can also easily become part of a pornographic art show. In the work of Souza, we can see an obsession towards female nude. He is known as a Rebel and Prince of Ego which reflects in most of his works (**Bhardwaj 2009**). In the opposition of it, the paintings of the nude in the work of Gogi Saroj Pal indulge only in themselves and are far from any social manipulations. She is one of India’s first feminists for choosing to do away with her *chadar* or veil (**Bawa 2011**).

In an edited a book, titled *Gogi Saroj Pal: The Feminine Unbound*, in 2011. In this book, major art historians and critics discussed the art of Pal through a critical observation and most of them recalled the supremacy of female protagonist in those of paintings. In this book, the essay of Seem Bawa gives a true insight into the work of Pal. The mythical element and realistic encounters have emerged as the greatest expression in the paintings of Pal. The relationship between daily life adventures and supernatural aspects has been fully explored by the artist (**Singh 2011**).

Vinod and Brij Sharma also curated a show on Souza’s paintings titled, “The City of Women,” in 2015 at Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi. Bhardwaj tried to build a strong connection between the women of Souza with the great Italian film director Federico Fellini. Federico Fellini’s movies are particularly having the same stereotype of voluptuous actresses which are found in the paintings of Souza. In the catalog, Bhardwaj clearly mentioned that Souza was very much obsessed with the voluptuous female body like that of Fellini, and he points out that the “current feminist ideology would reject Souza, even revile him and condemn him, might even declare him sick and a pervert”

(Bhardwaj & Sharma 2015). He merely serves any particular tradition in his painting styles when asked about aesthetics, in the discussion of aesthetic Souza mentioned that he does not follow any Indian or Western norms of aesthetic, he has collected what suits him whether it is Indian or Western. It is mentioned in the writing of Jag Mohn,

“There was a bifurcation in the concept of aesthetic, which had led earlier on, to the creation of another class called “Indian Style Painting Class”. This class was taken by one Mr. Ahivasi, as opposed to the “Western Style” classes comprising of anatomy, perspective, antique drawing, portrait and still life painting in oil, which were taught by other instructors who perhaps fancied themselves as “Western” in education and outlook.” “Even then, I never agreed with this division between “Indian” and “Western” art. To me, knowledge was universal and aesthetics were Catholic” **(Bhardwaj 2009)**.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this course of observation, it is analyzed that the studies related with early Indian art represent that the paintings have been observed on various aspects, but the studies related to the portrayal of women are very few. Various studies show the projection of women from ancient to modern times but in a very brief way. There was a need to survey the depiction of women from ancient to modern Indian paintings; so, this study has taken up to explore the portrayal of women from prehistoric to the modern period. The modern paintings have been observed deeply by many types of research. There are several studies, in which feminism, gender politics, and patriarchal issues have been focused on the critics, but the paintings of male and female artists have not been compared with each other. Moreover, the actual roots of gender difference in the work of male and female artists have not been examined appropriately. The portrayal of women has been discussed frequently, but case studies are very few, so this area of study has been taken by the researcher to explore the difference between the work of male and female artists with respect to the depiction of the female body.

3. FROM CAVES TO CANVASSES: MAPPING THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN INDIAN PAINTINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The present chapter is based on the portrayal of women in Indian paintings from ancient to contemporary times; in the first section, the role of woman has been observed on the bases of visual narratives. Then in the second section, some of the modern Indian artists have been observed through their paintings in respect of the portrayal of women. The difference of women portrayal between the paintings of male and female artists has been evaluated particularly from the colonial period. The major precursors of Colonial period were Abanindranath Tagore, Ravi Varma, Amrita Sher-Gil, and Jamini Roy. In the colonial period, the paintings of Ravi Varma are closely observed because he is the first Indian artist, who is called the father of modern Indian painting. Then, the work of Sher-Gil has been taken into consideration because she is called the first feminist artist of modern Indian paintings. Therefore, these two reverse approaches of both the artists have been used as a module to evaluate the depiction of women by other prominent Indian artists. After Sher-Gil, some Indian female artists have been discussed to seek the same subjective approach in their paintings, which is used by Sher-Gil. These female artists are Enjolie Ela Menon, Arpita Singh, Gogi Saroj Pal, Bharti Kher, Nalini Malani, Rekha Rodwittiya, Seema Kohli, and many more. In this context, some major male artists have also been chosen for the discussion, who is somehow related to the sensuous portrayal of women in their paintings. These artists have also been chosen after observing their frequent adoption of women as a subject, like M.F. Husain, Souza, and Jatin Das etc.

3.2 WOMEN IN PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD IN INDIA

In an ancient age, paintings are made on the walls of caves (pre-historic period), which was considered the first step of human towards development (**Misra 2001**). In this perspective, if the cave paintings are explored as an initial stage, the sexual identities for gender significance are not entirely visible due to geometrical-shaped figures on the walls beside few. Therefore, gender is not fully visible due to the liner composition of the figures. But, the fertility cult and procreation were the most depicted theme in the rock paintings worldwide (**Gardner and Kleiner 2009**). The pre-historical paintings are a mirror of that time in a society which helps people to understand the initial stage of humanity. According to Kak, the best way to understand India and its culture is the way

which goes through art and cosmology (**Kak 2015**). In these cave paintings, the dominating theme was hunting and daily-life depiction, but the identification of sexes (in the paintings) is a challenging term due to the geometrical shapes of the body in more than 80% of the whole paintings. It can also be considered that the gender has no significance in earlier times because the art of that time was entirely based on geometrical or linear forms. It is found that sexuality was not a big issue during those days and the power of reproduction or procreation was highly celebrated, as **Mathu (2008)** stated that:

“In such society, female sexuality was not a threat and did not have to be managed; on the contrary, since the very survival of the community depended upon it, female reproductive power was highly valued.”

The magical and religious semiotics can also be traced through some prehistoric paintings. Going through the theme, it is seen that the portrayal of women is rarely done. The paintings, which represent women, are very few and the dominated theme of those paintings is fertility. Fertility theme has been identified through the images of the pregnant woman. These cave paintings have been deeply observed by **Mathpal (1984)**, who also made some imitations of some of those paintings. His study is particularly related to the rock paintings of Bhimbetaka (now in Madhya Pradesh), which is considered as the main site of pre-historic period.

In one of those images, a woman has been shown as walking with quick steps. The woman is also carrying a stick, which is placed on her head. Her breast has been made larger than the proportion of her body.

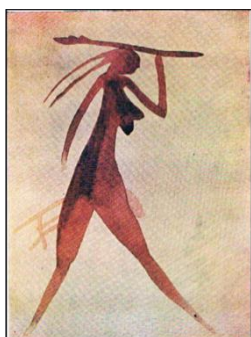


Fig. 3.1 Venus of Bhimbetaka

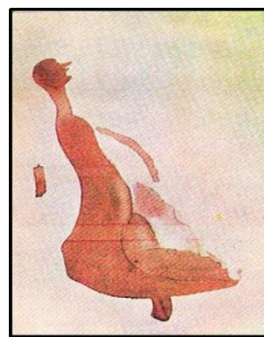


Fig. 3.2 Seated women of Bhimbetaka



Fig. 3. 3 Family Scene with a pregnant woman

Fig- 3.1, 3.2. Reproduction of Yashodhar Mathpal with Brush on paper, 1984, Source Mathpal, 1984

Fig- 3.2. Reproduction of Yashodhar Mathpal with Brush on paper, 1984, Source Malla 2013

In another image, a woman has been shown as seated in a resting posture; she is looking pregnant too, which is clearly visible through her body structure.

The theme of the remaining paintings is deeply male-centered and represents male dominance because men are depicted as a symbol of great power and energy and engaged in hunting and gathering activities for livelihood. Moreover, the heroic characteristics have also been shown in the portrayal of the man, which is also discussed by **Mathpal (1984)** and he divided all images of Bhimbetaka into 28 groups. In this category (which is made by him to define male and female paintings), man is mostly depicted with his weapons and riding on animals etc.

On the contrary, the woman is depicted only in conceiving state or engaged in very casual routines and being ignored by such a powerful display as compared to man. In an image, entitled 'pregnancy', the woman is depicted with two animals and three of them are shown in conceiving condition (Fig.3.4). One of the animals, placed on the above side of the painting, is looking like a deer and conceiving an elephant which is visible from the transparency.

Another animal (placed with a woman) in the image seems to be a cow-like figure, which is depicted as carrying the baby of her own species. The pregnant woman has been shown as pointing her hand towards that animal which can be a way of celebrating the happiness of giving birth after painting it on the wall. Moreover, it could be a way to express her condition to the unknown ones. **Kamat (1997)** has argued that the animals and birds constitute the largest subject of these paintings. According to him, the representation of embedding a different kind of animals in the stomach of one another is a way of depicting humor and imagination. It can also be a way to depict magical elements

through images. Whatever the message, behind the depiction of pregnancy, the woman mostly depicted in the pregnant state rather than in any social or working activity.

In this concern, fertility has remained a par-excellence and an exclusive merit of womanhood; so, the society and surroundings of each antiquity sanctioned its uppermost place than any other quality of woman. Childbirth is also celebrated like a divine bliss which is given to women only. So, it is obvious to display pregnancy for ancient people because they were not aware of medical theories. For instance, the people had beliefs in supernatural powers for the cure of illness and for the bliss of life. Therefore, to give birth is taken as a metaphysical quality in which the women are considered like Goddesses; but their involvement in other activities is particularly ignored in the depiction.

The other image (Fig-3.5) is having a mother Goddess figure with heavy breast and the fountains of milk are falling on the earth like a shower (**Kamat 1997**). Thus, the image is typically related to the cult of the mother Goddess which is one of the most prominent aspects of Indian ancient paintings. In this context, it can be analyzed that the women in paintings of the prehistoric period were discarded from the hunting and gathering works, and their productive energy is only shown.

On the other hand, maybe the existence of womanhood in these hunting and working activities has remained in darkness due to the geometric or linear shapes in the paintings. Because there are few paintings too, which depict women's involvement in the working field at the site of Bhimbetka. According to **Malla**, a group of some person is shown as gathering fruits and a woman is engaged in collecting those fruits in a basket on her back (**Malla 2013**).

Kamat stated that few Bhimbetka paintings show sexual organs. Sometimes to identify a woman they have drawn a small vagina, but have left out the breast. However, in some spots to glorify women, they have drawn large breast and a flow of milk is coming out from them like a fountain. The evidence of mother Goddess depiction can be traced by two drawings of spider-shaped women, and there is also a scene of a family in which a pregnant woman has been portrayed. Despite the depiction of fertility or pregnancy “several kinds of sexual activities are shown,” and in one of the scenes a reclining woman has been depicted with five men (**Mathpal 1984**)

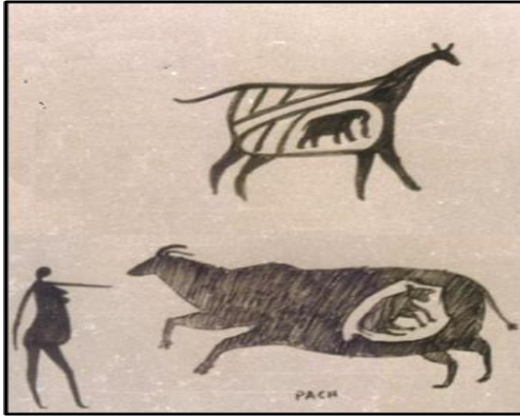


Fig. 3.4 Women with Animals

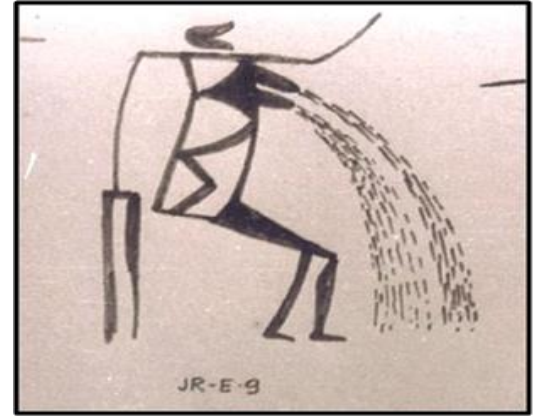


Fig. 3.5 Mother Goddess

Fig. 3.4 Drawing on paper By Kamat 1997, Prehistoric cave painting, Bhimbetka

Fig. 3.5 Drawing on paper by Kamat 1997, Prehistoric cave painting, Bhimbetka

Source-<http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/rockpain/betaka.htm> originally photographed and kept in the Tribal Museum Chindwara

In this context, the voluptuous mother Goddess, who has been frequently dominating over the theme of ancient Indian paintings, has also been exhibited in the pre-historic cave paintings of India. It may also be considered that the reason behind the minority of female depiction in paintings could be their own involvement as artists because various folk or tribal art of India have been practiced by a woman only as a performance of rituals or for the decoration. This point has also been argued by **Wakankar and Brook** because they mentioned that a village called Bhagalpur near Bhimabetaka has the same practice (where women decorate the walls on religious ceremonies). In this village, the hut of the head-man of the village has been decorated by the women on some religious occasions with wall paintings, which resembled the pre-historic rock paintings of that place (**Wakankar and Brooks, 1976**). Thus, it may also be considered that the artist behind the pre-historic paintings may be a woman, or the existence of womanhood has been concealed behind the geometrical shapes despite the unveiled fertility aspect. Therefore, the feminine acquaintances have been derived in a very diplomatic subsistence, whether they are the harbinger of sexual or reproductive powers or hidden artists of pre-historic caves. In the context of pictorial narrations, their role is not much significant than man. The painting related to sexuality or reproductive powers have no significance in framing their vital role in society. It can also be considered that the role of a woman is not much contributive in the narratives of rock paintings of prehistoric times. It is only their reproductive power which is celebrated more than their actual identity as a human being.

3.3 INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION (C. 2600-1900 B. C. E.)

The first Indian civilization after the pre-historic period is the civilization of the Indus Valley, where the production of artistic innovation had been more improvised in various techniques, including terracotta figurines, seals, and pottery. In this innovative era, the path for fulfilling the requirements of living had been discovered by mankind. The innovation of house making and other respective things; various skills had been developed in the field of art and architecture. A variety of seals and terracotta figurines had been found by the archeological surveys (Fig-3.6). In these figurines, nude mother Goddesses are frequently depicted (Coburn 1991, Nagar, 1998, Marshall 1932). In this civilization, the depiction of a woman has been done prominently in two categories; in the form of seals and terracotta figurines (Wangu 2003). Numerous nude female figures have been made in which the sexual organs are highlighted with heavy breast and broad hips (Muesse 2011). In their depiction, the navel and vulva are focused intermittently. Sometimes, a decorative belt overlaps the navel, at times a short wrap hides the vulva. Furthermore, some male figurines and animate motifs have also been found i.e., bull, elephant, unicorn, etc. (Fig-3.7) because manly powers have been represented symbolically through these animated motifs.



Fig. 3.6 Terracotta Figurine of Indus Valley



Fig. 3.7 Seals of Animate Motifs

Fig- 3.6 Terracotta figurine of a woman, 7000 BCE to circa 2500 BCE, Mehrgarh (Pakistan)

Fig- 3.7 Stone seals inscribed with animals and Indus script. Harappan Civilization, 3000-1500 BC

Source-<https://toranas.wordpress.com/tag/mehrgarh/> <http://www.thenagain.info/WebChron/India/Harappa.html>

These small clay figurines have been associated with the celebration of female sexuality because the power of giving birth is an exclusive boon. It is noticeable that this celebration of sexuality only belongs to supernatural powers and these powers had been taken as a divine worship. There were

mainly two kinds of woman, one is heavenly (deities, *apsaras* or heavenly dancers) and the other one is earthly (mother, wife, beloved, queens, mistress, and slaves). Worship of sexuality had been accepted as course of ritualistic performance by the earthly or common woman to gain child and for the prosperity of children. To some extent, sexual worship belonged to female deities; it has nothing to do with the common women except procreation. Sexual worship or mother Goddess cult may not be applicable to reconsider the role of the woman as an individual. A small sculpture of bronze, which is known as a female dancer, had also been found from the Indus Valley, which represents the engagement of woman in amusement-related activity for a man because dancers usually performed music and dance for the people. In this bronze sculpture, which is called a dancer, the genitals are not as big as the Mother Goddess figure. It may be said then that the voluptuous female body only belonged to sexual worship in the Indus Valley. The reason behind the lean body of this dancer may be her age factor because she is looking like a young teenage girl. Another major depicted form is of Goddess Lajja-Gauri, who is frequently depicted as her leg apart and showing her vulva (Fig.3.9). She particularly belonged to the sexual worship and also related to the tantric cults. Martin also added that sexual worship was very much in trends during the time of Indus Valley Civilization at numerous places all over the world (**Martin 2012**).



Fig. 3.8 Bronze Girl



Fig. 3.9 Goddess on Seal

Fig- 3.8 Made in bronze, c. 2500 BC, dimension- 10.5 c.m.x 5 c. m., Collection- National museum Karachi, Source- https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/58/Dancing_girl.jpg

Fig- 3.9 Indus valley seal. Mature Harappa.2700-2300 BC. Private collection, Source Martin, Source- https://www.academia.edu/5246382/Lajja_Gauri_the_Goddess_of_sexuality_from_Mesopotamia_to_India

There are no official records, which have any account of painting during the time of Indus Valley, but the mother Goddess cult has been initiated after the mark of Indus Valley civilization. The Goddess worship had been started and prevalent till recent past; these Goddesses have been identified as, “mother Goddesses and sacrificial deities” (**Wangu 2003, Muesse 2011, Martin 2012, Tiwari 1985**). So, the symbolic significance of fertility has turned its forms in the Indus Valley civilization.

3.4 VEDIC PERIOD

The artistic evidence of Vedic Age has been limited because literature and sacred religious books were the prior concern of the people. So, the record of artistic representations is very rare because the entire concentration of the authorities was on literary productions. It is the age when the social code of conduct has been initialized for the so-called development of human beings. The first religious text has been considered the Rig-Veda; after that, the other three Vedic kinds of literature have been composed, but there is no sign of painting or “we find no traces of Sculpture art in this period” (**Swarup 1968**).

In Vedic mythology, the worship of natural sources prevailed in which the air, earth, and water have been worshipped along with the deities. Even here, the male deities are much preferred than the female deities. The role of Goddess was not valuable because the worship of Gods has come into practice and “in most of the cases they are mentioned infrequently and must have played minor roles compared to the great male Gods of the Rig-Veda” (**Kinsley 1986, Coburn 1991**).

In the writings of Rig-Veda, the Goddess has been mentioned. **Kramrisch (1956)** has interpreted the evidence of a Goddess identification which is similar to the Lajja- Gauri Goddess and she translated the hymns of Rig-Veda- “In the stage of the Gods, the existence was born from the non-existent. After this, the regions were born. This (existence) was born of her with the legs spread open” (**Tiwari 1985; Kramrisch 1956**).

In these hymns, the status of womanhood was far better than the other historical periods because they have all the opportunities of education and recognition in their respective technical fields, i.e., some are scholars and theologians and so on. **Wangu (2003)** stated that the female education was also promoted along with the male, and they had also the right to choose their groom which is called *swaymvaram* (a custom in which the girl has the right to choose her bridegroom).

During the later Vedic period (c.900-500 B.C. E.), the social conducts regarding women were entirely changed and they had to face the barriers in their social and personal domains. In this context, the women of lower castes were deprived of education and only the upper-class women (particularly the Brahmins) were gaining an education in limited number. During the late Vedic period, there was a gradual change of women's education, and only the male children of the upper caste could go the *upanayana* (thread ceremony before starting education) ritual (**Wangu 2003**).

The Vedic period proved to be a foundation for the further proceedings of the culture and history and after the decline of the Vedic Age; the Epic period has come into existence. The Epic period (estimated to be roughly from 1000 to 600 B.C.), was full of religious academic prevalence in which the great epics, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, have been written. In this religious hegemony, the heroines of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* became the ideal for the society. In the late-Vedic period, the women were also a part of a display of the dancing and musical performances and their status declined when compared to the pre-Vedic period (**Fasal 2012**).

3.5 WOMEN IN MURAL PAINTINGS

The earliest history of painting in India was started in the form of a mural at Ajanta (2nd B.C. to 7th CE). The main theme of the cave temples of Ajanta was Buddhism and whole paintings were depicted in the narrative form. In the portrayal of womanhood, the graceful female icons have been painted in the form of queens, dancers, mistresses and other secondary forms. The women of Ajanta are well-known for their superb gestures and sublimity in semi-naked and naked forms. The exotic and sensuousness of divine *Apsaras* and other forms have been depicted after following the prototype of Indian *Shadanga* (the six limbs of Indian painting). The concept of Indian paintings belongs to the one major aspect and that is “*Shadanga* consist of the six limbs, or canons of art, on which the whole art of painting depends” (**Sharma 2016**). These divine beauties are very much appreciated for their magnificent gestures rather than seductive approach.

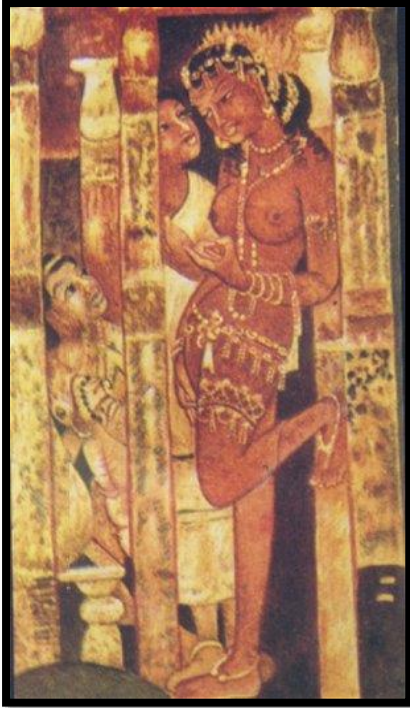


Fig. 3.10 Mayadevi



Fig. 3.11 Chaddanta Jataka Story

Fig- 3.10 Murals of Ajanta, Fresco from Cave no. 2, made around 2nd century BCE to 480 or 650 CE
Source- <http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/budhist/11094.jpg>

Fig- 3.11, Fresco from Ajanta of cave no. 10, made in 2nd century BCE.
Source- <http://www.wondermondo.com/Images/Asia/India/Maharashtra/AjantaJataka.jpg>

On the one hand, graceful and charming attributes of women have been painted by the artists of Ajanta, but on the other hand, they are just placed to fulfill the requirement of the story or for the ornamentation. Furthermore, **Archer (1957)** stated that the first interpretation of romanticism has been depicted in the cave paintings of Ajanta from 1st century B.C. to 6th -7th century AD. During the 5th century AD, the Buddha was celebrated as a divine king and his chambers in the form of caves were beautified with all types of amusements, including dancing girls. The dominating subjects represent the first major style of Indigenous painting, and also “communicates a delight in womanly physics” which represents the “dreams and fantasies of the female form and its promise of bliss” (**Archer 1957**).

Cave no 9 and 10 (Circa. BC 100 to the AD) have been considered as the earliest cave of Ajanta in which, major paintings are based on the story of Saddanta Jataka (six tusk elephant), the incarnation of Buddha. Both *Bikshues* (Saints) depicted women with full of grace and vitality. According to Chakrabarti, the mural tradition of Buddhist origin has come across silk route to Central Asia

(**Chakrabarti 1982**). They were very careful in taking out the minor details and ‘*Bhava*’ or expressions. The subjects were based on *Jataka* stories, folktales, the reincarnation of Buddha and many more narrative subjects.

In the first phase of the narrative, the elephant is depicted as playing in a Jungle and in the second part, the jealous queen has been depicted with his attendants. She is depicted in fainting condition after seeing the tusk of his previous- birth husband (dead husband in the form of an elephant) for which she has ordered a hunter to kill the elephant due to jealousy (**Anand 1973**). In this story, the victory of the greatness of Lord Buddha has been represented over the jealous nature of his queen. As per the story, the elephant was the husband of two she-elephants, but due to some misunderstanding, one of them thought that Buddha was giving more preference to the second wife. So, his first wife was dead and took birth as a woman. She became the queen and ordered to kill the elephant (Buddha in previous birth); but when she heard about his dignity, she realized her rude and unfair behavior for the husband of her previous birth.

The elephant sacrificed himself for the queen which represents the sublimity of Buddha for the happiness of the queen. On the contrary, the cruel nature of woman has been defined through the story and the emotions of the queen are represented after his death. Here, a woman is politically used to represent the divine nature of Buddha, where Buddha is proved as a divine soul: while the woman is proved an evil, who was either burning for her revenge or regretting her injustice.

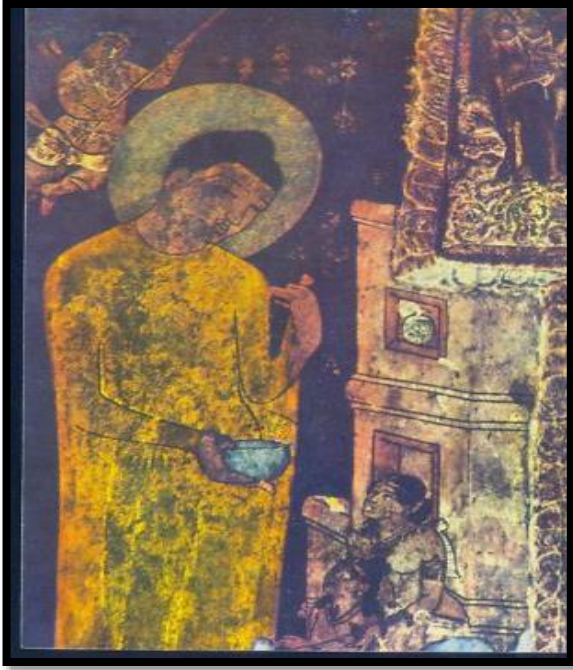


Fig. 3.12 Mother and Child, Ajanta

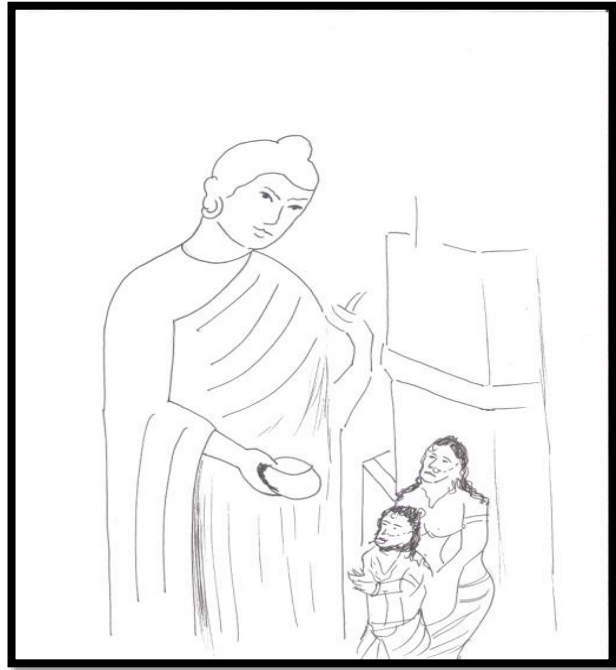


Fig. 3.13 Detailing of Mother and Child

Fig.3.12Source-<http://www.yadsi.in/img/records/big/4ce/f2e9f0.jpg>

In a scene entitled Mother and Child (Cave 17), the large composition of Buddha has been drawn to add more concentration to him than the woman in the painting. As per the aim of the painting, this way of emphasizing the main figure has been done to enhance the figure of Lord Buddha, which was a priority of the artists of these caves. In another painting, entitled 'Padmapani Bodhisattva' (c. 462-477 AD), Lord Buddha is again painted larger than the woman next to him.

The woman is also portrayed with the same flower (like the Buddha) in her hand and the costumes are also approximately the same. She is depicted in a semi-naked condition like the Buddha, but the size and the placement are very insignificant. The *Apsaras* and queens of Ajanta are often portrayed with full rounded breast with voluptuous body as per the six limbs of paintings. Despite beautiful grace and divine gestures, the significance of women in Ajanta is not much preferred than the male representation? Their place has only been driven by their gender significance but the virtual contribution of feminine may be neglected.

After Ajanta, there are also many painting traditions, which are influenced by it; in this category, the caves of Badami, Sittanavasal (Madras at present Tamilnadu), Tirumalaipuram, Ellora (at present Maharashtra), Anegudi, Lepakshi, Tiruparutikunram, Bagh and Sigiriya (Sri Lanka) can be observed. The Badami cave temples are situated in Karnataka and established by the Chalukyas

(600-700 AD). There is only one surviving mural in the Badami caves, which has the figures of Lord Shiva and Parvati, a divine Hindu couple. The major characteristics of the painting are the graceful gestures of the faces as it is stated that shyness and graceful gestures are the major features of the Goddess in this painting (**Anand 1973**). In Sittanavasal, the *Apsaras*, or heavenly dancers, are still dominant on the theme with their voluptuousness and sensuousness (**Archer 1957, Randhawa and Galbraith 1968, Anand1973**).

The cave temples at Ellora were built from the 7th to 11th century AD by Rashtrakuta dynasty. In the caves of Ellora, sculptures were more preferred than paintings in the temples. In this sculptural representation, women have been mostly represented as a 'Goddess' (**Malandra 1993**), but the paintings are very less in number. In Ajanta, the similar depiction of sensuous feminine figures is prevalent in almost all the murals. As **Archer (1957)** stated that 'in the Jain cave-temples at Ellora (c. 10th century), dancing-girls were depicted with molded limbs'. Wall paintings in cave temples of Ellora are on a small scale; but in Kailasa temple, the walls are filled with Hindu Gods and Goddesses, in which the heroic capability of male-Gods has been portrayed. For instance, the battle scenes, riding, and God-worship have been shown (**Anand 1973**).

Bagh (6th to 7th century) was the contemporary tradition of Ajanta at Western Malwa and flourished with many murals, but most of the paintings are damaged like those of Ajanta and Ellora. In the existing paintings, the religious theme was not the main concern but tribal Bhil life with full sensuousness has been depicted in murals. In a painting, the dark figures of women have been exhibited in a dancing state showing nude and half-nude women with ornamented details. In this group, a male figure is placed between the circles of female dancers. The well-proportioned structure of female figures has again been portrayed with half-nudity to set the seductive approach. In the cave of Sigiriya, the painting of two female figures (5th to 6th centuries) has been portrayed where the first woman is half-covered with an appearance of a queen or *Apsara*. *She is the focal point* of this painting. The second one may be her attendant, who is following her and is made in a simple way to give more focus to the main figure. The flower in the hand of her attendant may be a symbol of woman's delicacy and tenderness. The flower can also be a symbolic representation of offering purposes. The body structures are also framed with a sensuous appeal with charming gestures. (**Anand 1973**).

In this context, this may be said that the representation of woman in the murals has been implemented for mainly two purposes. The first purpose may belong to her objectification, where her beauty and

enigma has been used to make the paintings attractive and eye-catching. The second purpose may relate to the thrust of the subject, where she has been placed for supporting the narratives of a bigger male-centered story.

3.6 MANUSCRIPT TRADITION 11TH AND 12TH CENTURY

The naturalistic style of paintings has been developed under the patronage of Buddhism, in which manuscripts have been illustrated to highlight the Buddhist ideology. Similarly, in Gujarat, the Jain religious manuscripts are also complemented by illustrations. These two styles came into existence to preserve and spread the religious sect through the sacred text of Lord Buddha and Mahavira.

3.6.1 BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS TRADITION

The Buddhist manuscript tradition was started during the 12th century in Bihar and Bengal referred as the Eastern school by the critics. The main theme of these illustrations is related to religious beliefs associated with Lord Buddha and his incarnations. Art always existed as a medium to promote and protect religious antiquities as painting is the most convenient medium to express feelings. These Buddhist religious manuscripts were instrumental for the further promotion of religion. In these illustrations, women have been portrayed in forms of common being to Goddesses including the queen, princess, attendants, and slaves and so on. There is also a manuscript which is fully based on Goddess tenet, called, *Prajnaparamita*.

The Goddess Prajna (Goddess of wisdom in Buddhism) has been depicted in delightful colors with the scriptures of Buddhism. In these paintings, the Goddess is mostly in nude and semi-nude condition with powerful gestures. However, the main concern behind the Goddess's depiction is the ritualistic aspect rather than another significant portrayal of a common woman. According to **Anand (1973)**, “The *Prajna*, or wisdom, by which *Nirvana* is achieved, is visualized as a Goddess named *Prajna Paramita*” (**Anand 1973**). The style of the illustrations depicts some influence from mural paintings of Ajanta. In this manuscript, various forms of Goddess are illustrated with aesthetic appeal in a sublime manner. Due to Muslim invasion, this style migrated to Nepal with the artists. The finest example is the painting of Brahma and Sarasvati on cloth, which is now in the Boston Museum. In Buddhist manuscripts, the woman is mostly illustrated with sharp features in the vibrant color scheme. Their lotus-petal like eyes, bejeweled body, sharp features, and voluptuous body are depicted in semi-naked and naked forms.

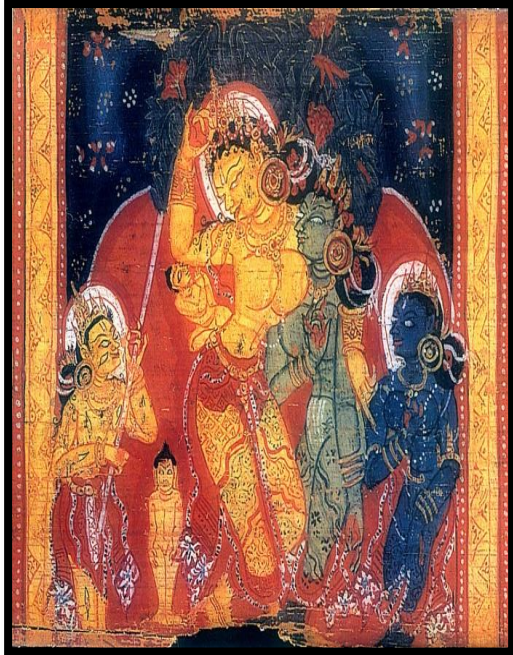


Fig. 3.14 Nativity Scene, Prajnaparamita

Fig- 3.14 Bihar (India), Mayadevi giving birth in the sacred grove, Collection- Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Ca. 1150, Opaque watercolor on Palm Leaf, Hight, 2.5 in. (6.35 cm.)

Source-

<http://vignette1.wikia.nocookie.net/psychology/images/1/1c/Prajnaparamita2.jpg/revision/latest?cb=20071105120330>

Fig- 3.15 Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita Manuscript, Pala Period (India), in the region of Surapala Deva, Late 11th century, Palm leaves with painted wooden covers, 58 cm. x 7 cm.

Source- <https://www.asianart.com/articles/allinger/large/x5.jpg>



Fig. 3.15 Mamaki with Vajra on lotus

3.6.2 JAIN STYLE

The tradition of illustrated manuscripts was developed under the patronization of Jain merchants. The *pata* (cloth) painting had been supplemented in the Jain religious manuscripts and started to be preserved in the temples around 10th century AD. In the earlier phase of Jain tradition, the depiction of women has not been properly done because the main concern of the artists was Lord Mahavira, but in later Jain style woman has also become a part of illustrations.

Moreover, the religious theme was more focused than other scenarios. The main theme of the earliest manuscripts was related to Jain mythology, including the representations of Gods, Goddesses, monks and other common characters. The paintings are exhibited in a limited extent in these manuscripts.

In this category, the main manuscripts are *Kalpasutra*, *Kalakacharya Katha*, and the *Sangrahni Sutra* etc.



Fig. 3. 16 The birth of Mahavira



Fig. 3. 17 Women Celebrating the Birth of Mahavira

Fig- 3.16 Page from a *kalpasutra* manuscript showing the birth of Mahavira. Western India, Late 15th and early 16th century, Opaque watercolor on paper

Fig- 3.17. A page from the *Kalpasutra* manuscript showing women of the royal household celebrating the sixth night after the birth of Mahavira, made in western India, late 15th and early 16th century, Opaque watercolor on paper

Source-http://www.herenow4u.net/fileadmin/v3media/pics/Jain_history/Art_History/VAMus_016.jpg

The later phase was influenced by the Persian style and a fusion of Persian and Hindu traditions has been portrayed in the form of the manuscript in Gujarat during the late sixteenth century (**Losty 1975**). As well as, the Rajput impact is also found in the later period. Although the phases of Jain tradition have been divided into three periods by **Ghose (1975)** in which, the first style spans from thirteenth to the sixteenth century (Archaic Period), the second one spans from the end of the sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century in the influence of Persian art (influenced by Mughal style). The last style was influenced by Rajput art in the late seventeenth century. The women depiction in early Jain style had first appeared within the *Oghaniryukti* (based on Jain monks and their life), in which the Goddess Laxmi has been portrayed with Kamadeva, the God of Love. In another manuscript entitled *Digambara Satkhandagma* (scripture of six works), a preaching scene

is portrayed with a Jina, and the Goddess Chakreshvari. In the *Neminathacharita* (1241), the Jina Neminath is portrayed with Goddess Ambika and a lying woman. The earliest examples of these illustrated manuscripts are found in *Kalapa-Sutra* and *Kalakacharya Katha*, in which the theme was particularly related with the lives and miracles of Lord Mahavira (**Sharma, 2007; Coomaraswamy, 2003**). There is a very little relationship between the text and the paintings, but some primitive effect was there with imbalanced body structures.

In the later phase, from the fifteenth century, manuscripts were started to be written on paper and the simplicity of these depictions had turned into ornamentally detailed under the Mughal influence (**Deneck, 1967**). The artists started to portray women figures with full bosoms in standard body type. This style had been flourishing in Gujarat, Malwa, Mandu, Jaunpur, and Delhi. The love depiction theme was also portrayed in a medieval Gujarati scroll of *Vasanata Vilasa* or the advent of spring (1451 AD) (**Anand, 1973**). The *Kalpasutra* was illustrated in Mandu under the Muslim reign with ornamentation and aesthetical approach to the feminine. The love poem of *Laurchanda* and *Chaurapanchasika* (the fantasy of love thief) were also portrayed in Jain style in Jaunpur. The Krishna stories of *Geet-Govinda* and *Bal Gopal Stuti* were also illustrated in Jain style. It is stated that:

“Sensuality was further enhanced by the larger breast and the jutting-out skirts and the curve of the haunches of the ladies represented in the manuscripts” (Bhattacharya, 1966).

In Buddhist and Jain manuscript tradition, the same ideology of religious representation had been found. In Buddhist manuscript tradition, the woman is particularly depicted in the form of Goddess or mother but with the grace of female figure, which was started first from mural style, has not been actually found in these illustrations. In earlier Jain style, the female form has been portrayed in an improper manner (*apbhransha style*) like all other forms. However, the other basic characteristics of the paintings had been shown through bright colors. In the later Jain style, the female form had been raised in a sensuous and charming attitude in nude and semi-nude postures, which may be an impact of other styles like Mughal and Rajput. The romantic and lovemaking scenes have also been portrayed, but there has been a lack of proper attention to representing the respect for womanhood.

3.7 MUGHAL PAINTINGS

Persian impact can be observed in Indian paintings from the 13th century when Delhi was conquered by Muhammad Ghori (in 1192), a successor of Turks and ruled by his Viceroy Kutb-ud-din Aibak.

The influence of Islamic tradition had started in Indian paintings with the fusion of many styles. In Malwa, a fortress named Mandu became an established kingdom under the reign of Pathans, and the display of erotic scenes in paintings was started around the 13th century. “The women have flowing skirts, narrow waist and full hips and breast.” (Randhwa & Galbraith 1982).

The founder of the Mughal Empire, Babur (1526-30), had started the artistic enhancement of Persian style in India, and then his successors continued it till the 17th century. The depiction of women in Mughal paintings had been done in manuscripts, which are very few in number. Furthermore, the Mughal miniature paintings are intricately detailed and associated with the narration of court scenes and social life, in which the representation of political status was more highlighted. Moreover, the focus was derived by the factors of self-appreciation of the king and his belongings, including ancestries too. Apart from that, some paintings were particularly done for the manuscripts of many religions including Hindu mythology (Lewis 1976). The custom of the veil was very prevalent in Islamic culture and strictly followed by everyone, making it very difficult to seek a woman in courtly paintings and portraiture, besides few erotic paintings. In Mughal miniature paintings, there are many images of women engaged in an erotic display like a man is surrounded by many women in a toilet scene. Dancers, maids, and concubines at courtly scenes are depicted in many paintings. On the other hand, the women are also shown in the form of a mother or princess enjoying or resting, but to a limited extent.

In the period of Akbar, the Hindu epics and stories had also been illustrated in manuscripts, for instance, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and so on. In these stories, the women were also portrayed as per their role in the story. A painting contained “the episode of *Ramayana* in which Sita, after her abduction by the demon-king Ravana, is asked to prove her purity in a test by fire” (Randhawa, 1981). Jahangir was a lover of nature, so he mostly patronized the paintings of animate and natural elements along with the courtly appreciation of other kings. The subject of the paintings in Jahangir's period was particularly related with flora and fauna, animals, the life on common people, the courtly life, and so on. Unlike Akbar, the women were more prominently depicted in the paintings of Jahangir's period in various forms including European, Persian and as well as Hindu. There is a painting, in which a young person is making love with a woman, is considered “the sensuous painting of the Jahangir period” (Randhwa & Galbraith, 1982). The scene of elopement and love meetings are also depicted with the erotic display. There is a painting entitled Jahangir playing Holi, in which many women were depicted with sharp features (Okada, 1992).

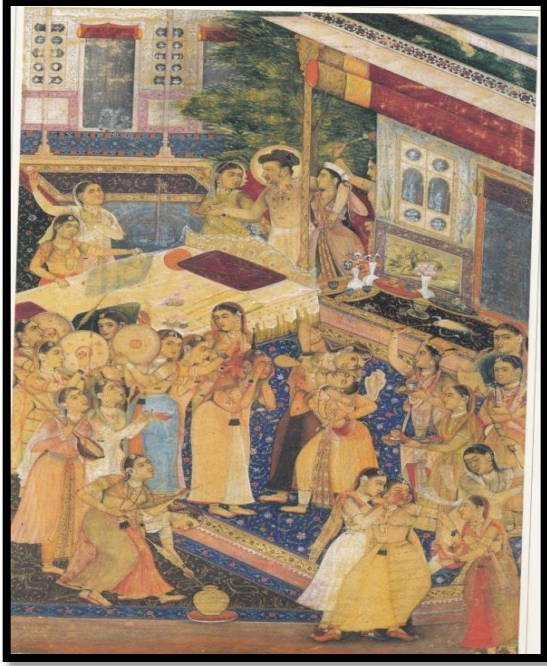


Fig. 3.18 Jahangir Playing Holi

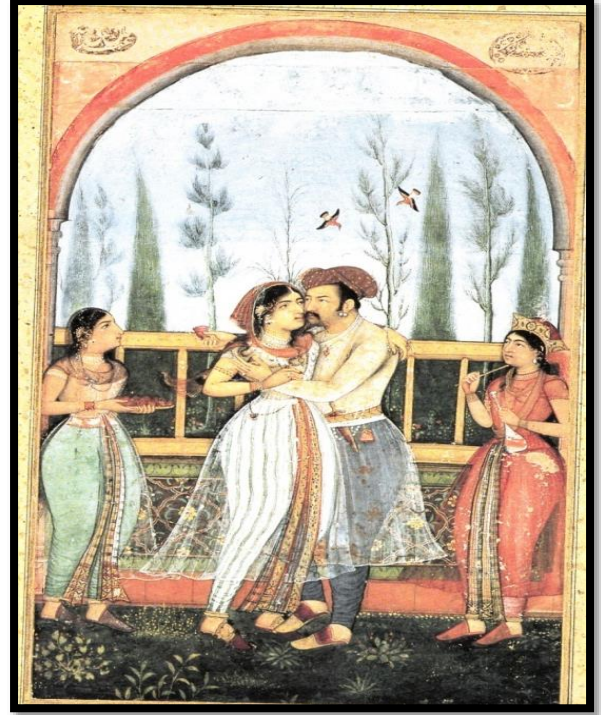


Fig. 3.19 Shah Jahan and his Beloved

Fig.3.18 Jahangir Playing Holi, circa 1615-1625, signed by Govardhan, a page from the Minto Album, Chester Beatty Library Dublin, Source- Okada

Fig.3.19 Shah Jahan and his Beloved, circa 1632, signed by Govardhan, a page from the Kevorkian Album, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Source- Okada

After Jahangir, his successor Shah-Jahan (1628-1658) became the emperor and contributed to art and architecture. Women are frequently depicted with their charming appearance. Romanticism was at its peak in portraying the glory of court life of the king and another glimpse of his personal life in inner quarters as well. The women are portrayed with the sensuous mood in transparent clothes, either waiting for their lover or enjoying with her female servants.

“It was to repeat, an age of pleasure and calm. Other paintings showed princesses in transparent Muslim blouses seated on terraces surrounded by their female servants listening to music”; this romantic theme was more preferred during the later Mughal paintings with feminine grace and perfection (**Randhwa & Galbraith 1982**).

Some independent provinces had taken shape in the Western and Southern parts of India during the 15th century. Among the five kingdoms set up by the Muslim Afghan rulers (also known as the Bahmani Kingdom), Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, and Golkonda were the most prosperous ones. They had patronized the miniature painting style and these provinces had become major centers for reproduction of the art form. The manuscripts like *Anvar-i-Suhayli* (the lights of Canopus), *Tarif-i-*

Husayn Shahi, Najum-ul-ulum, are complemented by miniature paintings. The Ragamala painting, which flourished between the 16th and 19th century AD, was also influenced by the Mughal and Rajput style. The influence can be observed in women portraiture where the same sensuality remained at various sites of drinking with music and dance.

In some provincial paintings, mainly in the Oudha, Hyderabad, and Lucknow, women were adopted as a particular subject of painting during the sixteenth century. The love poetry and romance with sensual erotic encounters were mainly portrayed. The court dancers with beautiful appearances and couples embracing each other, making love are also considered for depiction (**Randhawa 1981**).

After Muslim invasions, the art of miniature had been started in India, and then women particularly had been used as an object of male-gaze. It was the era when a woman has been politically framed for the offering purposes. In the imperial Mughal style, the woman portrayal has been started as making love, waiting, in toilet scenes, engaged with women and so on. The so-called Goddess or princess phenomenon, which has started from the mural tradition, was mostly faded after the mark of the Mughal period, and only the beautiful and well-proportioned woman has been much on display through erotic encounters. The reason behind this erotic display could be based on the individual taste of the emperor because, at that time, the paintings were mostly created for the private collection of the emperors. The artists were also directed by these emperors, or the artists made such paintings for pleasing their emperors for the reward and higher rank in his regime.

3.8 RAJASTHANI PAINTING

The miniatures of Rajasthani style are also known as Rajput School and the major patrons of this style were the kings of Mewar, Kotah, Bundi, Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Kishangarh during the early 17th century. The main concept of the paintings was related to Lord Krishna and his heroic tales; “the musical mode, the epics and romances, religious theme and love theme” (**Reiff 1959**). Many illustrated love poems of Sanskrit were complemented with passionate love and erotic depictions. The feminine charm and beauty were enhanced and represented in a refined form. The gestures of female faces are quite enchanting with their appropriate physical balance as per the Indian stereotype of beauty. The feminine icons are represented in various forms and moods through a fusion of Mughal and Hindu art. It was the period when paintings have been made on the love poetry and lyrical ballads. It was the high time of celebrating the love and union between a man and woman union in the forms of poetry. Krishna was the main idol for the kings of numerous places and they had often been represented as Lord Krishna.

Illustrations of manuscripts of love poetry including Gitagovinda, Rasikpriya, and Ragamala are portrayed with the other religious themes. In these paintings, the man is always portrayed with heroic manipulations and the woman is portrayed as the module of the perfect feminine in appearance (Mode 1970). The adoption of Lord Krishna emerged dramatically in the paintings in which romantic and sexual depiction was prevalent to satisfy the demands of Kings. Abbasi (2012) stated that “in Rajput paintings, sensuality has been presented--wearing transparent fabrics draped around their bodies” (Abbasi 2012). The eyes of the heroines were made wide and sharp with exotic features. Their erotic desires had often been represented with naked and semi-naked projections in those paintings. (Randhawa & Randhawa, 1980). “Priests belonging to the cult of Pushti Marg (the pleasure path) performed their worship of the image of Krishna in a beautiful ritual in which flowers and incense played a conspicuous part. Dressed in silk, anointed with perfumed oil, the high priests of Pushti Marg developed an aesthetic religion whose followers were the rajas, the aristocracy and the wealthy enacted in places and mansions in many Rajput states” (Randhawa 1981).

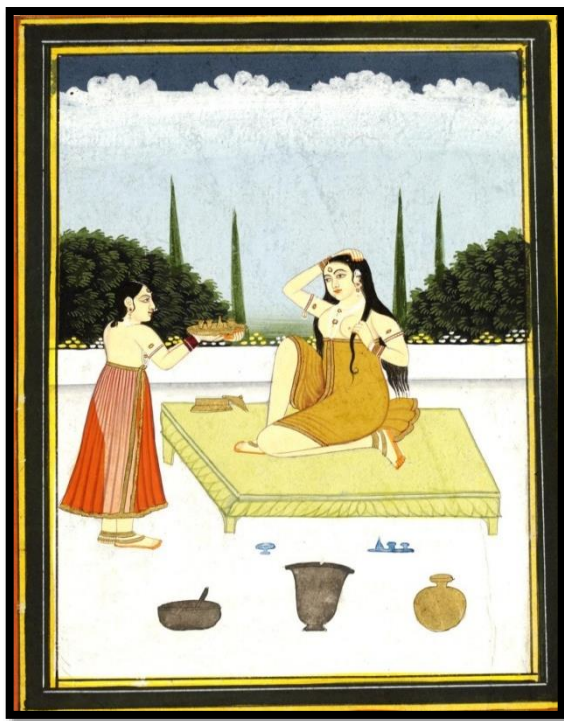


Fig. 3. 20 Untitled

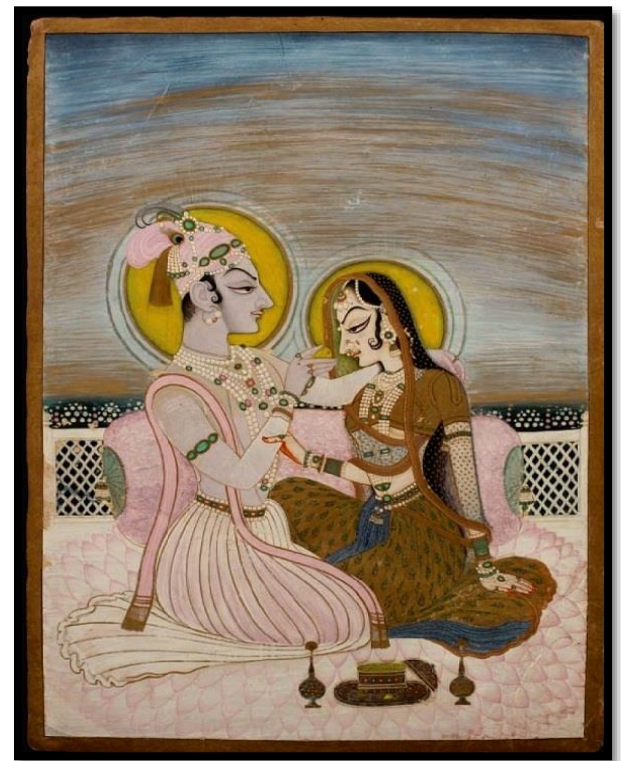


Fig. 3. 21 Savant Singh and Bani Thani as Krishna and Radha

Fig- 3 20 Untitled, made in Jaipur (India), 19th century, painted in opaque watercolor on paper, Height- 182 mm, and width- 201 mm, collection Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Source- <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O405254/painting-unknown/>

Fig-3.21 Savant Singh and Bani Thani as Krishna and Radha, Artist -Nihal Chand, made Kishangarh, ca. 1760. Madison Avenue Galler

Source-

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/34/2_Attributed_to_Nihal_Chand._Savant_Singh_and_Bani_Thani_as_Krishna_and_Radha._Kishangarh,_ca._1760..jpg

Kishangarh remained as a popular site of Rajasthani miniature paintings because the king of Kishangarh, Sawant Singh, was known as a great poet. He was also known for his affair with a courtesan of his court, who was known as Bani-Thani.

3.9 PAHARI PAINTINGS

The Pahari style developed in the regions adjacent to the Himalayas during the late seventeenth century. The main centers of this style were Basohli, Kullu and Chamba, Kangara, Guler etc. In Pahari School, the tradition of depicting Krishna in painting prevailed and reached its zenith which actually started from Rajput miniature style. Though some other themes had also been chosen as a subject the main concentration was on love-depictions. The heroic hegemonies of Krishna had become the super premise and the women were only a medium for erotic display whether in the form of Radha or *Gopis*. The major reason for depicting Lord Krishna may be based on the will of those kings, who wanted to be served as a God from people (Fig- 3.22-23). The kings were often compared with the Gods from the ancient time for proving their divinity and courage. They have borrowed the custom of having many women in their *harem* or bathing places for the satisfaction of their sexual desires and also portrayed themselves in the paintings in the form of Krishna with many women. “Through such equations, kings become a manifestation of heroic, Krishna-like erotic power, infinitely, seductive, naturally drawing every woman under their religious sway” (Aitken 2002).



Fig. 3.22 Untitled

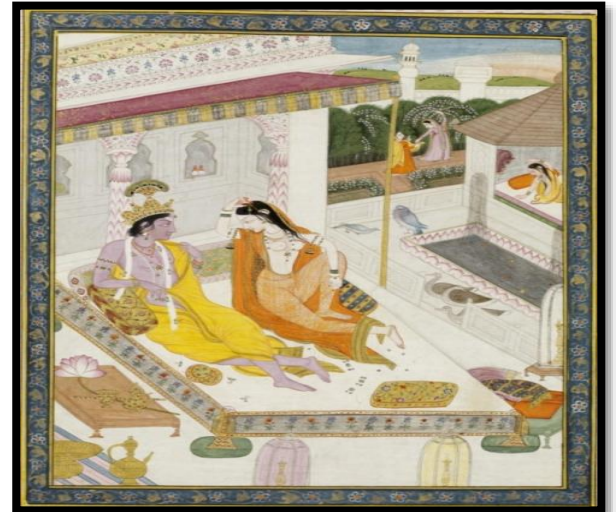


Fig. 3.23 Radha & Krishna

Fig- 3.22 Untitled, made in Mankot (India), Ca. 1730, painted in opaque watercolor on paper, Collection- Victoria & Albert Museum, London, source- <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O96535/painting-unknown/>

Fig- 3.23 Radha & Krishna, made in Garhwal India, Ca. 1860-1870, painted in opaque watercolor on paper, Collection- Victoria & Albert Museum, London,

Source- <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O72847/radha-and-krishna-painting-unknown/>

The manuscripts based on the Krishna theme had come into existence in a poetic language with colored paintings. The romance was highly celebrated and the theme was filled with colors of love-making, waiting for the lover, embracing with love in semi-nude and nude positions. Lord Krishna had been depicted with erotic passions with his beloved Radha and sometimes with another group of *Nayikas* or *Gopis*. The male-oriented heroism of Krishna cannot be avoided for mapping the scale of gendered politics. On the other hand, the female deities were depicted only with their one lover or husband, which reflects the attitude of the contemporary society. Contrary to their male counterpart, the female deities were accompanied by only one spouse representing the attitudinal difference of society between male and female, which was very prominent in that era. In this way, the inner scenario of the phallus centric society or kingdoms has been satisfied for the demonstration of sexual intimacy of man with many women; but in the case of women, it is much prohibited. The hunting and war scenes of the kings were fully promoted and only the objectification of women had been done without promoting their feminine skills. According to **Levine (1971)**, “the music of Krishna’s restless flute which pulls virtuous women from their homes and drags them by their hair to Shyam”.

In this way, the sexual relationship was permitted in the divine forms through the God himself and followed by the kings. **Levine (1971)** further added that “it is a divine license, socially permissible, and it is the circle which provided the paradox with its most appropriate visual representation”. These paintings were filled with the emotions in romantic premises with naturalistic beauty. The artists had equipped the love-depicted fables of Lord Krishna and Radha with the detailed ornamentation of nature. The divine love was dominated over the entire paintings and literature in semi-nude and nude body display. **Coomaraswamy (1912)** concluded that: “in the human figure there is great concentration and intensity of emotions; eye looks into the eye, as Blake would have drawn it, hand clasps hand, the very animals are spell-bound by the sound of Krishna’s flute, the elements obey the *ragas* and *raginis*”. In such fusion of naturalistic romance, the female imagery has encountered numerous in the offering condition for their one heroic God (**Archer, 1956**). In Indian paintings of this era, women were objectified and were used as ancillary subjects to glorify the main subject of the painting which used to be a male God or king for most of the times.

As per the above-discussed aspects, it may be assumed that there are various factors which frame the identity of a woman since the earlier times and can be observed in the pre-historic cave paintings. These traits of women were not included in the paintings of this period. Rather the women were used as a medium for satisfying the desires of the males: may it be a king or a male God like Krishna. One of the probable reasons may be that the pre-historic period was at an initial stage of art development where linear forms were mostly drawn on the walls, making it difficult for the primitive painters to create sensual curvilinear feminine shapes. Then the evidence of Indus Valley was only concentrated around the theme of fertility and procreation and these aspects neither represent the objectification of women nor represent their significant values. Later, the murals of Ajanta and other places can be considered as significant because the portrayal of the woman had been started in a unified form. These forms are opulently enriched with eye-soothing postures and sublime gestures of women.

The prototype of well-proportioned figures with seductive beauty had been served up to entertain the onlookers. The major purpose behind their depiction was to establish the visual narratives in order to promote Buddhism, where their projections were done to support the required theme. Their very first role was to become the part of the story, where the entire significance had been given to Lord Buddha only. And another role was related to their beauty and sensuous appeal in nude or semi-nude position. Moreover, in the forms of the mother and divine women, they were again somehow

manipulated to make them less important than a male with the help of background placement and other subjects. These phenomena of promoting or securing religious antiquity may be also responsible for such biased arrangement to add some attraction values in the paintings.

Feminine beauty and grace are always celebrated through the creative genius because the thing, which has the attributes to attract the minds, is always captured through various mediums. In ancient times, art was the only medium to capture those things, which draws human attention like the photography in the present day. It was also a medium to communicate ideas or knowledge in an easy way. In this sense, to attain human's sight for such religious stories, feminine grace and sensuality had also been incorporated to make them more attentive and considerable. On the contrary, a woman may also be an essential part of those stories for her exclusive feminine qualities like the power of giving birth, her love, compassion and so on. But her representation and role are only restricted to those biological or social attributes of womanhood as compared to man. The main concern behind such projection was to glorify Lord Buddha and the women had only become a tool for his glorification. The portrayal of a male was also well-associated with the contemporary ideology of perfection and power, which was considered the greatest virtue of man. In general, beauty and sensuality had been associated with women and power and efficiency had been associated with men. In this context, the identity of women had been derived from such patriarchal thought process and their appearances had been manipulated for offering to the males who were considered to be on higher social strata. Then this very construction of beautiful and sensuous female bodies had further been adopted in manuscript traditions, but there are examples where they also emerged in the form of Goddess and worshipped along with male-Gods.

During the time of Babur, who had established the Mughal dynasty, the erotic display had rarely been painted because his reign was very short and he also concentrated on architecture alone. During the reign of Akbar, the courtly scenes and portraits were mainly illustrated and women were rarely found in the portrayal. But, in the time of Jahangir, the erotic display was on its pinnacle and the portrayal of men had frequently been associated with a group of women. The scenes of Harem had been depicted with a male surrounded by many women, which entirely belonged to patriarchal dominance because it is very rare to find a painting of a woman surrounded by a group of man. Thus, this gender biased imagery of woman had been particularly painted in the Mughal period, where women had become only an object of sensual desire and erotic display. This kind of representation may also be a way to depict manly power over women, where women have been identified only as

male counterpart where their existence is particularly depicted in the association of her physical beauty or her lovers' desire.

In Rajasthani period, the king was often represented as Lord Krishna, and her mistresses and queens had been considered as his cow-girls or *Gopis*. Thus, the religious icon may often use to portray women in romantic postures. The heroic and powerful imagery of Lord Krishna had been conferred upon the king, who became a lover of beauty, and the helplessness of women has been represented through the group of *Gopis*.

As it is discussed earlier that the religious sentiments were fully subjugated to the art and paintings in Pahari style, so Krishna had become the idol of kings and of human-beings too. In this concern, the kings may be impressed by the tales of Krishna; so they implicated him in the paintings, or in the heroic literature. There are so many descriptions in literature, which prove the passionate nature of kings regarding female and their divine entertainment of luxurious life. The *gopis* or *Nayikas* were depicted with Lord Krishna in the erotic display, which represents many similarities with the *harem* scenes of the kings. It can be said that the stories of Lord Krishna had been used as an aegis to exonerate the passionate nature of the kings in front of the society. In miniature paintings also, the erotic and sensuous projections of women dominated and the objectification of woman has been done for offering purposes.

3.10 PAINTINGS FROM 17TH CENTURY TO CONTEMPORARY ERA

After the establishment of the East India Company in 1600 AD, Indian art came under the influence of European style and technique. It was the time when courtship was disappearing slowly, and artists have started to paint independently rather than under the patronage. Artists were experimenting with their artistic efficiency for earning their livelihood and the paintings of company style have been made by numerous artists. The company style paintings have mostly been made for the demand of the market, where some bourgeois or British people were the main buyers. The company style paintings have been made with the fusion of Mughal and Rajput traditions of painting with European techniques. The main patrons of this style belonged to East India Company and other British groups of people. The subject of these paintings is related to the day to day life of Indian people; some portraits of elite groups and landscapes of Indian sights. These paintings have been made in Indo-European style, where European techniques have been carried out by Indian artists for portraying native Indian scenes. In them, a woman has been depicted as engaging in daily domestic tasks and other social activities. And the lower classes were frequently exhibited to entertain the elite group.

The women have been found as performing the works like fish-sellers, fruit-vendors, sweepers, and with a basket on their head in these paintings. The other major depiction was related to dancing girls, which is called *Nautch* Girl, where a group of a female dancer has been made. Then, women have been depicted mainly in three categories at the time of company style, where the first one belonged to the middle class or marginalized woman, next one belonged to dancing girls and musicians, and the last one belonged to the portrait of an elite class woman. In the first category, the artisans, fruit vendors, fish seller, and other working-class women have been painted, which may be an effort of the artists to capture such unique and new aspects of Indian life for the British people. In the second category, the tradition of entertainment through dance and music has been painted by the artists, which may be also the prevalent favorite for the patrons. The third category of portraying women in the photograph has been particularly done for the private collection of some particular people, belonging to the elite class.



Fig. 3.24 A Group of Dancing Girls & Musicians

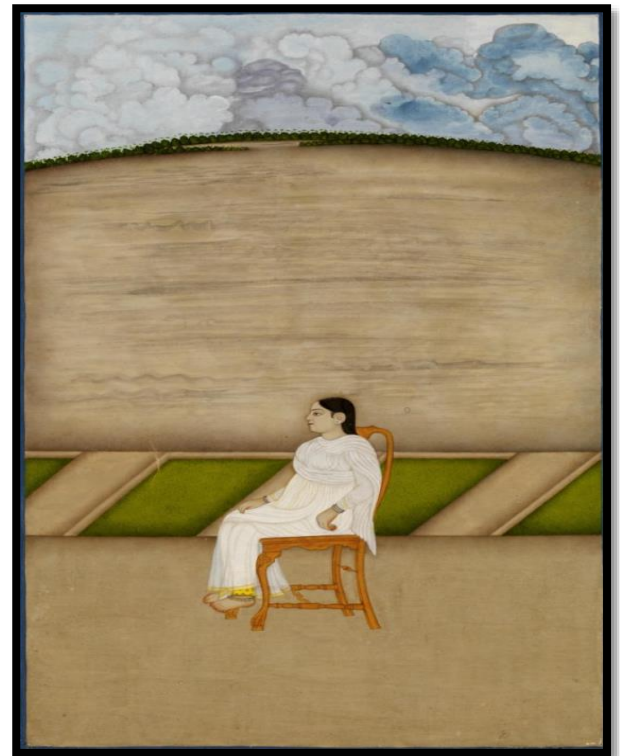


Fig. 3. 25 Untitled

Fig- 3.24 A Group of Dancing Girls & Musicians by Faiz Ali Khan, made in Delhi (India), Ca. 1815, Opaque Watercolor on Paper, Collection Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Source-

<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O15737/a-group-of-dancing-girls-painting-khan-faiz-ali/>

Fig- 3.25 Untitled, made in Murshidabad (India), Ca. 1760-1764, Opaque Watercolor on Paper, Collection Victoria & Albert Museum, Source-

<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O17515/a-seated-woman-painting-unknown/>

Instead of these paintings, some paintings of Hindu deities have also been made in a decorative manner. The company style paintings are an effort of Indian artists to switch to the artistic parameters of European traditions, where the depiction of women has been equipped to satisfy the demand of British merchants and bureaucrats, where women are merely objects and used for capturing the native Indian style. Some of the paintings, like dancing girls and female musicians, may be depicted for the purpose of entertainment alone. The artists have tried to paint the same impression of live dance by *Nautch* Girls, in which women have been used as a medium of entertainment. In this way, the depiction of women may not be considered significant in the company style paintings.

During the 19th century, the cloth paintings of Kalighat emerged as the greatest artistic resource. At that time, Calcutta was the major hub for artists and the Kalighat religious folk paintings were made on a large scale. The artists of Kalighat paintings were earlier known as Patuas (painter of clothes), who used to paint religious themes on the large scroll of cloth. After the encounter of British employees in the art market, Patua artists had developed a unique style and started to sell their paintings near Kali temple of Calcutta. There were the majority of some artists, called 'Patuas', who were making these paintings near the Kali temple of Kalighat (**Nandi & et al. 2004-5, Sanyal 2013**). "The Kalighat School of paintings is perhaps the first school of paintings in India that is truly modern as well as popular" (**Sarkar 2000**). These paintings have been known as Kalighat paintings. Apart from religious themes, Kalighat paintings have a rich variety of other daily life scenes of Calcutta but the main purpose behind the depiction particularly belongs to *bazaar* or commercialization through paintings. The main purpose behind the manipulation of this folk art was to get financial benefits in the markets through the promotion of mythical fables of deities (**Slaughter 2012, Sanyal 2013, Nandi & et al. 2004-05, Ghosh 2000, Sarkar 2000**). The depiction of a woman in Kalighat paintings has been done in the form of Goddess and in others daily life forms. However, the other subjects were also included portraits, social life, caricatures in an ironical tone, and so on. In these paintings, the role of woman has been extended into the liberated icons, who often dominated over man. On the contrary, the sensual depiction has been done for the arrangement of offerings. As concluded by **Nandi & et al. (2004-05)** for a painting untitled 'seated woman' that "this painting represents woman as an object of desire".

In such arrangements, the woman has been equipped for supporting the required narratives of theme, where sarcasm and irony have been used to represent the social scenarios. These social scenarios

have often been depicted to satisfy the demand of the non-Indian people, who arrived in India at that time because, for them, Indian society and its aspects were very new and surprising. Sometimes, they also took these aspects in a humorous way, without knowing the actual situation behind such aspects; so, they might have wanted to capture these subjects for their personal collection. Therefore, women were depicted as a part of such type of collections, where their role was not considered much as a human-being beyond a few ironical themes.

So, the amalgamation of the feminine has experimented through the various phases of life in the form of wife, Goddess, dancer, actress, prostitutes, etc. Women were the pre-dominated concept and the most subjugated as well. The paintings were often made as showing man-woman relationships, like “husband beating or killing unfaithful wife, pampered wives riding on the shoulders of henpecked husbands, *babus* embracing concubines” (Nandi & et al. 2004-05).

The theme of the paintings somehow attacks the society in its ironical way of representations regarding the social status of womanhood at that time. On the other hand, the artists were making paintings for the marketing purposes and the major part of their income may come from the elite and British people. They were highly triggered by the western techniques and traditions and adopted Western elements after leaving the indigenous roots (Kumar 1999, Nandi & et al. 2004-05).



Fig. 3.26 A Woman Beating a Man



Fig. 3. 27 The First Blow

Fig.3.26-27. Source Nandi & et al. 2004-05

They almost held the entire command on markets, so such paintings may be a way to fulfill their demands as they wanted to catch the realism regarding the gendered hierarchies in India through paintings.

In the above painting (Fig. 3.26), a woman is depicted as beating a man with a broom, which may be a sarcastic display of those men, who were engaged in luxurious life as **Nandi & et al. (2004-05)** quoted, “the artists showed satirically how on wasting money on luxurious things resulting in bankruptcy as such ridiculed by their wives and mistresses and even beaten by them”. On the other hand, it may be an exhibition for the arrangement of humor because Kalighat paintings were typically made for market purposes only and such kind of paintings may be in demand at that time. Moreover, the man, who is being beaten by the woman, maybe a slave and is being punished by her mistress.

Another painting (Fig- 3.27) narrates the tale of Tarakeshwar affair of 1873, which is based on an incident of a man named Nabin Chandra Banerjee and his wife Elokeshi, who was killed by her husband due to a love affair with a priest (**Nandi & et al. 2004-5, Sanyal 2013**). In this picture, Elokeshi is shown as raising her hands for stopping him and her husband is depicted with an ax in his hand and about to kill her. Such kinds of imagery are the evidence of the status of womanhood in that society, where a woman was punished to death for an extramarital affair. As **Sanyal (2013)** stated that “various scenes related to the Tarakeshwar affair were portrayed in Kalighat repertoire: the meeting of Elokeshi and the Mahant at Tarakeshwar Shiva temple; Elokeshi offering betel and *hokkah* to the *mahant*”

The reason behind such kind of themes in artistic representations may be a result of gender hierarchies, in which a woman is restricted in patriarchal politics and punished brutally by her family or husband. On the contrary, the man was free to pursue accordingly to his will, which can be shown through the series of other paintings, in which women have become an object for men. Although in these paintings, other powerful imagery of feminine can also be observed through the ritualistic display of Goddess or through some satirical display of caricature representations. But the place of Goddess is very different than the common woman in the society. Furthermore, the other images of women including beating a man with a broom or getting a message on feet by a man may be a humorous or ironical arrangement to criticize the *babe*'s culture of that time. The primitive elements of Kalighat paintings have inspired many eminent artists like Jamini Roy, and after Kalighat paintings folk arts of India have been considered valuable and became famous worldwide.

After the mark of the 19th century, the seeds of modern traditions have been observed by numerous art critics; but there is no certain point, which can be considered particularly as 'modern'. Likewise, there are various styles of painting, which are considered modern but modernity in Indian paintings have been calculated after the arrival of Colonialism. With East India Company, Indian art has been channelized through various academic institutions as art colleges. These art colleges have contributed a lot to give Indian art a new paradigm for its development. On the contrary, their European academic module of art training has not been accepted entirely by all, but their role cannot be neglected in the improvisation of Indian paintings. Moreover, some of the critics associated with the documentation of gender politics in Indian art have criticized the colonial period for degrading artistic representations of India. In this context, the words of **Garimella (1985)** cannot be avoided, who stated that historical writings and academic institutional practices of the colonial period were the main cause to degrade its quality and to politicize its roots as called it feminine. She further added that the Indian Nationalist movement has also responsible for this degradation because their art was responses for such political construction and paintings have been equipped by them to construct an authentic nationalism (**Garimella 1998**). In this way, art has become a medium for political agencies, in which the significance of ancient art has lost its identity and the new production has lost its novelty. In the domain of modern paintings, the name of Raja Ravi Varma cannot be forgotten, who ruled in the art world during the 19th century. He is also considered as the father of modern Indian paintings as he is the first one, who used oil colors in his paintings and handled his work with Western techniques. Raja Ravi Varma had been formalizing the tools and techniques of Western paintings after molding them in Indian mythological theme (**Thakurata 1991, 2005, Kumar 1999 and 1999**).

The calendar art has come into the market through Ravi Varma, where the mythical icons of women have been portrayed with their beautification and ornamentation. Ravi Varma has also painted the other forms of women, but the major priorities have been given to their seductive presentation. The women in the paintings of Ravi Varma were only a medium for the seductive glance of beholders, who displayed themselves to satisfy the privileged male-gaze (**Uberoi 1990, Thakurta 1991**).

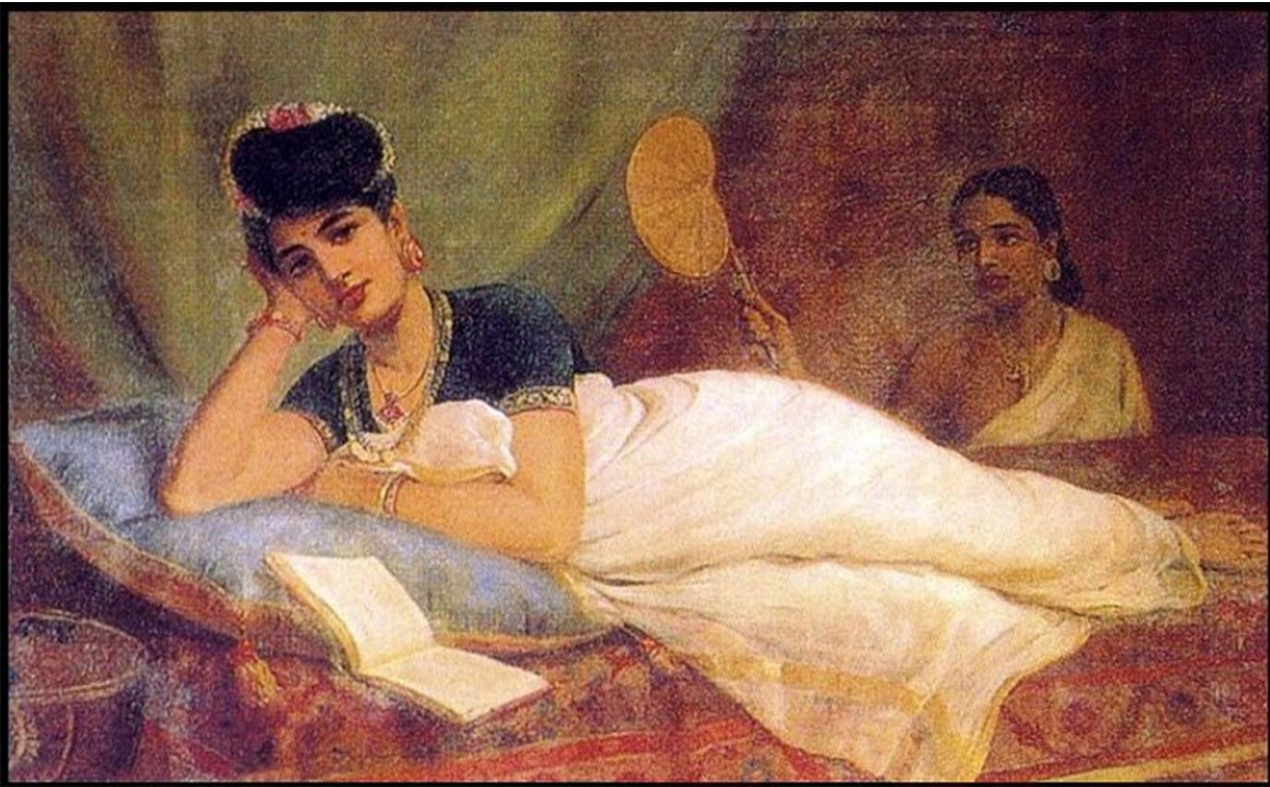


Fig. 3. 28 Reclining Woman (Un-dated) by Raja Ravi Varma, Oil on Canvas

Source- http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/59/Raja_Ravi_Varma,_Reclining_Woman.jpg

Reclining women of Varma has attractive gestures and position and similar treatment like Eduard Manet's 'Olympia' made in the 19th century (1863), which may be a result of Western influence on him. In this painting, the main figure has been made in the erotic mood to seduce her onlookers. The background or negative space is constructed through an interior of a bedroom, which is also representing the state of waiting for her male counterpart.

In Calcutta, the other renowned artistic oeuvre has come after the contribution of Tagore family and this time period is also called the Indian Renaissance period in the field of painting. This school, known as Bengal School, has been started in the early 20th century and has major significance in the revival of Indian modern paintings (**Banerji 2009, Kumar 1999, and Reynolds 2006**). Calcutta had become a major center for all literary and artistic activities and Bengal school had been formed under the direction of Tagore family during the British Raj.

In Tagore family, the most significant and leading personality was Abanindranath Tagore, nephew of Rabindranath Tagore, who made his individual style in which he depicted Indian figurative concept with foreign techniques after doing some experiment (**Thakurta 2005**). Although the paintings of Abanindranath Tagore are filled with indigenous spirit, inspired by the miniature themes but some of the women icons in his paintings seem to be the harbingers of political representation in the quest of nationalism in art.



Fig. 3. 29 Bharat Mata



Fig. 3. 30 Krishna Lila – Bhabollasa

Fig- 3.29 Bharat Mata, Abanindranath Tagore 1905, watercolor paint, Collection- Rabindra Bharati Society, Kolkata
Source-<http://blog.artsome.co/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/22.jpg>

Fig- 3.30 Krishna Lila – Bhabollasa, Abanindranath Tagore 1897, Watercolour Paint, Collection- Rabindra Bharati Society, Kolkata
Source- https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fe/Ganesh_Janani.jpg

In numerous paintings of Abanindranath Tagore, the women have been painted only for the political representation or for imitating the previous miniature style either they have their identity or not. For instance, the painting of Bharat Mata was only a source of political representation due to the colonial period in India. As well as, the founder of Bengal School, Abanindranath Tagore has represented the same erotica in the portrayal of a woman. Romanticism and sensuousness have been more focused by him rather than any other moralistic aspect. According to **Appasamy (1968)**, “He uses his subject

matter, his techniques, and his otherworldly beauty to communicate a feeling or to create a mood. He is not a moralist, painting for our edification but an artist painting for our delight. His pictures of the Gods are not icons meant for worship, but a poetic rendering of the imagery of the God” (Apsamy 1968). In the portrayal of womanhood, the sensuous and erotic imagery has been frequently repeated from the ancient times till the modern period but it is differentiated and changed its way after the mark of Amrita Sher-Gil, who represented woman as a subject rather than an object. The representation of woman has turned its meaning when female artists tried to capture the sad and tragic faces of women with their loneliness. In this way, Sher-Gil has changed the narratives of woman's depiction in a feministic approach and differentiated the gender significance in a unique style.

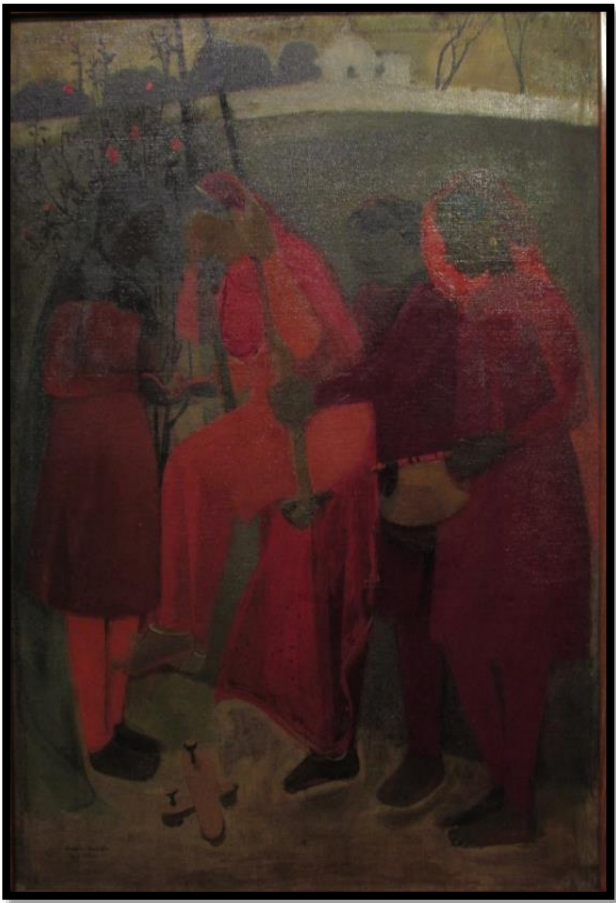


Fig. 3.31 The Swing

Fig- 3.31 The Swing, Amrita Sher-Gil, Oil on Canvass, c. 1940

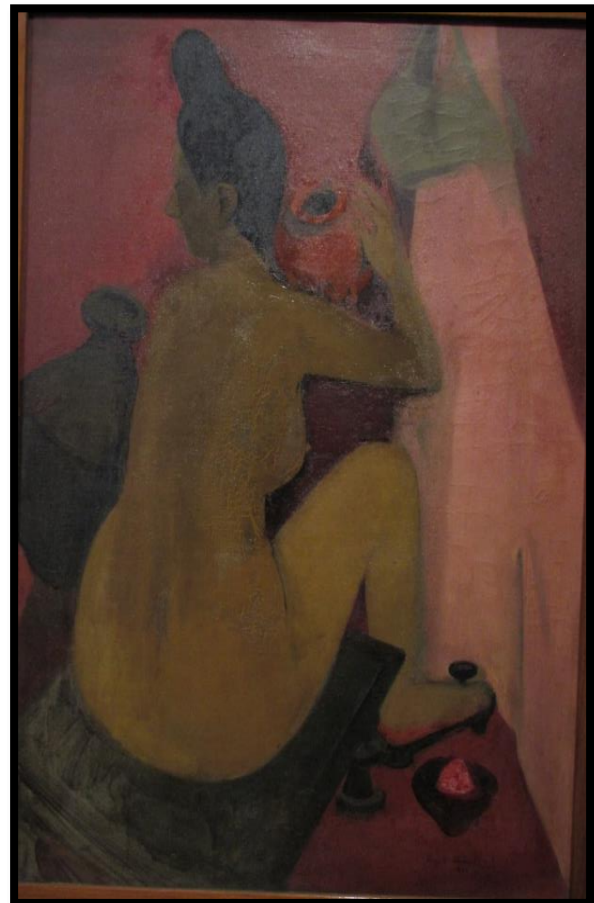


Fig. 3.32 Woman at Bath

Fig- 3.32 Woman at Bath, Amrita Sher-Gil, Oil on Canvass, c. 1940

Images Courtesy- National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

The seeds of feminism in modern Indian paintings initialized by Amrita Sher-Gil, who has been blessed with the par-excellence of Western art and a lover of the Indian ancient art (Fig- 3.31, 3.32).

She used her own nude body to frame ironical dimension for shifting the gaze of gender-biased society and for representing the ideology with her bisexuality as like her contemporary Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (**Kapur 2000, Gupta 2011, Sundaram 2010, Wojtilla 1981, Mitter 2007**).

Gender and art have been associated with each other from the very dawn of artistic representation but may not come into light earlier because a woman is remained neglected in the art field as like other occupation. During the 19th century, the participation of women has been started in all working sectors including paintings. In Indian scenario, gender politics has been noticed by a group of female critics, where Vidya Dahijia was probably the first art critic, who noticed gender significance in art and edited a book titled, *Representing the Body: Gender Issues in Indian Art* (1997) ', in which a group of critics contributed their thoughts on gender politics in art. The term gender has caught its roots during the 1960s, where a group of social activists has started fights for the equality of woman in the society in every sphere, but in paintings the word gender has come into existence after the world-famous essay of Linda Nochlin, " Why Have There Been No Great Women Artist (1971 and published in 1989) ", in which she criticized the social as well as institutional practices and looked up for the history of having female artists. In the Indian context, Dahejia was probably the first one, who raised gender issue and feministic interventions in the history of Indian art. Going through the history of female artists, the minority of females is a vexed phenomenon, which may be a cause for the objectification of woman in paintings. In modern Indian paintings, female artists have entered into the field of art, where the first female artist is considered to be Amrita Sher-Gil, an Indo-Hungarian artist, who took her academic training in Paris and then came to India. Thus, after the feministic approach of Sher-Gil, numerous female artists have adopted feministic ideologies in their paintings, and Indian modern paintings have been differentiated into two approaches. The first approach belonged to the objectification of woman by male artists, and the second one belonged to the subject-oriented theme by a female artist. These approaches are not entirely depended upon the ideologies of both the artists, but they also belonged to the ideology of their onlookers. As a production of art, each and every individual has the right to paint what he likes, but the production may become questionable when it belongs to gender politics. In India, there are a number of art activities, who have formed various groups and contributed significantly to the promotion of paintings. In these groups, the PAG has been founded by Francis Newton Souza in 1947 and M.F. Husain, Saiyad Haider Raza, K. H. Aara, V. S. Gaitondey are the main artists of this group. All members of this group have universal significance in the field of art and proved the landmarks of Indian modern paintings. M. F. Husain considered the leading pioneer for the modernization of pan-

Indian realm. Husain, who remained in controversies, has depicted uncountable paintings themed with female nude in which he has drawn the Indian religious icons and his muses with the sensuous appeal (**Chandra 2012, Kapur 1978, Nadkarni 1996**).

The portrayal of women in the paintings of Husain has been based on Hindu Goddesses, rural women, and his muses. In these subjects, her affection towards female form has been observed. Husain, apart from his religious contradiction, which is imposed by some fanatic Hindu people, is one of the greatest artists under the sun. He has painted numerous images of a woman in which sometimes he has painted naked and semi-naked images too. His paintings of women are most of the times represents his exotic feeling toward the woman.

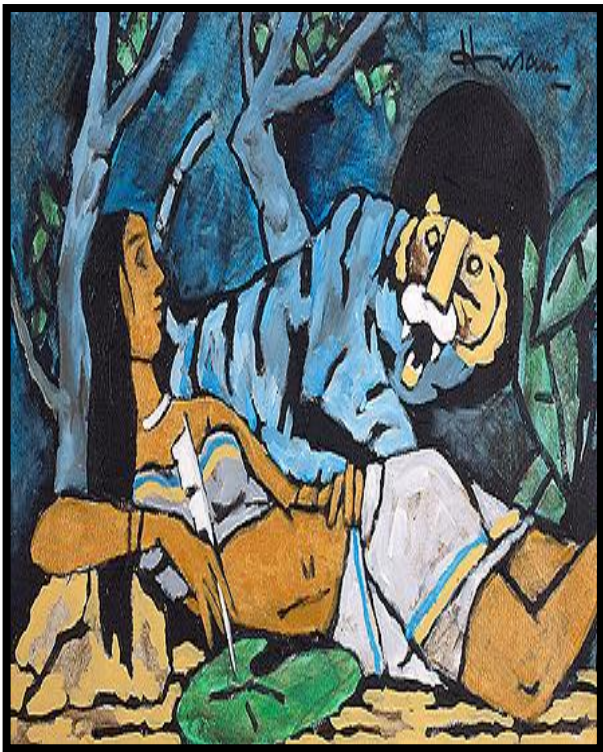


Fig. 3.33 Lady with Blue Tiger



Fig. 3.34 Parvati

Fig- 3.33 Lady with Blue Tiger by M.F. Husain, 2005, Oil on Canvass, 23x 35.5 in/ 58.4x 90.2 cm. Collection Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi

Source-http://mediacloud.saffronart.com/auctions/2011/autumn/mfhusain2436mtau11_big.jpg

Fig- 3.34 Parvati by Anjolie Ela Menon, from her series "Divine Mothers-1", 2013, Oil on Masonite, 48.5 x96.5"

Source- <http://blog.artsome.co/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/25.jpg>

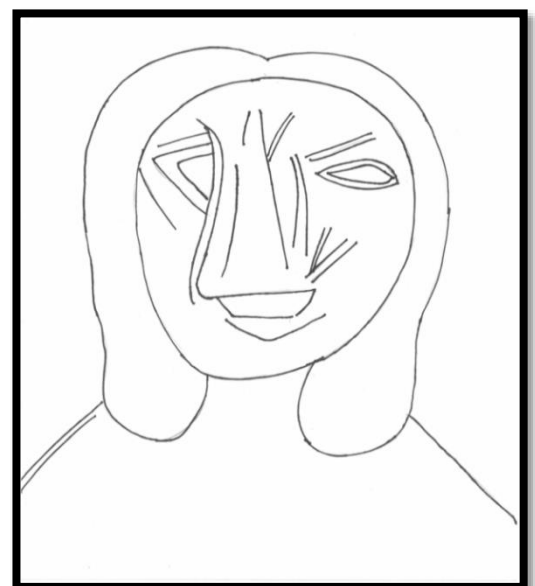
In the image titled 'Lady with Blue Tiger', the tiger may be a representative of male sexuality because, in India, male-sexuality has been always symbolized by animal forms. On the contrary,

another painting (Fig.3.34) titled Parvati, made by his contemporary female artist, Anjolie Ela Menon is based on a very different aspect. In this painting, Menon has raised a mythological issue, which is associated with the helplessness of a Goddess. In this story, Lord Ganesha, son of Lord Shiva and Parvati, has been killed by his own father because his mother (Parvati) has ordered him (to Ganesha) not to allow entry to anyone in her place while she was taking bath. Lord Shiva came at that moment and in his anger and ego, he killed his son and Parvati could not do anything to prevent the same. Therefore, Menon painted the story with powerful gestures of Parvati than the helpless one. In this way, going through the comparison, both of the artists (Husain & Menon) have painted woman but in a very different and opposite manner. On the contrary, Husain was the leading personality in the enhancement of Indian painting internationally and had a keen interest in Hindu religious manuscripts. He has painted many series on *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and a series on Mother Teresa in very unique form.

Husain's contemporary, Francis Newton Souza is known as the artist of devil-like images of women with heavy genital parts and strange faces. He has done thousands of sketches and from the very childhood has been obsessed with female nude; his obsession is not only limited with his academic nude models but he used to watch his mother during her bath. It is stated by **Raaj (2010)** that "Collectors and admirers, believes that he did over 12,000 sketches. Female nudes were an enduring obsession, with his early sexual stirrings triggered by watching his mother bathe through a peephole. By his own confession: "I used to watch her bathe herself through a hole I had bored in the door... I drew her on the walls and prudes thought I was rude. I can't see" (**Raaj 2010**).



**Fig. 3.35 Sketch of Devil like woman
Images of Souza**



**Fig. 3.36 Sketch of Devil like woman
Images of Souza**

He has married four times and remained in controversies for his appealing and flaming nudes. According to **Ghose (2010)**, Souza was an iconoclast. His distorted figures challenged convention; his essays provoked the intelligentsia. He led a wildly interesting life, punctuated by many women, marriages, and divorces, split between the cities of Mumbai, London, and New York. His art enhanced the eye's image of the world by distorting it. Like Georges Rouault and Francis Bacon, he was an image breaker (Fig. 3.35, 3.36).

Unlike the Indian feminist artist, Gogi Saroj Pal, exploring the women-oriented phenomena in her paintings after taking inspiration from the ancient Indian Art (Fig.3.37-38). The nudes of Pal are consecrated exceedingly with the commemoration of self-interpretation in opposition to the male dominating culture of a society (**Kumar 2008, Bawa 2009, Lutzker and Ann 2002, Sen 2002**). After comparing the paintings of Pal and Souza, it is considered that their representations are entirely different from each other which may be the result of gender difference. The women in the Souza's paintings are only the object of offerings with their horrified appearances (**Kapur 1978, Mago 2001, Tuli 1997, Saffron Art 2012**).

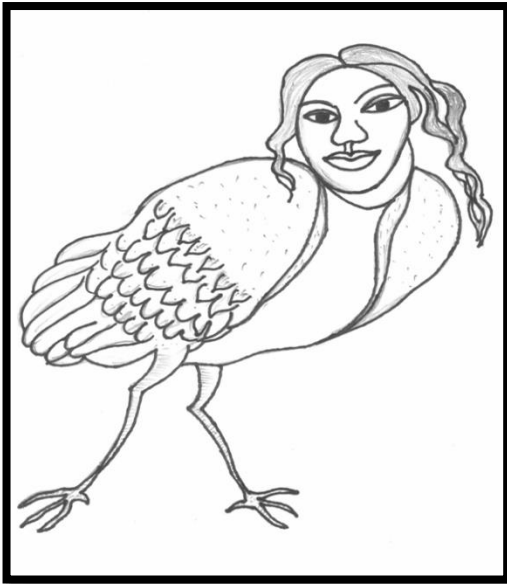


Fig. 3.37 Kinnari Series of Gogi

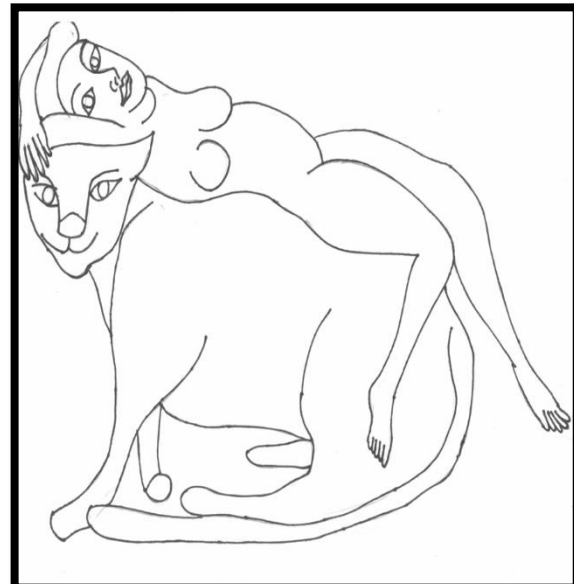


Fig. 3.38 Hatyogini Nayika of Gogi

Nalini Malani is also a contemporary feminist artist, who is working on paintings, media and shadow play. She was born in Karachi in 1946 (in undivided India, now in Pakistan). She has made a painting titled 'Rethinking of Ravi Varma', where she depicted the major female icons of Varma's paintings in a corner and painted her icons in the middle of the painting. The main focal point is a large female image, which is supporting Nalini's icons in the process of rejecting those forms of Varma's

paintings. This major figure is pointing towards the female forms of Varma, which may be a way to reject those previous depicted forms of beauty and ornamentation.

On the other hand, the contemporary artist, Jatin Das, is capturing the same erotic and sexually charged woman in his paintings. His main concern of paintings is a man-woman relationship, in which he mainly depicts nude female figures (Mago 2001). The woman has been depicted in huge muscular body-type which is a signature style of the artist in numerous paintings. Jatin Das has given much attention to muscular structure because he has made his role icon to Michelangelo as it is stated by Punja that “adopting Michelangelo as his hero, he produced 300 sketches every day” (2003). So the anatomy and body structure has become his most preferred style from the beginning of his paintings, where bare bodies are portrayed.



**Fig. 3.39 Rethinking of Ravi Varma,
Nalini Malani**



Fig. 3.40 Innovation

Fig 3.39 source and details

Fig- 3.40 Innovation, Jatin Das, 2011, 48"x 60" Acrylic on Canvass, Collection International Creative Art Center

Source-<http://www.icacart.com/gallery/innovation>

In this way, the difference of depiction can be seen in both of the artist's works regarding the woman. The pain and sufferings of womanhood encountered deliberately in Nalini Malani's work, who has taken the path of feministic ideology in which, she is engaged with his puppets in a series entitled Media.

Seema Kohli, an Indian contemporary artist, is also engaged in demonstrating the feminine potency and ascendancy with spiritual and sublime creativity (Fig.3.41). The various postures of feminine characters are used, which looked like the protagonist and revolutionist, and they are also the true harbinger of feminization in paintings (Kumar 2008, Pande 2008). In another image (Fig.3.42), Ramachandran, a contemporary male artist, has portrayed the same ancient concept of a woman at her toilet.



Fig. 3.42 The Divine Feminine

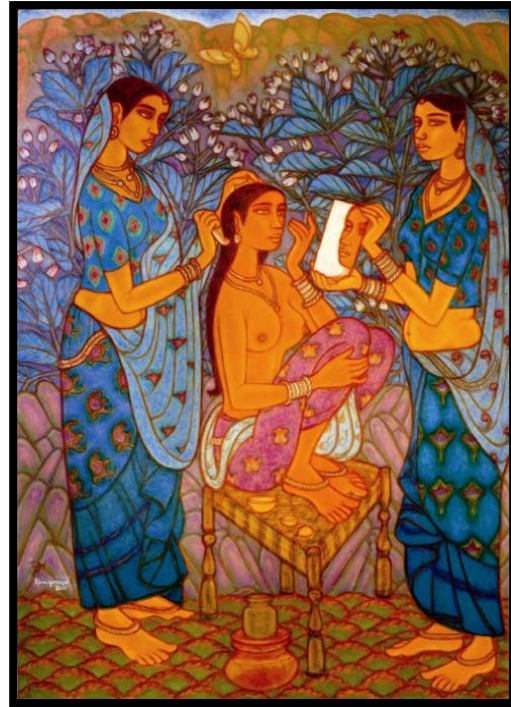


Fig. 3.41 The Brides Toilet

Fig- 3.41 The Divine Feminine, Seema Kohli, 2007, 48"x 60" inc. mixed media on canvass, Collection-Contemporary art gallery

Source-

http://www.masterart.in/sites/default/files/SEEMA%20KOHLI%20MIXED%20MEDIA%20ON%20CANVAS%2048X48INCH%202007_0.jpg

Fig- 3.42 The Brides Toilet (exhibited in 2008), 2006, by A. Ramachandran Oil on Canvass, 198.1x142.2 cm.

Source- http://grosvenorgallery.com/wp-content/gallery/ramachandran-a/ram_9-bridestoilet_web.jpg

Thus, after the feminization of art by Sher-Gil, there are many female artists, who are engaged in seeking some contributive role of women through paintings. On the other hand, many male artists are busy in capturing the sensual imagery of women on their surface. In this context, as per the artistic representation, nothing can be taken entirely as offensive, whether it is female portrayal or any other thing. Sexuality in art is not only associated with artists but it is associated with the onlookers too. In the name of art, each and every individual has the choice to make or to have what he or she wants and artists have their own ideology regarding female portrayal. Therefore, the phenomenon of gender is also affecting their representations, because individuals are channelized through the social construction of patriarchy. In such a society, the woman is symbolized with the divine power, on the one hand, and also symbolized as a medium to evoke erotic appeal, on the other. As Italian Philosopher **Croche** stated that the art is an expression of impression not an expression of expression. Therefore, all the artists have their own perception regarding female depiction in their paintings. Male artists have depicted a woman in sensuous form, which is a way of representing art but their perception becomes questionable after the advancement and involvement of a woman in the field of paintings. The sensuous and erotic imagery of their own body may not be acceptable to them on the display because instead of sexuality, they have other significant roles in society. As a human being, they also want equality and justice and painting is also a way to present such unfair issues of woman's life.

This is discussed already that such issue has been raised in Indian paintings by Sher-Gil, who changed the sensual imagery of a woman in a tragic display of their life. Ravi Varma's so-called religious icons are full of erotic engagements and representatives of sensuous appeal in disguise of mythical heroines (**Uberoi 1990, Thakurta 1991**). Husain was also fascinated by the magnificence of womanhood and derived by an emotional attachment towards Indian feminine. He also announced that his subject will remain women only in his last phase of life. His muses, including Madhuri Dixit (**Chandra 2012**) have been depicted in many of his works. On the Contrary, the painted women of Pal are not offering their nakedness for male-gaze because, being bare, they are celebrating their freedom and sexuality rather than seducing their onlookers, they are attacking this very gaze (**Rao 1999, Lutzker and Ann 2002**). Souza was absolutely possessed by his vamps, who are imbibed with horrifying identity and lustful attitude, they also look like the whorish women of Bombay (**Kapur 1978, Tuli 1997**). Seema Kohli is fully against these phenomena and concentrated on the divine theme in her paintings where the *Yoginis*, ferries, myth, mind, and movement are playing with the entire world ironically. The work validates a woman's spirituality, emerging aligned with the

male dominating society (**Shailaja 2017, Pande 2008**). Rekha Rodwittiya has been inspired by feminist beliefs, in which the images are dealt with the issues like isolation, degradation, subjugation, and harassment. They look like female protagonists, who are displaying themselves sexually after objectifying the male gaze by their frontal gaze (**Magar 2012, Lutzker and Ann 2002, Farooqi 2006**).

3.11 CONCLUSION

The depiction of female figures has been intermingled with the aesthetical delight in paintings from the ancient age. This very depiction can always be considered in various phases of paintings with different identities and forms. In this concern, the objectification of women has been done to evoke sensual pleasure or to celebrate male-dominance from the ancient time till recent ages. This kind of objectification has come to notice after the arrival of feminist artists because representations of the feminine are better accomplished by the woman artists only. Being a woman, they can feel the avoidance of women in significant roles on the painted surfaces; so the important aspects related to the woman's pain and happiness have been observed nicely by them. As per the analysis of history to modern Indian art, the role of women in paintings has been mainly equipped to portray the most preferred forms, directed by patriarchal hegemonies. There are mainly two types of forms of women; the first one is related to beauty and sensual pleasure and the other one related to the social code of conducts. This style of depiction has changed its way through the paintings of Sher-Gil, where poor or marginalized Indian villagers (women) have come as a sight of exploration. Then female artists of modern Indian paintings have started to contribute significant subjects related to the social injustice, gender inequality, and women unemployment and so on to protest such issues. Although the erotic and non-significant portrayal is still there, it has decreased to some extent. Nude or bare bodies of women are always considered as a form of objectification by numerous art critics. Naked figures of the female are also considered as an aspect of gender politics; in modern times, the female artist has also depicted female nudes but in a very different manner. Sometimes they have also used their own body as a module and Sher-Gil is probably the first Indian woman to do so. In actual sense, the representations of female nude by female artists are entirely different than those of the male artists. This difference can be observed through their ways of depiction because male artists have mostly preferred the sensual part through nudity, while female artists have concentrated on other real issues. These subjects have been transformed by female artists for the purpose of questioning or rethinking. These subjects have been changed by them into the form of working women, female protagonists, and shameless nudes. The pictorial narratives of previous times, which are related to

mythological themes, love poetry, waiting for the lover, scenes of the male and female union, have been changed into the feminine fables. Space and background, which enhance those erotic and sensual appeals of the painting, have been changed into new dimensions, where female artists mostly used those supporting objects on a very small scale. Moreover, the background has been left empty or blank by numerous female artists; for instance, Sher-Gil and Gogi Saroj Pal have mostly ignored other background details. This avoidance or less consideration regarding the background of the paintings by female artists may be a way to give main significance to the main figure (woman) only. In this way, the arrangement of color has been proved a better medium to create structures in the painting rather than other supportive objects.

In the field of art, there are numerous factors, which contribute to framing the artistic representation. In these factors, social factor and surroundings of the individuals play a major role because all art is basically related with the personal or social encounters of the individuals. The art or representation is something, which comes to the mind after getting inspired by something or to capture something. These things may belong to realistic encounters or imagination of the artists and represent on the surface for visual communication. Thus, art is the biggest and the easiest medium to communicate ideas and feelings through symbolic or non-symbolic forms. In ancient time, art belonged specifically to religious sects for promoting deities and rituals and it was always channelized by patronage or rulers till the pre-colonial period. Therefore, the artists had to portray according to the will of their patrons; they had no individual liberty to depict what they want. Then art has also been used as an act of social discourse, and the depiction of women has also become a part of this religious and social display. For instance, the first image of women has been in the form mother Goddess or the Goddess of sexuality, worshipped symbolically through her genitals too. Because, at that time, sexuality and procreation may be taken as a universal bliss because people were amazed regarding the reproductive power and procreation aspect of the feminine. In ancient days, the people were unaware of scientific knowledge; so, the birth-giving power and sexual union were considered a divine task. In this way, fertility and procreation played an important role at that time and the sexual depiction of Lajja Gauri, or the boon-giving aspect of mother Goddess, has been accepted as a major subject. This Goddess imagery has been divided into numerous categories as per the various religions, but beauty and ornamentation have always been preferred by the artists. The difference has been created, when artists became liberal after Independence and started to work individually. Female participation as professional artists have been increased and this participation changed the

way of women's portrayal. The observation of spectators has also been changed as per the social development.

To conclude, it can be seen that the depiction of women by male artists is entirely different from that of the female artists. This kind of objectification is a dominating phenomenon in the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma and Francis Newton Souza. To some extent, being a woman, female artists have the right to shift such offerings into some subjective compositions to show their other accomplishments besides of aesthetical and physical depiction. On the contrary, the male artists who have depicted the female figure in full erotic and stigmatic manner are not quite guilty, because the physical beauty of women is celebrated and encountered from the very ancient age of art. It is to be noted here that in an earlier age the social status of women was not much improved than that of today, but now female has the power for proclaiming their individuality through art. On the other hand, if male artists are exhibiting such sensuality of female figures, their freedom of expressing themselves cannot be ignored; but the objectification of womanhood has always been a radical phenomenon. This phenomenon has been occupied with various factors, i.e. the societal perception, the psycho-analytical vision of the individuals, and the inner consideration.

4. RAVI VARMA AND FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA: THE PREVALENT STEREOTYPE OF SENSUAL DISPLAY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the portrayal of women has been observed from the pre-historic period to the contemporary time. In the present study, the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma have been observed to seek the significance of the depiction of women from the pre-Independence times. He was one of the most renowned artists of modern Indian art and was responsible for originating new paradigms to increase the accessibility of art for all the classes, including the marginalized and middle-class group. After this, the paintings of Francis Newton Souza have been critically overlooked to trace the connection between the works of both the artists. Francis Newton Souza is one among the forerunners of Post-Modernism. He adopted an entirely Westernized approach as compare to Varma's in the representation of a woman's body and made it shameless and vicious for the onlookers.

4.2 BEAUTY AND SENSUALITY: WESTERN ENCOUNTERS IN INDIAN ART

As mentioned earlier, Ravi Varma made numerous paintings on women and his style was a combination of Indian mythological themes and the Western academic techniques (Ramachandran, 2003). Apart from his creative fusion of Indo-Western style in depiction, the reason behind his popularity as a modern artist is probably the invention of those oleographs which were produced on the stories of Hindu mythology. He transformed the very Indian sensual imagery of women as per the Western trend. The representation of woman in Ravi Varma's paintings is full of erotic display and offering (Varma, 2003). First of all, in the matter of theme, they are characters of Indian idealistic module and, secondly, they are serving themselves to its onlookers. The space of these paintings is occupied by male-dominated hegemony. He has showcased a variety of subjects in which women have been displayed as engaged in daily life, bathing, laying on the bed, sitting, playing musical instruments, and narrating the mythological stories. In all of these subjects, it can be easily observed that he mostly painted beautiful and fair skinned women with a well-proportioned body. The gestures of all the female figures have been mostly painted with an inviting attitude. All of them belong to the imaginative world and are far from the realistic aspects of the life of women, particularly as per Indian standard. After getting into the Western premises, numerous Indian male artists adopted this seductive display in realistic, abstract or semi-abstract style.

4.3 RAVI VARMA: IMAGING THE BEAUTY AND VOLUPTUOUSNESS IN MYTHOLOGY

Ravi Varma belonged to that era when East India Company has established its roots in India. He was born in Travancore and closely connected with a royal family of South India. He is also one among those artists, who may be obsessed with the beauty and sensuous delight of the feminine because he often paints them beautiful and enchanting.

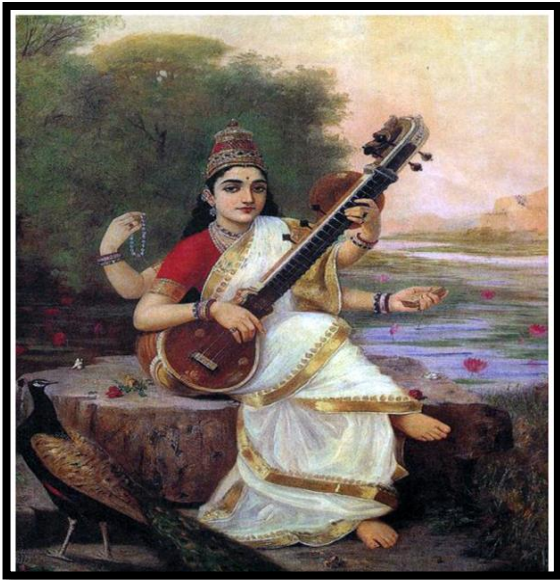


Fig. 4.1 Goddess Saraswati

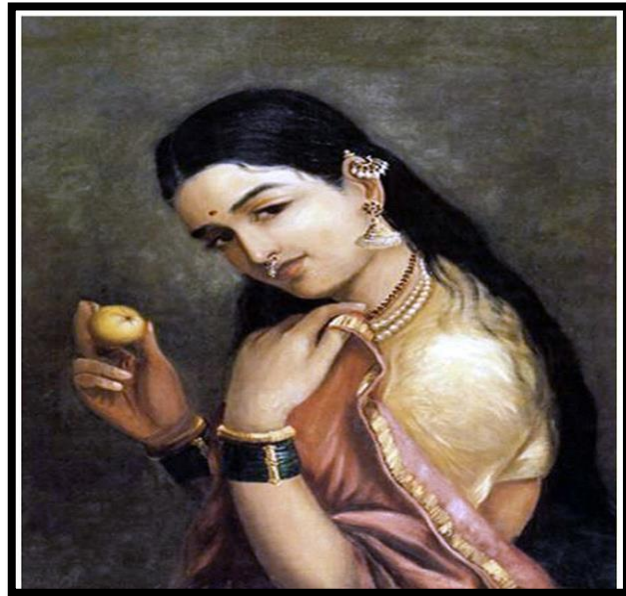


Fig. 4.2 Lady holding a Fruit

Fig- 4.1 Oil Painting on canvas by Raja Ravi Varma dated 1896 - Maharaja Fateh Singh Museum, Lakshmi Vilas Palace, Vadodara (Baroda), Gujarat

Fig- 4.2 Oil painting on canvas by Raja Ravi Varma - National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.

In the portrayal of women, he has painted certain themes, which are closely related to Indian mythology, but he portrayed other common themes too, in which women are engaged in day to day activities or resting, lying on bed, waiting for her lover, playing musical instruments, associated with birds and animals and flowers and so on. In mythological theme, he painted them in traditional Indian outwears, prevalent at that time, which represents the efforts of the artist to create an aesthetical approach with some certified norms of woman's appearance.

In this context, Ravi Varma has executed the woman, who is dominated by the hegemonic tendency of body display but covered in Indian mythological layout. Each and every religious manuscript of Hindu mythology has a story about womanhood as defining the physical desires. Varma has given a deeper insight into it through his work and give a shape to those religious icons in the form of

artwork. During the discussion, **P. Uberoi (2000)** added that commercial production of artworks was responsible to make the woman as a subject of the display. The commercialization of art, which is popularized by Varma has a strong impact in the development of making a woman as a subject of desire or as an object of erotic pleasure. Various subjects including Krishna as surrounded by girls; Draupadi as humiliated in the courtroom; or women as an offered commodity and like many of such subjects were depicted again and again. The calendar or Bazar art then again equipped to target the very subject through erotic display and woman become a thing for male-gaze. It is mentioned that

“The *gopis* cover their nakedness with their hands and plead with a smug Krishna for the turn of their clothes, neatly folded beside him on the branches of a tree [see **Mode 1970:27**]. Adam and Eve hold their fig-leaves coyly in place, watched by a smirking serpent. The disrobing of Draupadi is enacted before a court of spectators and the voyeur-buyer. The year of a burqa is provocatively raised to confer a seductive glance on the viewer. A set of Muslim women of all ages are revealed at prayer. Unveiled before an invisible beholder. With the exception of Adam, whose predicament was the fault of Eve, men are not on display! In a sense, the 'commodification' of women through calendar art is implicit in the function of 'display: but it is made explicit by the consociation of images of women with a range of material products rather after the manner of commercial advertising”.

(Uberoi 1990)

‘The Galaxy of Musicians’ is a famous painting of Ravi Varma in which Varma has tried to frame out the regional diversity of Indian continental theme. The painting was depicted with female figures having a musical instrument in their hands like a band of musicians. But the otherness of the painting is pointed on female depiction only for the amusement of the male-centered norms as per the vision of the feminist perception because music is signified as a part of entertainment and exoticism in traditional Indian antiquities and in Western too. For instance, **Darwin** stated about music that “It is the erotic indeed perhaps vibratory, force in all organisms, even those without auditory systems, that sexualizes the body, metabolizes organs, and prepares and solicits it for courtship” (**Darwin 1981**). The women with the musical instrument in this painting have the approach to evoke sensuous compatibility for the gaze of the viewers. Ravi Varma has tried to settle the Indigenous spirit in the painting but the facial appearance and physical structure of each figure seem to be borrowed by South Indian region. The construction and details of the figures can be identified by their black curly hair, round head and broad nose due to climatic reflections on the artist, rather than a variety of Indian cultures through the painting. In this order, the painting of contemporary feminist artist Nalini

Malani entitled, 'Rethinking of Ravi Varma,' can be analyzed to differentiate the persona behind the basic treatment of the concerned painting, in which, Nalini Malani has made all the icons of Ravi Varma's galaxy in the corner of the painting and made her protagonists, in which one dominating figure is pointing on the icons of Varma as like they are criticizing the women of Ravi Varma's painting.



Fig. 4.3 Galaxy of Musician

Fig-4.3 Oil painting on canvas by Raja Ravi Varma - Sri Jayachama Rajendra Art Gallery, Jaganmohan Palace, Mysore, Karnataka.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raja_Ravi_Varma,_Galaxy_of_Musicians.jpg

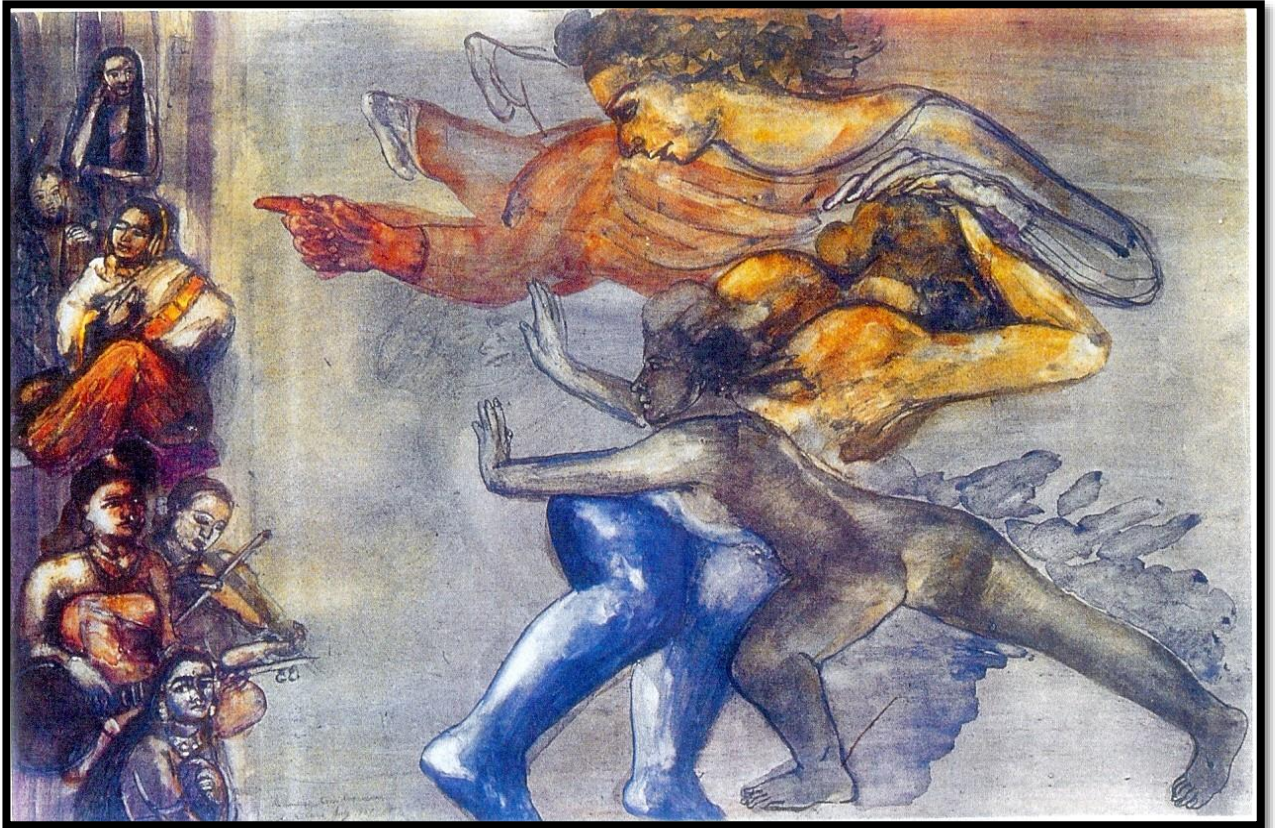


Fig. 4.4 Rethinking of Ravi Varma

Fig.4.4 Source-Sinha 2003

Nalini Malani made the painting entitled, “Rethinking of Raja Ravi Varma”, for the reawakening of those people of society who considered Ravi Varma as an Ideologist (**Kapur 2000**). If the painting is summarized, there is a rejection towards the sensuous icons of Varma after doing a revolt by the Malani’s women as their rethinking in the society. The painting’s protagonists seem to be highly unsatisfied with the presentation of Varma’s traditional objectification. As Kapur gave a statement, “Nalini Malani sets up a quarrel with the nineteenth-century artist and offers a virtual summation of her iconographic serial of women up to that moment (Fig-4.4)”.

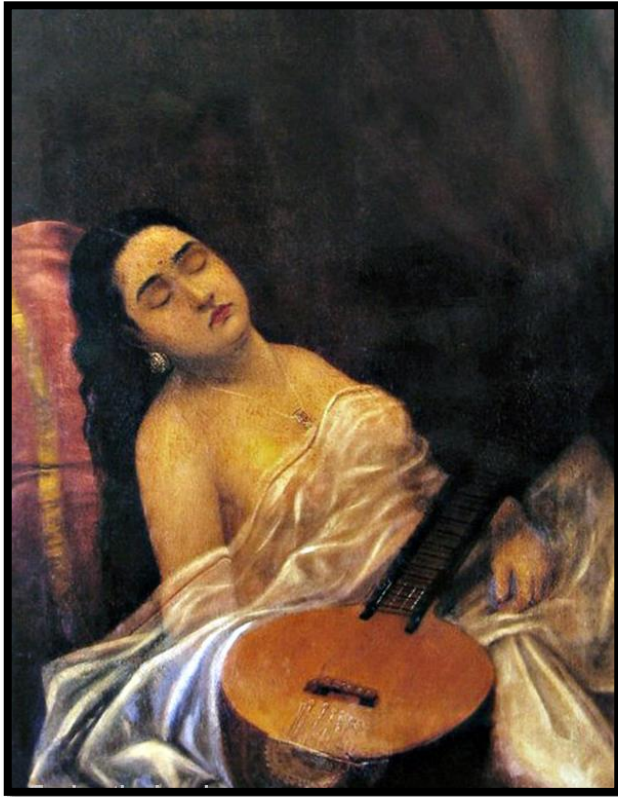


Fig. 4.5 Sleeping Beauty



Fig. 4.6 Lady with a Pillow

Fig- 4.5 Oil painting on canvas by Raja Ravi Varma - Maharaja

Fateh Singh Museum, Lakshmi Vilas Palace, Vadodara (Baroda), Gujarat. Source: <https://www.elwallpapers.com/ravi-varma-paintings/>

Fig- 4.6 Oil painting on canvas by Raja Ravi Varma - Collection of Dr. M.A. Chidambaram, Chennai, Tamilnadu.

Source: <https://www.dollsofindia.com/product/lady-resting-on-pillow-ravi-varma-reprint-OW39.html>

In Varma's 'Sleeping Beauty' the woman again depicted in seducing manner through the half-nude dressing and musical instrument. In this painting, the hand of the women has made upon the private part of her instead of the instrument, which is again a symbolism of music for generating erotic appeal. The woman is covered with a transparent sari in the mid of the breasts and laying in a sensual position. In this category, the reclining women of Varma can be considered significant by her attractive gestures and position and have similar treatment like that of Edouard Manet's Olympia made in the nineteenth century. If Varma's reclining woman is compared with the Olympia, it can be found out that both are having the same entertaining par-excellence to engage their viewers. The only difference is that Varma's reclining woman is covered with clothes that is again an Indian stereotype of projection. "Both Manet and Ravi Varma introduce the European single point perspective of viewing the woman propped up high on cushions, looking down to confront the viewer" (Sen 2002).

Another painting of Varma entitled 'Lady resting on a pillow' has also drawn only to stir the erotic sentiments for the viewers because the woman is holding a musical instrument in an unconscious state and wearing a transparent white sari in half nude condition. It appears that the woman is only pretending to be asleep and the musical instrument is kept on the private part of the women, which is looking like a phallus to create a sexual display to fulfill the demand of the women objectification for the lovers. The sitting position of the woman is also very inviting because the woman has been sitting in a seductive position with opening legs. The fetish approach can be caught by the fleshy and semi-nude adjustment and the background details are not highlighted to give more emphasis to the projection of woman.

In the depiction of women, Ravi Varma has also depicted Goddesses, who are fully covered and full of religious sentiments, but he also classified his female figures with caste and class division. Numerous painting of Ravi Varma can be differentiated by their class, as elite women have been made full-covered in ideal forms while the working and poor women are made mostly as semi-nude and full of physical attraction. Whatever the concept behind these depictions, they shed the light on the objectification of womanhood, where one part of the coin represents the Indian women with artistic genius, and another is the representative of the male-oriented visualization of them for their engagements of erotic appeal.

4.4 FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA: SHAPING THE FEMALE BODY THROUGH MODERN WAYS

Francis Newton Souza was born in Goa, a Portuguese state of India, in a middle-class family and his father died very soon. During his schooling, he was expelled from the school due to some nude graffiti designs. He moved to Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay for his art education but was suspended in 1945 due to some political affairs. The first exhibition of PAG group was organized in 1949 in Baroda (Gujrat) and in Bombay consequently, where, the group gained attention on a larger scale. Their manifesto was very fascinating and clubbed with a number of aspects including Indian primitive and folk style, temple erotica, and realistic encounters and so on. The "absolute freedom for content and technique" is the only preferred aspect because they were not bound by any art movement or school, but their representations have been channelized through the 'laws of aesthetic order, plastic coordination and color composition' (Souza 1994). They are considered as a harbinger for making Indian art truly modern and vigorous. Later on, Mohan Samant, Vasudeo S. Gaitonde,

and Krishen Khanna joined the group in the 1950s and there were numerous artists, who got inspired by the progressive module of PAG.

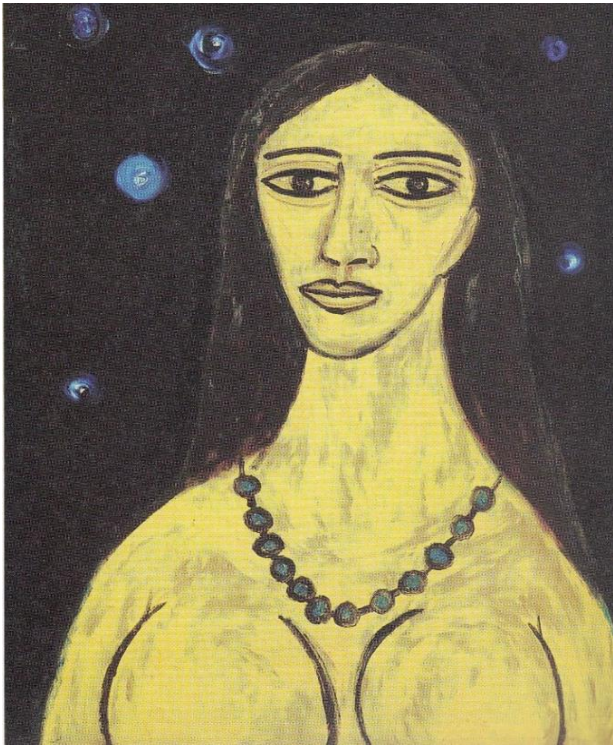


Fig. 4.7 Portrait of a Young woman against starry

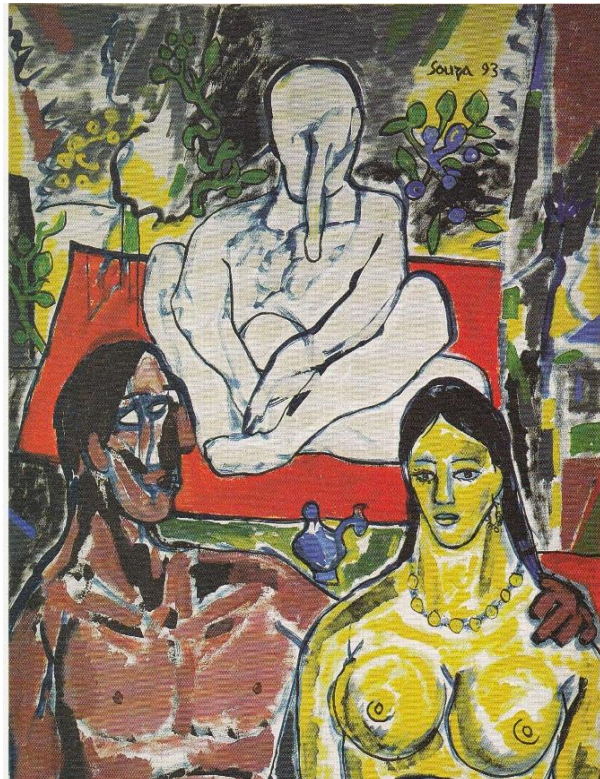


Fig. 4.8 Triad, Background

Fig- 4.7 Oil on Board 48X24 Inches, 1984, Source-Dhoomimal Art Gallery

Fig- 4.8 Acrylic on Canvass, 70x45 inches 1993, Source-Dhoomimal Art Gallery

Therefore, the group has led its followers on the zenith of individualistic styles of representations. Souza left India in 1949 and went to London. He has gained name and fame nationally and internationally through his different styles of depiction. He was not only inspired by erotic temple imagery of Khajuraho, but had also some influence of the Western modern artists including Titian and Eduart Manet, Henri Matisse, Picasso, Goya, and many more.



Fig. 4.9 The Three Girls (1949)

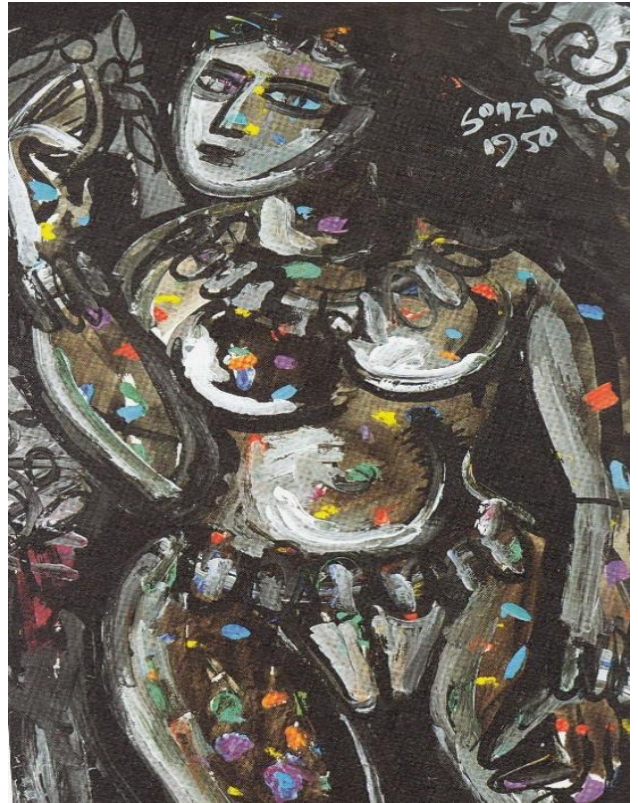


Fig. 4.10 Untitled (1950)

Fig- 4.9 The Three Girls, Souza, Oil on board, Size unknown, Galerie Palette, Zurich, Source: Kurtha 2006

Fig-4.10 Untitled, Souza, Source-Dhoomimal Art Gallery

4.5. FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA: THE REBEL ARTIST

History of painting has numerous movements and isms, which has contributed significantly to the arrival of modern art. Of all, Dadaism movement, which started in Zurich (Switzerland) in the early 20th century, has carried a powerful fellowship, which is adopted by various contemporary art movements, including pop art too. Dadaism had come into light during the First World War when a group of some artists rejected the previous norm of aesthetic representation and started manifesting their anger through artworks. This movement is also defined by the poet Tristan Tzara (1896-1963) as "Dada doubts everything/ Dada is an armadillo/everything is Dada too/Beware of Dada" (Matheson 2006). The basic aim of Dada artists was to protest by using vandalized forms of surrounding objects in their art to shock the people. As with all other International movements, Dadaism also played a major role in the development of modern Indian paintings as the symbols of

Dadaism can be seen in the works of many contemporary artists. Indian art has changed its way and jumped into the stream of modern world after Independence.

The artists of PAG group had some influences of Dada, Neo-dada, Pop art and abstract art, and were particularly considered radical and rebel because they developed their own individual style after getting inspired by European academic module. In this context, the paintings of Francis Newton Souza have some rebellious as well as awakening components in respect of the portrayal of women. He painted numerous sensuous and shockingly bare figures of a woman in his tremendous artistic oeuvre. He was a strong follower of his will and artistic genius from his school days. In this context, there are so many things, which reveal his powerful troops with the Dada artists because he always represented an art, which has a novel and shocking approach. Therefore, whether his work is appreciated or criticized, it always remained in limelight in the art world. Souza, in his early artistic times, had visited an Indian erotic site, Khajuraho, and its influence can be seen in most of his earlier works. In the depiction of womanhood, he always used a voluptuous woman body with huge genitals, which is a standard of Indian historic art; but he dramatically increased their body parts and made them focal.

This kind of hyperbolic transformation in the depiction of a woman is the landmark of his paintings. In this way, Dada artists were also against such pre-decided norms of aesthetical representation like Souza. Here, this point can be considered to seek out such rebellious and meaningful art forms that Souza was highly inspired by the temple erotica of India. But he used it in a very different manner, like he increased the body size than the actual one, changed the eye-soothing gesture of women into disturbing and shocking manner (Fig- 4.12).

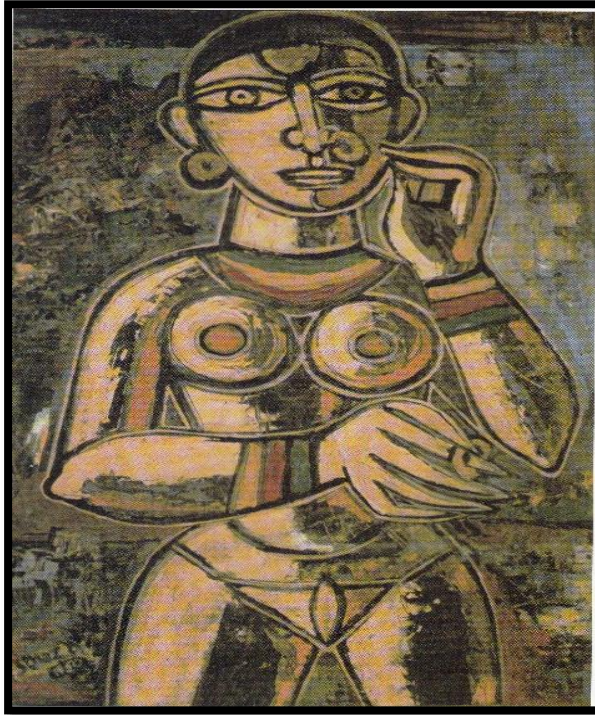


Fig. 4.11 Hindu Girl with Nose Ring

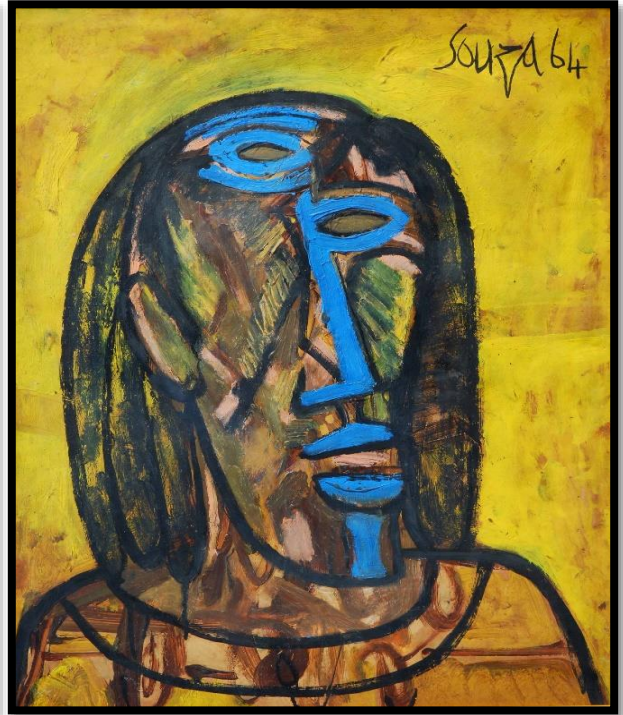


Fig. 4.12 Untitled

Fig- 4.11 Hindu Girl with Nose Ring, Oil On Board, 39x25 inches, 1950

Fig- 4.12 Untitled, Oil On Board, 30x 24 inches, 1964

Courtesy, Dhoomimal Art Gallery New Delhi

In most of his paintings, women are particularly associated with stark nudity and devious attitude and that makes those women a piece of consideration. Before him, no one has represented such distorted and evil like a woman in India, in which she does not offer herself with the soft and delicate appeal as the previous prevailed trends of historical paintings.

In relation to Dada artists, we can recall Marcel Duchamp, who displayed his anger and restlessness with the help of some unethical projection of existing objects. For instance, he used a urinal as a fountain and Mona Lisa's reproduction with a mustache (Fig-4.13). The main intention of Duchamp may only be to destroy the concept of pleasing or meaningful art as a mark of protest against the ongoing world war, as he generally mentioned about his ready-made productions: "My idea was to

choose an object that wouldn't attract me, either by its beauty or by its ugliness. To find a point of indifference in my looking at it, you see” (Tomkins 2014).

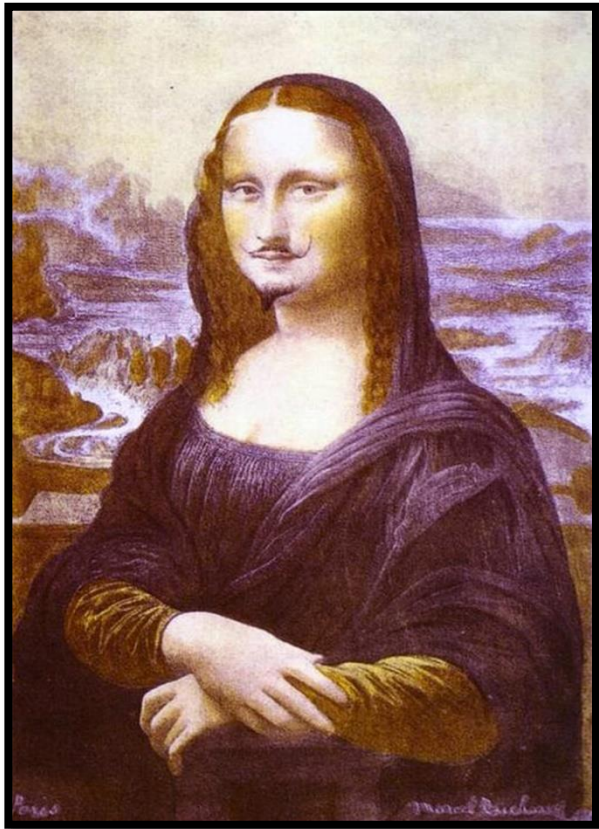


Fig. 4.13 L.H.O.O.Q.

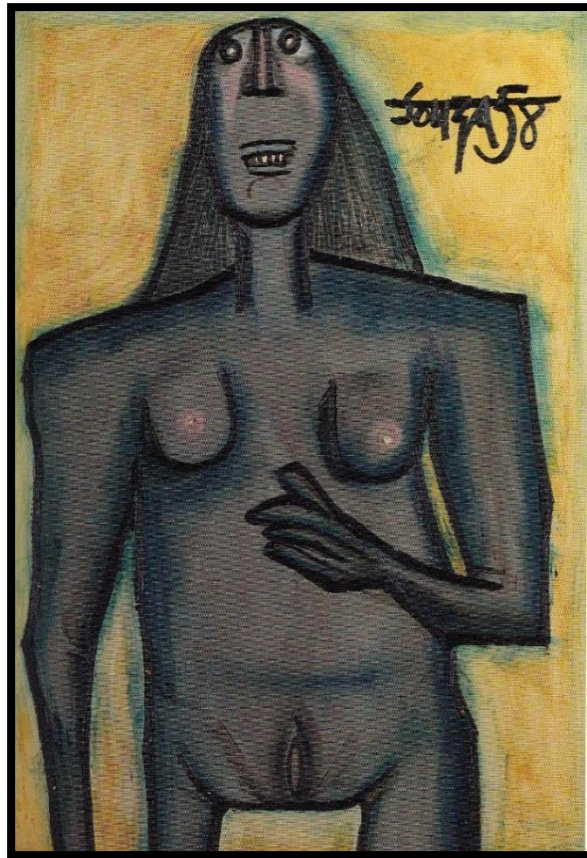


Fig. 4.14 Miss Universe 1999 A. D.

Fig- 4.13 'L.H.O.O.Q.' by Marcel Duchamp, 1919, Pencil work on a reproduction of Mona-Lisa, Collection- Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA, USA

<http://mattblake.net/210/images/Duchamp,%20Mona%20Lisa%20with%20Moustache%201919.jpeg>

Fig- 4.14 'Miss Universe 1999 A. D.' by Souza, 1958, Oil on Board, 120x 90 cm,

Source: Aziz Kurtha from the book, "Francis Newton Souza- Bridging Western and Indian Modern Art", 2006, Mapin Publication.

In a similar way, Souza has also made a painting titled "Miss Universe 1999 A. D." in which, an ugly, grey woman has been depicted with a horrible face (Fig-4.14). The representation of the painting is entirely different from its title because the image of miss universe has always been associated with the certain perception of beauty. On the contrary to this image, Souza's painting is represented in an opposite way of those certified dimensions.

This painting has been depicted in 1958, and the purpose behind this subject is related to the war of the 1960s when the threat of nuclear war was there and Souza has represented this subject in the

form of a grey woman because, after the nuclear attack, everything will be turned into ashes. According to Souza, "In the 1950s and 60s, there arose a great fear that the world was on the blink of nuclear war; to say Goodbye Earth...It's all wrong and will end in ashes. That is why my painting is in grey"(Kurtha 2006).

He was a great admirer of such unique art pieces and also made many paintings on those artists' theme in his own style. In many of his paintings, he distorted the faces of a woman but when he used to make them on paper with ink, he gave them the same effect as like Picasso did in soft lines. Unlike, in oil color technique, his brushwork is strongly taken up in scratching and cross-hatching lines.

In his 'chemical alterations', a term used by him to define one of his experimental works, he has used some images of the magazine and then developed a different style after burning or removing their parts and then remade it with black color. This chemical alteration series is highly erotic, which mostly depicts the union of man and woman, involve in sensuous acts. In detailed work, he mostly used gouache and strong in creating structures through colors and after that he often used black lines to generate balance.

In some of his paintings, women are strangely portrayed and offer them to the onlookers with strong eye-encounter. This kind of offering is not so forbidden in Indian historical paintings and it always belongs to woman's portrayal; but in Souza's paintings, it is different and unique. This very difference has been created by Souza through depicting shameless women, far from any moral display or social construction because, in most of the Indian paintings, the sexuality of women has been projected in the clothes of moral values.

This waiting posture of Indian historical paintings has been politically constructed as per the societal rules, where women must hide their sexual desires. This posture is very significant to compare with the painting of Souza because he has made hundreds of paintings on women, who are standing or sitting alone. The subject was explored numerous times in art and women have been executed as waiting for their lover but in the form of delicacy, their inner lure has been shown to their onlookers, who (onlookers) see they're (painted women) desire for their beloved one. Either he (lover) is present or not but present in the painted subject, the woman is projected to represent the desire of his lover (for male), and then the role of the male has become more significant than a woman because in his absence too, she has been depicted in waiting posture for him. The man is the only force who can evoke a sensuous feeling in the woman for whom she is waiting. Contrary to it, the nudes of Souza

have already been evoked by the artist, they don't need any societal method to be awake. They are full of their inner quest of sexuality and seductive glance and particularly offered for the onlookers only rather than giving posture as waiting for their male hero or savior. They are not noble or followers of monogamy but they are available for everyone. This sexualized representation somehow attacks the identity of the woman as they are being played on the surface by the quench of their sexual desires. As per morality, a woman should be shy at such desires and this thing can be encounter through the way she is depicted. For instance, the frontal face is mostly avoided in Indian miniatures, where her eyes are particularly made as not looking into the eyes of its onlookers. Their gestures are quite astonishing and have delicacy. Their body proportion is mostly made in the proper or socially accepted standard. They are also sometimes associated with flowers or animals, which may be a projection of sensuous desires because flower and animals have also been considered as the symbol of romantic and sensuous desires. Unlike, Souza distorted this very stereotype of projection and made a woman a thing of lusty display and in both the ways woman is being objectified through diverse approach.

Moreover, the main figure (or a woman) is associated with a group of women in various themes, which may also be a way to give the main woman more preference through projecting other living or non-living things. These things can be musical instruments, birds, animals, female friends and so on. It is very rare to find a woman without any objects discussed above. Going through Souza's paintings, he has not depicted them like such previous standard, as his women do not want any cover to hide their physical desires. First of all, he broke the concept of the beautiful and moral depiction of women and represented them as the ugliest creatures, who are engaged in their devious plays on the spare of his canvass. They are not aware at all about the pre-dominated nuances of beauty and aesthetic they are enjoying their sexuality and representing themselves as per the will of the artists than the will of its onlookers. They are wicked and rebellious and shocking everyone with heavy breasts and big vulva. They are rarely associated with any musical or other living objects because they are not taking shade in the roof of prevailed social construction. They are strong enough to represent their inner desire without being ashamed of it. They are strongly making eye contacts with onlookers. Sometimes they are horrifying their viewers, sometimes seducing them with their powerful approach. They have been depicted in the state of full confidence as well as sarcastically arranged for questioning the prevailed noble imagery of womanhood. They are shameless and vicious and doing rebel through this kind of attitude, which entirely belonged to Souza, who has been expelled a number of times during his academic training at his early stage. Thus, the kind of

aggressive and rebellious gesture of art, which is marked by Dada artist to alert people through meaningful art, has been successfully carried out by Souza in the portrayal of women. He is among those artists, who gave Indian paintings fresh and tremendous dimensions to rethink the true meaning of art.

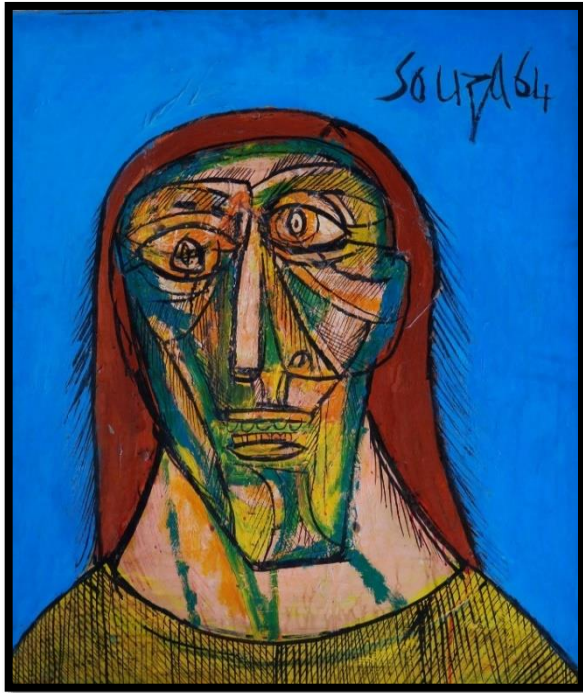


Fig. 4.15 Head



Fig. 4.16 Couple (Chemical alteration)

Fig- 4.15 "Head" by Souza, 1964, Size. 30x 24-inch, Acrylic on Board,

Fig- 4.16 Personal Collection of the Artist

Courtesy- Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi.

4.5 F SOUZA: DISTORTING THE BODY: REVISITING THE WESTERN FASHION IN A PROGRESSIVE ATTITUDE

The enigma and personification regarding the erotic perception of the feminine have always remained a most contradictory facet throughout the artistic decades of Indian paintings. However, the aesthetical approach of beauty is always debated and argued through its vexed semiotics of internal and external appearance. The internal depiction can be explored by theme-based images, in which, the significance is more focused rather than the physical representation. In such paintings, the woman has represented as like a medium for conveying the meaning, but their body representation and facial expressions are not highlighted. Moreover, only the outer structure of the body is drawn without any detailing. On the other hand, the external manipulations belong to the body structure and the gestures of the female figure. These gestures and forms are often dominated

by the very concept behind its implication. Sometimes, the depiction has moved to other direction of its subject due to unparalleled body-structure and portrayal. For instance, if the world-famous painting of Edouard Manet, entitled 'Luncheon on the Grass', can be taken into consideration, the basic theme and title are entirely opposite than its depiction. The painting also remained in controversy because, at that time, such kinds of paintings did not prevail (Walther 2002, Webster 2004). In this painting, a nude female figure is depicted in a sensuous mood with erotic appeal and the basic concept is not entirely applicable to its presentations. To some extent, both of the types contain the artistic imagination and significance, but the portrayals of women with erotic appeal and offerings have always been reverberating in numerous Indian paintings. In India, the women have remained one of the most approaching mediums to create an aesthetical appeal from the pre-historic period to the post-colonial period. The women have also been depicted to evoke sensual desires and erotic appeal in the paintings of numerous artists after a post-colonial period.

Souza has been blessed with a diverse imagination and inner intuition through which his paintings are always observed by the viewers. Such kind of observations are not entirely taken as a virtue but it can be offensive too because Souza had to face rejection in his initial stage.

In this context, the art of representation is simply based on the perception of the artist first and then for its onlookers. In India, since a very long time, the portrayal of women has been done on the bases of some pre-decided aspects of manuscripts; for instance, the Chitrasutra many more. It is mentioned that "Chitrasutra, an ancient text also mentions six limbs (*anga*) of painting as: *rupa-bheda* (variety of form); *pramana* (proportion); *Bhava* (infusion of emotions); *Lavanya-yojanam* (creation of luster and having rainbow colors that appear to move and change as the angle at which they are seen change); *sadreya* (portrayal of likeness); and *varnika-bhanga* (color mixing and brushwork to produce the desired effect)" (Kramrisch 1928). In such hymns, women must be beautiful, and full of delicacy, well-proportioned and fairer in complexion. This certain ideal of depicting women has been followed in a large number from the ancient times till 19th century. Then, some modern artists have started to look at this very subject in a different manner, like Amrita Sher-Gil, Jamini Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and many more. Sher-Gil raised such serious issues of woman's life, which are not related to physical beauty and outer appearance, but those issues that led its onlookers to their realistic encounters. The realistic encounters are those which are associated with the life of women from the very adolescent age. Afterward, numerous artists have experimented with women portrayal

as per their different styles and approaches. But in the case of Souza, women depiction has been mostly done to frame out an urge of their self-exposure with erotic desires.

It is already discussed that Souza has always remained solicited with the voluptuous female body. After some time, the genital parts are turned into much bigger objects and a sense of dramatic illusion has dominated his painted themes because the physical intimacy played a big role in his life. This illusion can be differentiated by the devil-like structure of women, who are filled with the bitterness of humanity and the otherness of beauty. In this way, the beauty, which proved to be an enchanted persona in the development of aesthetical appeal for artistic representation, has been served in the form of ugliness and in rude stereotype. These kinds of images have been preferred by Souza because the meaning of beauty is also dependent on the various analyses and, sometimes, on the individualistic experience. The thing, which is beautiful and pleasing to anyone, can be ugly too for another person.

Souza has initiated his own narration regarding the beauty of the female image and he highlighted the genital parts rather than the charm and attractiveness of the face. This may be his way of representing thing on the canvass, but he depicted only what he wanted to and for this, he has been criticized too. But apart from this criticism, his paintings represent a perfect rhythm of color application and lyrical harmony with the sarcastic approach, as Marwah (1976) argued that “ballooning breasts and monstrous buttocks are a feature repeated in a number of drawings in his exhibition of January 1976. This facility and lose emphasis have as much to do with the arrangement as with association; it will be seen that Souza is the more successful when he is direct, vulgar, oblivious, and bold and always more than when he attempts to be lyrical”. The artistic endeavor of Souza has started to form the J. J. School of Arts (in 1940) and then the voyage of experimentation has reached its zenith internationally.

He was probably the first post-Independent Indian artist, who was resided in foreign and gained prosperity and fame. He is not only known for such flaming nude but also for his remarkable sense of handling colors through structures and self-developed style of composition. In respect of woman portrayal, he has mainly made three styles of paintings, one with pen ink on paper, other with color and the last one through chemical alterations. In the earliest phase of his paintings, the influence of Indian erotic imagery can be seen, where some of the paintings have been made with the nude and semi-nude condition. His numerous paintings are highly influenced by the painting of prominent Western artists of Paris school and the influence of Picasso can be seen in most of his paintings,

particularly in portrait. In the portraits of women, Picasso has made various paintings, in which the faces are strangely divided into some parts of distorted forms. It is also stated by Melly that he was very much influenced with the Pablo Picasso, a contemporary of Souza (**Melly 2005**).



Fig. 4.17 Head

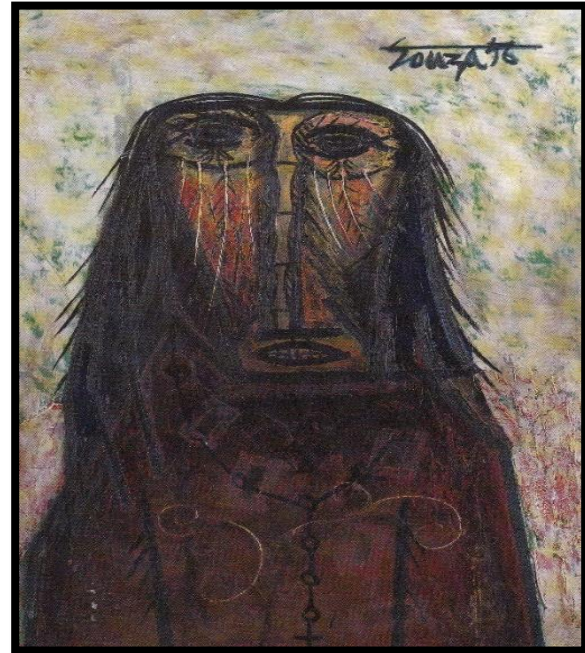


Fig. 4.18 Head of a Woman

Fig- 4.17 "Head" by Souza, 1964, Size. 30x 24-inch, Acrylic on Board

Source- <https://ridingtheelephant.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/1964-head-30x24inch-acrylic-on-board.jpg>

Fig- 4.18 Head of a Woman, Souza, Oil on Board, size- 95x 60 cm. (38x24"),

Source- Kurtha 2006

This kind of distortion of faces can be seen in Souza's paintings (Fig.4.17), where faces are made as looking like some hanging objects on the surface. The actual form of natural appearance has been lost due to these tilted and moving-like shapes and which somehow attacks directly or indirectly on the conscious of the onlooker. In the depiction of women, he mostly used vibrant colors with powerful strokes. These paintings have been mostly made in acrylic and oil medium with bold color strokes and vibrant shades of orange, green and yellowish background.

Then black lines have been marked on the painting to give final touches, which is particularly made in a cross-hatching technique. This technique has been used by Souza in approximately all paintings, and according to Alkazi (a Delhi based curator), this pattern is closely related with private parts of a woman (**Kurtha 2006**). Souza has also discussed this very pattern in his words. This pattern has been made with two parallel lines, which are cross-hatched on the other side and this can be seen in

all of his work including still life, landscapes, portraits and compositions (Souza 1959 in Words & Lines). According to Ghose (2010), Souza was an iconoclast. His distorted figures challenged convention, his essays provoked the intelligentsia. He led a wildly interesting life, punctuated by many women, marriages, and divorces, split between the cities of Mumbai, London, and New York. His art enhanced the eye's image of the world by distorting it. Like Georges Rouault and Francis Bacon, he was an iconoclast. Moreover, Parimoo argued that "It has been observed that among the 20th-century artists, painting of nudes and erotic imagery became an important weapon in the battle for modernism. Shocking the onlookers was among the strategies to assert their individuality and freedom. This way very much the case with Souza, who had already projected his bravado by depicting the nude in stark frontal view" (Parimoo 1946).

The paintings of Souza have been mesmerized with a deep sensation and strong intoxicating imagination, as Andrew Forge declared that the hegemony of reality and transparency of life has been merged with the portrayal in his paintings (Kurtha 2006). During an interview with Souza, Neville Tuli (1997) asked him about man-woman relationship and sexual depiction which is intrigued in his paintings, than he replied, "the nature of sex itself, this piston activity, it is very vigorous, one might even call it violent, and the very construction of the female vagina, that it is so tender and delicate, and yet it can take a lot of friction is one of the miracles of nature, unbelievable." Thus, the sexual imagery is highly concerned by the artist himself, which has been reflected in his numerous paintings. Geeta Kapur (1978) argued that the female icons of Souza resemble with the prostitutes of Rouault's paintings, but the influence of Indian sculpture of Khajuraho and Mathura also reverberates. The women in his painting are much similar to the whorish women of Bombay.

The women-based paintings of Souza are always conquered with strong erotic appeal with stark nudity. They seem to be quite shameless in their body display and their sexual organs are formed in hyperbolic connotation and are obliged with a lure of the offering. Additionally, the external approaches may also be intermingled with the sexual hegemonies because through the other perception the images set up an ironical manifestation for the spectators. They are rotating the gaze of the beholders through their starring attitude. So, the various dimensions behind the nude imagery of women on Souza's surface have been highlighted in the context of internal and external conflicts. In this matter, two paintings of Souza will be discussed after analyzing some critical approaches.

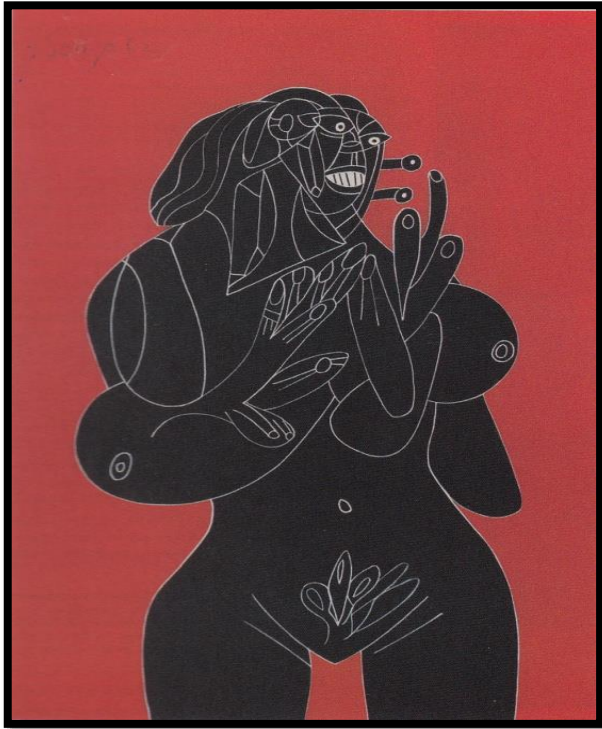


Fig. 4.19 Lady in Black

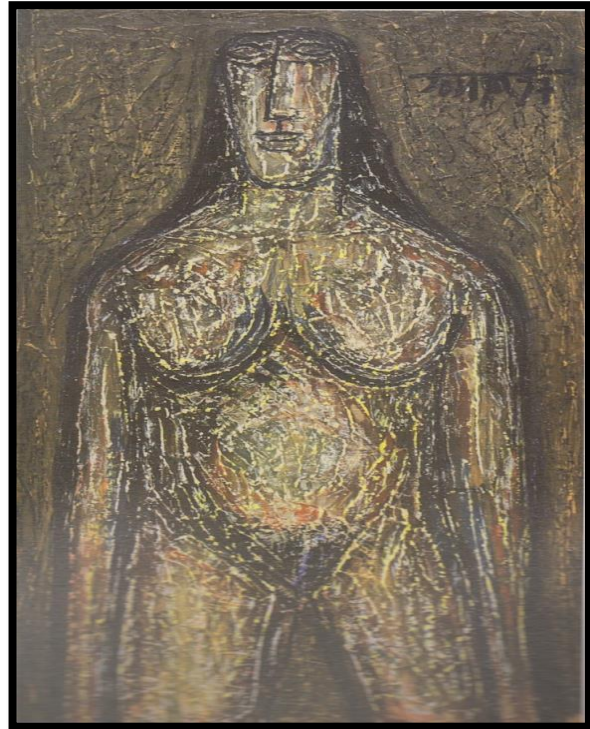


Fig. 4.20 Amazon (1957)

Fig- 4.19 Lady in Black, (1962) Souza, Tempera on paper, size- 36x23, Kumar Gallery, New Delhi, Source: Kurtha 2006

Fig- 4.20 Amazon, Souza, Oil on board, 36x24 inches, Source: Dhoomimal Art Gallery New Delhi

The sensual nude of Souza, which has been channelized through the erotic temple imagery, now has been transformed into distorted forms. For instance, in the image titled 'Lady in Black', the sensuous imagery has been turned into a horrifying woman, which has distorted figure and face. In another image titled, 'Amazon', Souza has painted a woman with brownish and yellowish tones and gave a rough texture through thick lines. This harshness of lines has changed the delicacy of a woman's body into toughness. The face is also depicted very long, which made the painting destructive. The treatment of gestures and other things are also very strange and disturbing but one thing, which a signature style of his paintings is again remained the same. The very style of exaggerating the genital parts is frequently found in all his works.

Such images have a strong physical structure, which may be a result of his fascination towards voluptuous women. Souza has been derived by the sensual delight of man-woman relationship which is mentioned by him: "I have no desire to redeem myself or anybody else because man by his very nature is unredeemable, yet he hankers so desperately after redemption. I wanted to hang myself on the cross with my hands and feet nailed to it...to have arrows quivering in my neck like flies, while

in the sweetness of love-making...to responses in absolute bliss, the bliss of *Ananda* (1959)". The repetition of sensual nudes and erotic display in his paintings may be a result of his anti-artistic influence of the Dada art. Sometimes the pudendum of the figure has been made extremely larger than the actual size and the black color is used to highlight it. The concept of women showing her vulva with heavy breast is much familiar with the Indian nude squatting goddess named Lajja Gauri (Fig.4.22); only the posture has been changed in Souza's painting. The Lajja Gauri is recognized as a mother goddess of ancient India and the mother of sexual worship, always depicted as her legs apart and showing her vulva (Martin 2012, Tiwari 1985, Sankila 1960, Kramrisch 1956). In many women imagery, moreover, the women are made in sitting postures and showing their pudendum in Souza's paintings. In this context, the words of **Kapur** can be taken into consideration that "Souza has often quoted that the Indian tradition as a sanction for his own erotic imagery" (1978).

This worship has also been practiced in contemporary times in Assam (India), where a Goddess named Kamakhya has been sculpted in the same posture as her legs apart and showing her vulva. Then the tenet of sexual worship and its depiction through art form has been still practiced in India. In the context of Souza, it has already been mentioned that he was so much inspired by Indian temple erotica so it can be assumed that he may saw this very posture and might have been inspired by its representation because the sculpture has been looking very powerful and unique in itself. It represents the sexuality and the worldwide phenomenon of sexual union in the form of Goddess. Souza also accepted that he was much fascinated by this aspect of female sexuality and the bliss of sexual union, and when he saw this Goddess, who invited everyone for a sexual act, he just adopted this very aspect of permissiveness in most of his paintings. In his paintings, he did not directly adopt the same posture but only tried to depict the same kind of woman with inviting attitude through showing her face and genitals in highly emphasized manner, who somehow leads its onlookers into a strange world. In this strangeness, there are a plenty of symbolic arrangements, where one can relate his or her own ideology with this stunning and shocking attitude of the female. In this way, this particular display of shocking the spectator with such kind of taboos is highly synchronized with Souza's own imaginative power in the depiction of women. (Fig.4.21 and Fig.4.22)

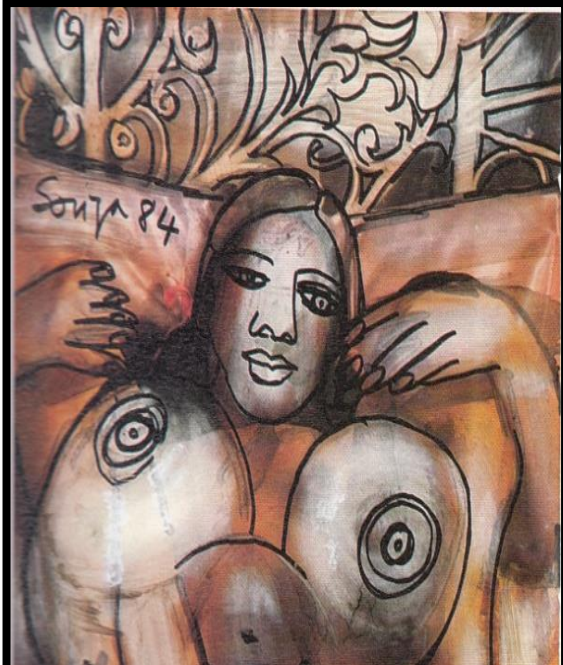


Fig. 4.21 Untitled



**Fig. 4. 22 Lotus Headed Fertility Goddess,
Lajja Gauri**

Fig- 4.21 Untitled, Souza, chemical alterations on paper, 11x8 inches, Image Courtesy, Dhoomimal Art Gallery New Delhi

Fig- 4.22 Ca. 6th century, Madhya Pradesh (India), sandstone sculpture, dimensions: H. 4 1/16 in. (10.3 cm); W. 4 1/16 in. (10.3 cm.), Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Bequest of Samuel Eilenberg, 1998, The Metropolitan Museum of Art-
<http://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/as/original/DP253528.jpg>

Sometimes, Souza also portrayed the same posture of Lajja Gauri through his chemically altered paintings, in which a woman has been shown as showing her vulva (Fig.4.21). In this image, Souza has depicted a nude woman, who is on display through showing her genitals but, unlike Lajja Gauri (Fig.4.22), the face of the woman in this painting has been fully shown with a seductive appeal. Thus, the fertility aspect of Lajja Gauri has been replaced by Souza with stark nudity.

Then, there are hundreds of sketches and paintings, which captured the same shocking treatment as the goddess of sexuality. The icon of sexual worship has often been subverted too by Souza because the Goddess entirely belonged to worship but this woman was only meant for erotic display. The goddess Lajja Gauri is particularly related to fertility, procreation, and pregnancy before its structural display, but Souza's painted woman is far away from such association and represents the socio-political issues related to the objectification of woman's body.

Thus, it can be said that Souza had a deep interest towards female body structure and erotic representation of Indian ancient art but he adopted this very erotic appeal in a strange manner. The female nude, therefore, may be materialized by him for his artistic enterprise. The gestures of women are quit approaching because they seem to encounter the spectators through a seductive glance. On the contrary, they have been depicted to disturb the onlookers with their vicious attitude. In Indian patriarchal hierarchies, woman, who displays her desire with inviting attitude, is not acceptable and considered offensive. The ideal woman of ancient Hindu mythology, like *Sita* of the *Ramayana*, is more preferred by society and the same stereotype of idealism imposed on a woman. In such a society, the women of Souza can be considered as an irony for phallus- centric social norms, because they are just depicted as per their will accordingly or the will of the artist. Moreover, the nude in the painting may be an approach for the psycho-oriented consolidation of the artists, because Souza has suffered throughout his life from the childhood to his last days. In childhood, he has lost his father and suffered due to chicken pox, and in his studies, he has also faced many barriers. He was a great artist and founder of PAG, but he had to face many hindrances at that time. “In his life, as in his work, Francis Newton Souza defied social and artistic conventions with untiring verve. This served him well for half his career as a painter. During the latter half, however, failed marriages, tempestuous love affairs, alcohol, drugs and long stretches of deprivation and solitude took their toll” (Padgaonkar 2002).

4.6 THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN THE PAINTINGS OF SOUZA AND VARMA

In the work of both the artists, the style of depicting woman is different. Both of them are having a singularity in their representation of women. Even their working period is very different and that is also a reason which differs from their work from each other. In their astonishing journey, they like women the most to depict in their striking canvasses. Varma is quite realistic while Souza sometimes jumped into the abstract or semi-abstracts approach in his works. Varma took the religious and mythological fables of Hindu culture because he belonged to that culture and colonial India. This was the time when the paintings of most of the native artists were used as a medium to expose the prevalent Hindu culture.



Fig. 4.23 Nude with Blue-Bead Necklace (1984)



Fig. 4.24 Fresh from Bath

Fig-4.23 Souza, Oil on canvass, Source Dhoomimal Art Gallery

Fig- 4.24 Painting of a Malayali lady after a bath in the pond. Oil painting on canvas by Raja Ravi Varma - Collection of Dr. M.A. Chidambaram, Chennai, Tamilnadu. Source- <http://www.cyberkerala.com/rajaravivarma/ravivarma-painting-77.html>

The religious and mythological fables became popular and Varma used plenty of such themes. In the context of religious representations, Souza preferred Christianity as he was born in a Christian family, but he never gave any appreciation of Christianity in his work. He, most of the times, criticized its propaganda and fake display of the priests. During his projection of Christianity, he rarely depicted women, but Varma usually painted women into the religious frames. Their ways to see a woman as a model or to paint her as a subject is entirely the opposite. Varma went for the delicate and sublime body-types with enchanting gestures, because he was much inspired by the Western academic style and such stereotype of a woman (in the art) was a popular fashion over there. Contrary to it, Souza preferred vicious and arrogant gesture with a muscular body, because he was

much interested in the projection of female sexuality in a hyperbolic form. Additionally, Souza has taken the inspiration from the West after coming into the influence of Picasso, Goya and other prominent artists of the West. Varma usually preferred to go with the narratives because art has been an expression of religion and culture from the ancient times to the Colonial ones. This very expression has emerged as a dominant theme, which was liked not only by the Indian spectators but was also in demand among the Western people. They usually made a collection for their personal use and all the company artists were involved to satisfy the need of their collections. Ravi Varma had executed the same in much refined and astonishing manner and he also painted them on Indian themes. Varma was the one who makes the art more spiritual and religious so this manner hit the mass on a large scale. This particular style became universal and was liked by numerous British people too because the projection of religious fables was quite fascinating for all at that time. The biggest reason for his popularity was his unbiased art, which reached the elite and low-class people through oleographs and reproductions. The woman was profoundly celebrated as a medium to give sensual pleasure and to become emblematic of beauty and morality.

On the other hand, Souza painted nudes and semi-nudes only with monstrous attitude. They are having devil-like faces and it appears after looking at them that their face and body have been torn apart by the artists and then rearranged on the canvass to introduce their broken spirit. Souza believes that all human beings have a vicious mindset and in general it is a fake display which we all do to maintain the existing prototype of society. He just wanted to break this fake display of all human-beings to unleash their evil and viciousness. As he frequently mentioned that “the artists of Renaissance paint angels to show humans what they look like. I paint humans to show angles what humans look like in reality”. He was inspired by the Western artists like Marshal Duchamp and Francis Bacon, so this inspiration can be easily seen in his portrayal of womanhood.

In comparison, it can be concluded that Ravi Varma painted angles and heavenly damsel and Souza painted witches and vamps. All of these characters are related with gender politics as all are judged by the sexuality or physical desires of a woman so both the artists are mostly projecting the physical desires of a woman towards man or man towards a woman. **Marwah (1976)** argued that “ballooning breasts and monstrous buttocks are a feature repeated in a number of drawings in his exhibition (**Marwah 1976**). This facility to lose emphasis has as much to do with the arrangement as with association; it will be seen that “Souza is more successful when he is direct, vulgar, oblivious, and bold and always more than when he attempts to be lyrical” (**Marwah 1976**).

This painting is made in acrylic and oil medium with bold color strokes and vibrant shades of orange, green and yellowish background (Fig-4.23). The painting contained a nude woman in figurative style with heavy breast and broad hips with strong physical structure because in numerous paintings of Souza the body structure has always been surmounted with the narcissism encounters in which, the imaged body of women has depicted as showing their genitals' parts and exotic in their sensual mood. It may be assumed that the nude paintings on womanhood are a consequence of his psychological restlessness after being troubled by the social and personal dilemma in his life. As to some extent, the artistic adoptions belonged to the artistic state of mind and derived by the individualistic self-exploration with all the influences of circumstances. These circumstances can emerge in the negative or positive representation of the individual. The body of the woman may be equipped to get rid of the depressions and to satirize the Orthodox bodies in the society.



Fig. 4.25 Volte-face (1984)



Fig. 4.26 Lady with a Swarbat (1874)

Fig-4.25 Souza's 'Iconoclastic Vision' is on at the Lalit Kala Akademi till April 18

Source- <http://www.saffronart.com/artists/f-n-souza>

Fig- 4.26 Oil painting on canvas by Raja Ravi Varma dated 1874 - Kowdiar Palace, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

Source- <http://www.cyberkerala.com/rajaravivarma/ravivarma-painting-77.htm>

The painting displayed at the Lalit Kala Academy, Delhi and made in 1984 by Souza, is again a hyperbolic representation of female genitals (Fig- 4.25). Here, the breasts are much bigger than the above-discussed figure and the vulva is also very huge in shape. The background is black and the hair of the image is made in brownish-red tone to create an energetic and passionate ambiance around the figure. The face of the image is very small than its body- structure and the full concentration has been focused on the full-rounded breasts and the vulva, which is quite open. In this way, it may be interpreted that the deep sensual desires of woman have been materialized to evoke sexual delight for the male-gaze. Here, the words of **Parimmo (2012)** cannot be avoided that “It can be observed that Souza turns the represented figure itself into a fetish object (or primitive deity) so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous, circumventing her threat. Psychoanalysis also draws attention to the unconscious imagery of a woman with a prominent row of teeth as representing the penis devouring female genitals” (**Parimmo 2012**). The figure is ornamented with necklaces and navel-belt with free hair. The female genitals are served for the onlookers and it may be assumed that Souza had anger for the people, who are politically revolting against the artistic freedom of expression. On the other hand, it may be a way to satisfy his own fascination regarding female image after burning them in his internal conflicts. His manifestation of female temptation can also be caught through the words of **Melly (2005)** that “obviously, as his erotic drawing shows, he was a highly-sexed man, marrying several times, and the father of five children”. It is also stated by **Melly** that he was very much influenced by Pablo Picasso, a contemporary of Souza and also wrote a poem entitled ‘Mother of God’, in which he has described his mother’s genital parts (**Melly 2005**). The jewelry of the image is a sign of the Indian temple icons because numerous temple female icons have been depicted bare but they were ornamented with the jewelry. Her face is made with the tender and delicate approach as like the sexual desires as represented by the hyperbolic genitals. But the innocent face may be a representative of another face of the image. The face, in which the sexual ambitions have covered with the innocent facile expression but the painting is depicted both the sides of the women’s nature as per the perception of the artist. On the other hand, the artist has made this image to attract the attention of the people because, during that period, such kind of nude images was not so common because he was the only artists of India, who has done such a different kind of resurrection regarding the image of women. “Painting nudes as a part of the academic practice (which in fact was denied to the women students even in the European countries) was ideological and demeaning for the female model that stood in stark nakedness before a group of young male art students. It became almost a rule that the female body was the most organically beautiful form and

it was important to draw her nude form in order to become a good artist. Somehow the gender politics and male ideology were always overlooked". (**Johny 2013**)

These opposite approaches serve only one single purpose, which is the projection of woman's sexuality but in two different ways. The women of Varma are seducing their onlookers in a moral disguise while the women of Souza are seducing their onlookers through immoral approach (the morality and immorality which refers through society as a good and bad woman). In the work of both the artists, we can observe two stereotypes of woman, which is universalized as a good or bad woman, the good one usually behaves or acts as per the pre-decided code of society. It is also considered good to marry and people generally refer to her as a socially acceptable woman. Another stereotype stands for those women who are socially deprived of this acceptable list and excluded from the vocabulary of good women. They belong to brothels or to those relationships which numerous men want but do not accept socially. They are also accounted as characterless women by the patriarchal norms of society. This type of women has been adopted by Souza in his paintings; and as stated by Kaur that they are more like the common whores of Bombay and London (**Kapur 1978**). These very contradictions make their art (Souza's and Varma's) genuine, but turn women merely as an object.

The gestures of Varma's sensuous women are very calm and inviting and created to attract the viewer, while the gestures of Souza's painting are very provocative and vicious. The color scheme has been chosen by the artists to balance the selected theme as per Souza preferred dark colors with a thick outline of black and Varma preferred eye-soothing color schemes having tons of whites and browns. The method of choosing the color scheme is also representing the psyche of the artist, for Varma belongs to a royal family and lived in an elite group. Contrary to that, Souza belongs to a middle-class family and known for his aggressive behavior. It is found that both the artists are very different in their projection of feminine. They only connect at the point of selection of their theme, which is based on various encounters of women. They did not contribute to any significant imagery of womanhood as they usually used the female body to give visual pleasure to the spectators but in different ways. This differentiation is obvious because they belong to two different times and attitudes. The sensuality of Varma's work has further been transformed into the more advanced version in Souza's paintings. They started their journeys from religious depiction and then reached the zenith of their individual styles.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The representation of femininity has taken a particular shape in the paintings of Ravi Varma. The academic realism of Varma's work has been dominated by mythological narratives. These paintings of voluptuous women are quite similar to the allegorical representation of the Western European art. In European art, the imagery of woman has been represented as a beautiful, delicate and voluptuous creature. Unlike the ancient Indian deities, they were not represented in supernatural forms as having ten hands and with aggressive nature. They are really as human beings and do not have any supernatural outlook. Their (Western) goddesses were painted as having a common body like an earthly woman. The only hyperbolism to differentiate the margin between the woman and Goddess was metaphors of beauty and sensuality. This particular style was adopted by Varma but as per Indian mythology. The gestures of female bodies in the work of Varma's have been painted as looking into the eyes of the onlookers which is again an adopted of the sensual nudes of Western art. The women as taking bath, waiting for their lover, offering fruits, playing musical instruments are some subjects which are similar to the miniature painting style. In some of these scenes Varma's sensual women have been represented in pretentious attitude; for instance, they are playing musical instruments but only for the sake of posing. Their bodies are tilted towards the onlookers as if the artist (Varma) is still standing there and introducing them to the spectators. This particular angle of the body has been adopted by Varma after coming under the influence of Western art because Varma was frequently involved with Western artists. His so-called heroines became a stereotype of Indian popular culture, and they were celebrated in the advertisement industry because they were so Indian in their appearance. Their Indian belongings and Western appearance were the actual reason because, at that time, a majority of India people were living at the threshold of two different worlds. One is related to their inferiority complex and personal desire to adopt the Western culture. Another is their show off toward Indigenous culture and their desire to look superior. In Ravi Varma's paintings, this complexity of desire is successfully depicted in the portrayal of women. On one hand, they are an equipment to display the Indian Puranic anecdotes and, on the other, they are also desirable to adopt the Western culture.

This complexity of desire was reached at its zenith in the paintings of Francis Newton Souza. It appears that Varma initiated the trend to represent women as a decorative thing. Then the portrayal of women has become a projection of female sexuality in a more progressive way. The noble attitude gradually disappeared; the beauty and charm have been replaced with an ugly and nasty projection. The strange and vicious representation of womanhood in Souza's paintings led its onlookers into the

new world of imagination. The women depiction in the paintings of Souza may reflect both his negative and positive attitudes toward women because he was very much obsessed with them throughout his life. On the contrary, it may be an approach to criticize the orthodox society because as an artist, he had the right to express his aspects and views on anything. In his paintings, the woman is made full of lust and ugliness, which, on one hand, represents an artistic thrust to paint what he wants; but it also represents the anger of the artist, on the other. Because art is not only used to represent the feelings of individuals but it is also used to deal with dilemmas and contradictory experiences. This kind of dealing can also be used to heal personal issues, which cannot be expressed directly but can be represented through painting. His approach is quite sociopolitical but exclusive in itself, where women may serve to frame the utmost bitterness on the surface. He is also known as a passionate being and considered both a lover and hater of the feminine and this kind of projection of women may be a response to such traumatic experiences. He may figure out a way to come out from his intense love towards such sensual imagery through distorting the previously accepted icons. On the other hand, it may be a way to express his anger or maybe a medium to shock people by subverting the previously depicted female icons. Therefore, his paintings have devil-like figures, in which faces are constructed with horrifying or vicious gestures and the phenomenon of the six limbs of Indian paintings has been fully distorted by Souza. The women may somehow be objectified through such representation because their sexuality and vicious attitude are preferred only in most of his paintings. The distortion of female anatomy cannot be taken entirely in a bad taste because it represents his powerful approach to take this subject into other dimensions. His flaming nudes are very much related to the ancient Indian goddess of sexuality, but she was associated with fertility first rather than a sexual invitation. In Souza's paintings, the procreative or reproductive aspect of womanhood has been almost neglected and the sexuality with vicious attitude has become dominated. The temple erotica of Khajuraho and other sculpted forms have certain limits and acceptable too on the basis of artistic dimensions, but the nudes of Souza's painting have crossed all the limits. For instance, they are not beautiful to look at; they are not well-proportioned; their skin is very dark with scratching on it; they are shameless having big genitals; often inviting their onlookers, engaged in the erotic act and so on and on. His imagination and artistic representation are entirely derived from the ancient art of India but his style and technique to consider things, handling the surface, treatment of color, space management much belong to the Western art. Thus, it can be observed that Souza has created a world of his own like hell through painting where these greedy and lusty women are celebrating their nudity in their shameless attitude.

5. THE FOREMOTHER AND HER SUCCESSOR: AMRITA SHER-GIL & GOGI SAROJ PAL

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the depiction of women in the work of Raja Ravi Varma and Francis Newton Souza has been observed. This chapter deals with the evaluation of the work of Amrita Sher-Gil, and some of her paintings are discussed on the basis of the subjective approach. Then, the Indian contemporary feminist artist, Gogi Saroj Pal has been taken as a case study after using Sher-Gil's approach as a base study. In this way, Sher-Gil is a primary focus because she is the one who noticed and depicted the tragic life of Indian rural women. Afterward, to explore the status of the depiction of women in contemporary Indian paintings, the artistic works of Gogi Saroj Pal has been studied. Moreover, some of the paintings of both the artists have been analyzed through a comparative analysis to trace the impact of Sher-Gil on the works of Gogi Saroj Pal.

5.2 EMERGENCE OF FEMALE ARTISTS IN INDIA

The relation of women with painting is as old as the existence of humanity on earth. Women have been represented and executed from the very prehistoric age in Indian art and architecture as a beautiful and sublime being. On the contrary, the evidence of their connection with painting as artists is very few until the pre-Colonial times. They had frequently been adopted as an art object but mostly neglected as an artist in the earlier times.

The first female artist in India of the twentieth century is considered to be Sunayani Devi, who depicted the folk primitive series in her paintings and became an ideal for women empowerment and professionalism through paintings (Mitter 2007). The word 'feminism' is a much-debated issue and there is no definition which can define its entire objective. Afterward, many critics have narrated the ideology of feminism in art and the protestation of womanhood through various approaches. In this category, Griselda Pollock, Barbara Kruger, Geeta Kapur, P. Uberoi, Navelli Tuli etc. can be considered. Feminism has its radical definition in various forms, but in each description, the social and analytical enrichment has been pursued the improvisation of womanhood. In this discourse of feminism, the traditional ways of patriarchal dominance and male power which subjugate the life of women, are particularly opposed to improvising the identity of women. This very subjugation and vulnerability of womanhood has been represented, and opposed as well, by female artists. In this

concern, **Geeta Kapur** stated that “Feminism is a discourse against power; feminist artist, refusing to accept the formal closure of modernist art, translate feminism’s deconstructive “genius” along an itinerary of subversions, along such reconstructive hypothesis that addresses the issue of power conceptuality, retroactively”. (**Kapur 2009**)

As mentioned previously, this phenomenon of feministic art came into existence after the revolutionary essay of Linda **Nochlin (1971)**, ‘Why have there been no great women artist?’ In this essay, the absence of female artists from historical records has been criticized through various aspects like unfair academic practices, biased institutional bodies, and patriarchal hegemonies, and so on. (**Heartney et al. 2013, Pollock 1988, Thompson 1982**). She had also raised the rigid issues of academic qualifications and gender hierarchies on account of some great male artists.

In earlier times, Indian women were mostly restricted to the domestic work and they were not permitted to choose painting as a profession as compared to the recent times. They usually used to perform decorative arts for their houses, known as folk or tribal art in recent times. In modern times, Sher-Gil was one of those female artists who gave a fresh and shocking direction to the portrayal of women. She rendered the tragic experiences of rural Indian women, which is very strange but strong characteristic of her artworks. She also looked her own body as a subject of art (for herself) and as an object of desire (for establishing sarcastic dialogues to the onlookers) as well. She remained in controversies for her tragic life, love affairs and bisexuality (**Gupta 2011**). She was successfully compared with her most renowned contemporary Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (**Kapur 2000**). She is known as one of the modern feminist artists worldwide and became an inspiration for numerous contemporary female artists. She is a role model to many of the Indian female artists too. The path which was initiated by Sher-Gil is successfully adopted by various prominent contemporary artists including Nalini Malani, Anupam Sud, Navjot Altaf, Gogi Saroj Pal, Kanchan Chander, Seema Kohli, Arpita Singh, Anjolie Ela Menon, Rekha Rodwitiya etc.

Gogi Saroj pal is an eminent feminist artist of India and gave numerous contributions for reforming the status of womanhood through paintings. She executed various series for making women stronger and powerful.

5.3 AMRITA SHER-GIL- A PIONEER OF SUBJECTIVE APPROACH IN THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN

Amrita Sher-Gil is known as an enigmatic Indian artist and invented subjects to narrate the silent stories of middle class and marginalized women in her paintings. She was born in Budapest (Hungary) and grew up in an Indian Sikh family. Her father was a Sikh aristocrat and her mother was a Hungarian musician. She took her artistic education from Florence and from the world-famous Ecole Nationale Des Beaux-Arts under the direction of Lucien Simon. After working in Europe, she returned to India in 1934 and started to depict the spirit of rural India through paintings. She was a true admirer of frescos of Ajanta and Ellora and was a great lover of Indian miniature paintings. She was wholeheartedly devoted to Indian art and culture and her devotion is immensely blended in her paintings after her arrival in India.

She had married her cousin, Victor Egan, and spent her last moments of life in Lahore (now Pakistan). Her artistic voyage has remained unfinished due to her sudden tragic death at the age of 28. She was a fascinating person, a brilliant artist, and a splendid writer. She particularly painted rural Indian women in a very strong and powerful manner and almost became successful in capturing some neglected areas of the life of women in the dull color scheme (**Lutzker and Ann 2002, Sinha 2003, Sen 2006**).

In Amrita Sher-Gil's paintings, a cultural variation can be seen between the two periods of her life, first one during her residence in Europe and the next one after her arrival in India. It is her hybridity that made her an accomplished observer of the indigenous spirit of Indian culture. She gripped the intimacy of the Eastern culture after exploring the multiplicity of the Western one. She admitted, after coming to India, that it is the only solution of her artistic pursuit. This residential switch from Eastern to the Western world is not only visible in her lifestyle but is reflected in her paintings too. Likewise, her personality, living style, dressing sense were also changed after getting into Indian culture. She was fascinated more by the folk and rural culture of India than the urban one (**Sundaram 2010**).

Her feministic approach and remarkable persona are entirely reflected in her paintings of womanhood. She was also the first Indian woman artist, who portrayed herself nude and took an enterprise to depict tensed faces with a powerful appeal. To some extent, this very otherness of depiction has been related to her tremendous spirit and power of observation, but behind such representations, her hybrid voyage may be one of the reasons. Her artistic perception was quite

remarkable as she captured some deep and traumatic moment of women's lives. She studied in Paris but her attraction and understanding of the Indigenous art were more appreciable than those of her contemporary artists.

There are many prominent artists, who depicted women after experimenting with various styles and techniques during the pre-colonial period. Sher-Gil was also inspired by the paintings of Gauguin and Cezanne, the harbingers of modernity in Western art. She had a great power of observation as she considered ancient Indian art as the source of inspiration without affecting the prevalent trends. She also criticized those artists, who were not aware of the indigenous roots of art. She died when her artistic journey was almost at the peak of creativity, but she is still the inspiration of numerous artists, particularly the female artists. In recent days, there are many feminist artists in India, who are deeply inspired by her way of the depiction of her themes. In Amrita Sher-Gil's paintings, an adjustment of tension has been balanced with the ironical arrangements for the onlookers.

5.4 GLIMPSE OF INDIAN CULTURE IN HER PAINTINGS

Culture and art have been associated with each other because art belongs to people's past, present, and future. Culture is a key to access the way of living of human beings and also a medium to differentiate their individual identity. The identity varies from place to place and religion to religion, which is represented by their customs, traditions, and other rituals. The cultural values are also represented through art and visual narrations because art is basically related to the personal encounters and surroundings of human beings. In the Indian scenario, visual culture has much significance to define both the role of Indian antiquities and the recent trends in culture. In this cultural narration, paintings are the best medium to depict the socio-cultural aspects of society. For instance, the people of pre-historic times were involved in hunting and gathering activities; so the scenes of the cave were depicted with the same. Then, the same narratives of surroundings and way of living have been depicted in the Indus Valley civilization. To some extent, such kinds of narratives have been painted by the artists of almost all periods till the 17th century. After the mark of modern concept, paintings have been represented with more innovative and realistic approach, but the basic stereotype of the cultural phenomenon has been simultaneously represented by the artists. In this way, culture has always remained an essential entity to represent the artistic productions.

During the 19th century, India was a land of cultural and political hegemonies of the British and seeking its authentic values in respect of various spheres, including painting. Sher-Gil is not only solicited by Indian culture and traditional values but she truly lived in its roots (**Wojtilla 1981,**

Tillotson 1997, Tuli 1998, Kumar 1999). Her interest towards the rural life of India is not only appreciated but also adapted by numerous prominent artists of India. Her portrayal of womanhood, after returning to India, is a very concrete and wonderful instance of her genius. Through this way of projection, she has not only settled a neglected phenomenon of woman's life but has also become a role model for the feminist artists of India. In this context, her work before her arrival in India can be observed to differentiate this cultural hybridism, where her work has been entirely transformed after coming to India. After coming to India, in 1934 she gave a remarkable boost to the roots of modern Indian paintings and represented a sense of "indefinable melancholy" of the life of Indian villagers (**Mitter 2007, Dadi & Mitter 2008**). To observe cultural variations in her paintings, some of the paintings of Sher-Gil have been taken into consideration because, before her arrival in India, Sher-Gil was inspired by great Italian masters and modern Western artists. She was an academic student and her paintings appeared to be much connected with academic realism.

After coming to India, Sher-Gil's subjects were dramatically changed into feministic interventions and tragic display (**Kapur 1978**). The gloomy faces have been perfectly portrayed to give a glimpse of the life of middle-class people, which Sher-Gil found strangely attractive. She was also obsessed with the primitiveness and folk culture of India. She depicted villagers and women as either engaged in work or constructed in an idle form (**Chawla 2003**). There are some issues, too, which are related to their tragic life and trauma due to societal inequality (**Doctor 2002**).

Apart from this, if the painting is analyzed on the basis of cultural aspects, there is some semiotics of culture which differentiates both of her styles. There is an indigenous mechanism which drives her creativity to reproduce the realistic life of Indian people. This mechanism is also surrounded by some other factors, like social and religious factors, climatic condition etc. To observe the cultural aspects in Sher-Gil's paintings (Indian Period), it is essential to revisit her previous paintings (European Period) through a comprehensive study of both the painting styles.

The painting titled 'Young Girls' was painted when she was in Europe. In this painting, two girls have been portrayed as sitting in a casual mode. Sher-Gil was only 19, and for this painting, she won the honor of an associate at the Grand Salon of Paris. This honor was a big achievement for Sher-Gil because no one got this achievement earlier at such a young age. For this painting, her sister Indira and her friend became a model because Sher-Gil always used to paint through models (**Dalmia 2013**).



Fig. 5.1 Young girls

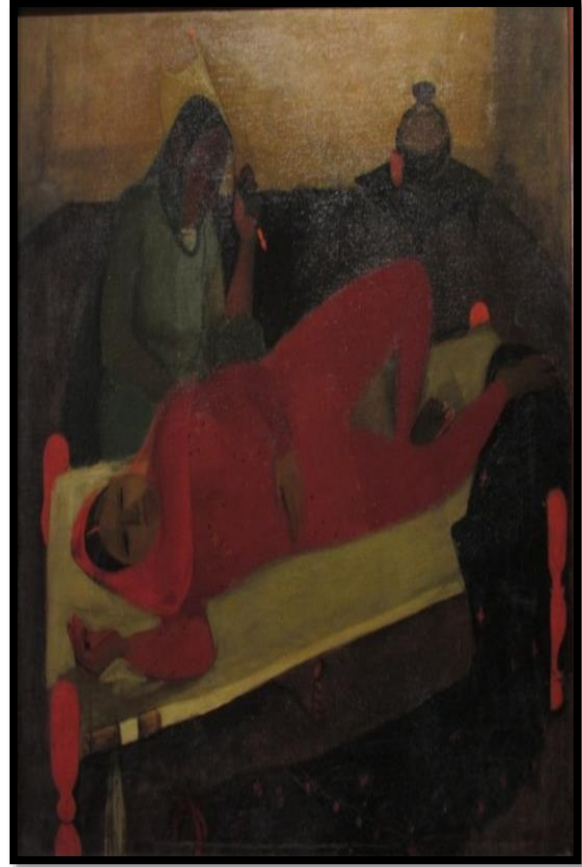


Fig. 5.2 Woman resting on a Charpoy

Fig-5.1 Oil on Canvass, 1934 Size- 134x 164 cm. Acc. No-29

Fig-5.2 Oil on Canvass, 1940 Size- 74.5x 87.5 cm. Acc. No-129

Source: NGMA

This image has been painted in oil colors with an impressionistic style in bluish and whitish tones because Sher-Gil was inspired by Paul Gauguin and Paul Cezanne (French post-impressionist painters). Her work of the Western period has much significance to these artists. In this painting, both girls are sitting casually and are engaged in conversation. In this context, if the painting is looked without the association of Sher-Gil's name and then deeply observed through representation; the first thing is the cultural representation of Western trend. The style of dressing is typically European, in which a semi-nude French girl (Denise Proutaux) has been depicted.

Another girl (her sister Indira) has also been painted in the same Western outfit. In this painting, ornamentation has also been done through jewelry and other things of beautification, which is particularly related with Western style. The posture of sitting is also Western because sitting posture with cross-leg was mostly forbidden for Indian woman at that time. The face of a blonde woman has

not been highlighted because her hairs are streaming on her face. This woman is having a comb in her hand and is engaged in conversation with another girl. The theme of the painting is indicating Sher-Gil's inner dilemma, where she was exploring her individuality not only as an artist but also as a person in the West. It can be assumed that for Sher-Gil, it was very difficult to accept that alien culture because her roots were entirely connected with India. In this painting, Sher-Gil symbolically represents the culture of the West in the form of a blonde girl and herself as the woman sitting in front of this girl. The girl of dark complexion has been portrayed as staring the blonde girl, which displays the efforts of Sher-Gil to adopt Western culture because, after some time, she painted this subject in a clearer style as titled, "Two Girls".

According to **Dalmia**, "the concept of this painting is closely connected with Sher-Gil's Eastern and Western conflict, and it is further explored by the artist in the painting titled "Two Girls", where, she has painted two girls with an opposite complexion (**Dalmia 2014 & Gupta 2011**).

The same concept of depicting two girls or women has been painted again by Sher-Gil after returning to India as titled, 'Woman Resting on Charpoy'. The painting had been made at Saraya, Gorakhpur (India). Going through the comparison, at a first glance, it is very difficult to find out that this painting has been made by the same artist (or 'Young Girls'). There is only one similarity in both the paintings, the concept of depicting two females together with the dull background. In this set of observations, the same tool of socio-cultural and religious aspect can be used to study the Indian semiotics in Sher-Gil's painting. Their titles are also very different from each other; even the title of 'Young Girls' is very simple and before looking at the picture, the concept is not entirely clear. On the contrary, the painting, titled 'Woman Resting on Charpoy', explains most of the parts of the painting through its title because it narrates the theme behind it.

She painted 'Two Girls' in 1939, where two nude girls are represented in the dull color scheme and according to some critics the painting depicts bisexuality between the two figures. Gupta stated that "Since the 1970s, "Two Girls" has been described as being emblematic of Amrita Sher-Gil's much written about bisexuality" (**Gupta 2011**). In the painting, the girl standing in the right is having a fair complexion and the other is having the darker physical appearance, and the two are pointing their sight in a very strange way. They are not facing the eyes of the onlookers because they want to show themselves but not interested in the response of the viewers. They are basically carrying an attitude of their self-involvement rather than a painted object of onlookers' desire.

They are not displaying themselves for the viewers as their gestures are quiet ignoring the gaze. Going through another perception of the artist behind this painting, the opposite complexion of the figures is representing the hegemony of the art world where racism has been prevalent for a very long time. The painting also represents the identity crisis of Sher-Gil's inner self as being an outsider verbally (as she left India and returned after a long time) but remained insider internally (her attachment to India).

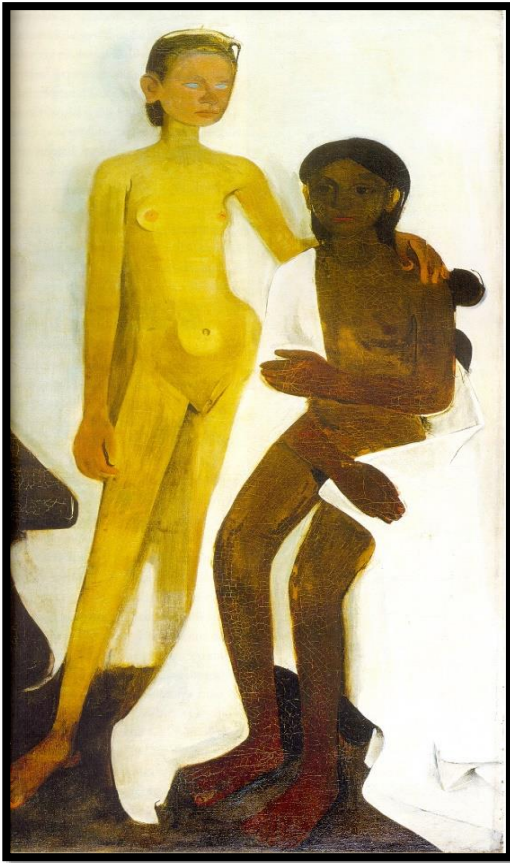


Fig. 5.3 Two Girls

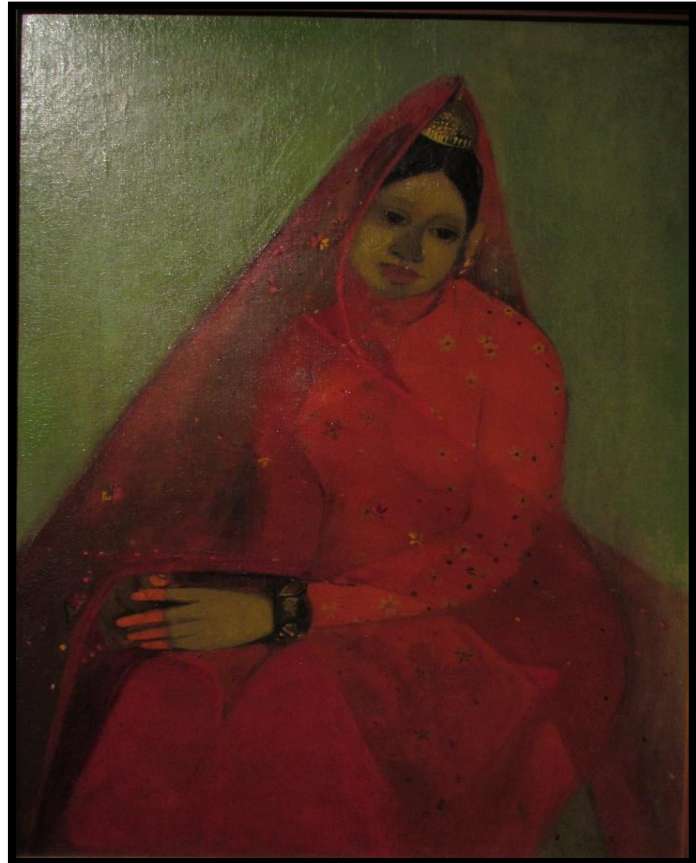


Fig. 5.4 Bride

Fig- 5.3 Amrita Sher-Gil, Two Girls (1939), Oil on Canvas, 129x89 cm. Courtesy NGMA

Fig- 5.4 Amrita Sher-Gil, Bride (c.1940), Oil on Canvass, Size- 70x 95.5 cm. Acc. No-114,

Image Source: Latika Gupta, Vivan & Navina Sundaram Collection,

One of her paintings, “Child Bride” leaves a dark impact on the onlookers with the ample application of red and green. Apart from the vibrant color scheme, the bride is having an uttermost silence in her gesture and body posture because the painting is not serving the beauty of the bride; its purpose is to show the helplessness of the young bride. The description of this bride has been found in the notes of Sher-Gil as she opined that “the bride was thirteen years old and the bridegroom was over fifty and had three wives already..... poor little bride you little know that perhaps you might live

a year, you are doomed and yet you do not realize.... (August 1st, 1925)” (**Sundaram 2010**). This way it is observed that Sher-Gil was emotionally attached to those Indian women or girls who were tortured and subjugated by the unfair patriarchal practices. These issues were then taken up by her as a subject.

Going back to the discussion, it is observed that in “Young Girls” colors are also applied to follow the prevalent Western techniques of that time. As like the style of Cezanne, Sher-Gil used the same approach as composing things into some of the areas of the painting with 'shape simplification' and 'spatial tilts" (**Subramanian 1978**). The painting represents the elite class of European women because at that time she was not so familiar with the marginalized or the middle class. The detailing and other aspects have also been structured to give a calm and eye soothing touch with balanced color composition. In this way, the painting portrays the same glimpse of her surroundings in which she was living except the symbolism of her East and West crisis. On the other hand, if the painting is observed without comparing it with her Indian paintings, it has a feministic approach. Women are portrayed as engaged in conversation and in the sensuous display, which was in fashion at that time. The women are busy in themselves and displaying their individual identity as a woman and rejecting the male-oriented stereotype of female projection.

In her residence of Paris, she had painted numerous paintings, which were titled in a simplistic way; for instance, Two Girls, Torso, Reclining Nude, Portrait of a Lady, Portrait of a Young Man etc.

These titles are not associated with that culture or tradition and failed to narrate the story of the painting. In contrast, the titles of her Indian paintings indicate the theme and its cultural association. Sher-Gil became more expressive after coming to India in respect of giving elaborative titles because, in Indian paintings, titles play an important role. Then this particular way of giving narrative titles have been successfully taken up by her after coming to India. She has painted numerous paintings with such kind of representative titles including, 'Child Bride', 'South Indian Villagers Going to Market', 'Story Teller', 'The Musicians', 'The Swing', 'Bride's Toilet' and many more. During her earlier stage of painting, particularly in Europe, she was not much profound to give the title (of paintings) the same spark (which strongly represented in her works), which embellished in her later phase (Indian). In respect of comprehensive representation of artistic work, the title of the painting has much value because it helps to direct the onlookers as per the artist's perception. In general, after seeing the painting, the eyes of the onlooker search the title to generate a perception regarding the painting. The perception, which is generated through the combination of title and

representation, can also be varied from person to person. These two paintings are better instances to observe the approach of Sher-Gil's treatment of subjects after returning to India (**Subramanyan 1978, Thompson 1982, Sen 2006**).

In 'Women Resting on a Charpoy', red is the dominant color, while in 'Young Girls' red has not been used at all; because in India red is the most dominant color for women. This dominance of red color can be derived from certain socio-cultural and psychological parameters because red is the most auspicious color in Hindu religion for married women. In this painting, a woman is depicted laying on a charpoy or cot and is attended by another woman. Another woman is depicted as holding a hand-fan and sitting in a tense mood. The slightly constructed dullness through the background in 'Young Girls' has been changed to a focal point in the 'Resting' because all adjustments have been settled to represent the traumatic state of rural women. In most of her paintings, the realistic phenomenon of women's life has been depicted, which is rarely observed as such at that time (**Kapur 2000, 2009**). Before the arrival of Sher-Gil, women had mostly been painted to display patriarchal hegemonies or to promote religion. Women were often treated as an object in the paintings and represented as engaged in erotic display or to simply meet the need of the theme. In Indian miniature paintings, the depiction of women was based on gender politics, where man's power was celebrated through the projection of woman. In numerous miniature paintings, women have been offered to the onlookers through symbolic arrangements (**Aitken 1998**). Women are mostly depicted as engaged in love-making, preparing for the meeting with her lover, waiting in lovelorn condition, taking care of the child, serving their mistress or master and participating in social activities and so on. Those miniature paintings may be a reflection of that society in which the kings had been represented as a hero, surrounded by women as attendants, concubines, mistresses, queens etc. Miniature painting style had collapsed after the establishment of the East India Company; at that time, Indian art had lost its identity and artists had lost patronage. During that time, Bengal School also emerged to set new paradigms of modern art. Raja Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore, Jamini Roy and other prominent artist were also engaged in depicting women with beauty and sensuousness. In such ambiance, Sher-Gil had chosen her subjects without any political or sensual display. She has raised different issues in concern of rural women because the true spirit of India only lies in rural places rather than in the urban ones. She picked up only those subjects which are having the conceptual beauty, which was avoided by her contemporaries. Her contemporary artists were engaged in producing paintings after getting inspired by the Western technique and style, but Sher-Gil chose to paint India in lively ways. For instance, Ravi Varma, one of her contemporaries, painted Indian

mythological subjects in the Western style and technique; in most of his paintings, the spirit of contemporary Indian culture has been lost entirely, because he preferred the Western style with mythological stories. Abanindranath Tagore was involved in experimenting with the Indian miniatures for the establishment of national Indian style, mostly related to history and mythology. Sher-Gil used her genius to capture the contemporary view of India rather than its historic events. The concept of a reclining woman was very much in fashion and was depicted by numerous eminent artists, like Eduard Monet, Picasso, and many more. This subject had also been painted by Varma too. Varma depicted the beauty and sensuousness, which was frequently depicted in miniature paintings and Western art.

In Indian miniature paintings, reclining women had only been associated with the erotic display. All of these reclining nudes were made in a seductive way with an inviting attitude. On the contrary, Sher-Gil subverted this imagery of a woman without letting her art being distorted and created a unique representation of Indian culture through the fresh portrayal of women. She just painted what she felt after coming to India without mythological association. It is a unique virtue of Sher-Gil to paint the reality in a modern style; her Indian women, therefore, belong to the group of ordinary villagers of India and her Western women belong to the Western elite class. Sinha stated that this painting is a subversion of that representation of women in Indian miniature, which is often associated with the bed as waiting for her lover or in the highly enchanting mood. They (Sher-Gil's women after coming to India) are not belonging to any character that narrated in ancient Indian literature or painting; they are "modern, recognizable, and "common" too with its "striking spontaneity" (Sinha 1996).

In the 'Resting on Charpoy' Amrita Sher-Gil depicted stress and tense ambiance while in 'Young Girls' calm and casual view has been painted. In 'Young Girls' the women have been shown as sparing their leisure time peacefully without any stress, but in 'Resting' the woman is looking very tired and ill. The 'Young Girls' belonged to the elite class, while in 'Resting' a sight of the subaltern class family is painted. In India, women particularly belonged to only domestic work at that time (often in subaltern class); in their leisure time, they used to involve in other household activities. In the scene of 'Resting' the lying woman is looking unhealthy (like having a stomach ache because her hands are placed on her stomach) and another woman is looking like her attendant because, usually in rural India, it is very difficult for a woman to spare time for themselves. This kind of subject was entirely avoided by the artists and sensual imagery was the focal point in the portrayal

of women. Laying woman was also depicted with the same erotic or sensuous display surrounded by a group of females.

The attendant in “Resting” is painted as holding a handmade fan but not looking like a maid; the stress can be caught on the faces of both the figures. The emptiness of the painting is portraying the glimpse of loneliness, which is a common phenomenon of rural Indian women of that time. The painting can also be explored through the other way as relating with artist’s life because Sher-Gil has faced many grievances throughout her life and this can be observed that through the portrayal of such kind of subjects, Sher-Gil was involved in self-healing. According to **Geeta Kapur**, “Sher-Gil’s peasant and aristocratic women in a feudal setting seemed to hold in their stillness a latency of desire that would appear to exceed the artist’s own potential as a middle-class woman. But perhaps it was precisely the other way around: that the artist’s (occidental/ romantic, perhaps bisexual)” **(Kapur 1997)**.

The laying woman in that painting is looking married because she is having a red line between the middle partitions of her scalp, which is a sign of marriage in Hindu religion and prohibited for unmarried women and widows. This line is applied with auspicious red pigment, called *sindoor* by the Hindu woman after marriage, and this custom is strictly followed till the time of their death. The institution of marriage is appropriately practiced in India and followed by numerous people. In Indian society; a woman is often more particular in such practices than man. Sher-Gil portrayed this painting to represent such marital customs, in which married woman has gone through isolation and loneliness. After the arrival of this very marital red, women used to be bound and dominated by their husband and family. This boundary has been symbolically depicted by the artist through the red four pillars of *charpoy* (Cot). They long for their counterpart after marriage because men work outside and women do domestic work inside, especially so in rural areas. This is the biggest problem of numerous women in India because illiteracy is much more prevalent among them. Then they remain alone physically but remain united socially with her husband. This was the biggest issue of Indian culture at that time, which was only focused on Sher-Gil in her painting because she has acutely suffered due to unhappy married life.

In this painting, Sher-Gil focused on a major aspect of paintings in which a woman is depicted without a man, but the presence of man is construed in a symbolic way. She took this concept for sarcasm after using some signs of a marriage in red color, but her depiction is not supporting that presence (male); it rather is criticizing this situation of a married woman.

In the Western culture marital practices are limited to mostly physical attraction, but in India, it is more comprehensive; so, in 'Young Girls', Sher-Gil chose a casual theme. In 'Young Girls', women have been painted as involved in the objects of amusement, like one is holding a palate of apples and another one a music script in her hand. They are well educated and beautifully dressed up with fine makeup. Quite the opposite, the 'Resting' woman and her attendant have been portrayed in simple appearance. There is no sign of male presence in 'Young Girls,' because this painting is not interrelated with patriarchal politics or male dominance like the 'Resting'. In 'Resting' the pillars of the cot are also painted in bright red, which may be an effort of the artist to project the boundary of painted woman's in-laws house, which she wants to cross but always fails. The women in 'Resting' have been painted in traditional Punjabi (India) dress but this dress is also worn by the woman of Uttar Pradesh, where the painting has been painted. It is mentioned by Sher-Gil in one of her letters to Karl Khandalavla that "I have just finished a picture--a girl in red-flowered clothes (the Punjabi dress, tight red trousers, shirt & veil)" (Sundaram 2010). The dress is known as the *Salwar Kameez* (fully covered upper and trouser) and worn with a long scarf (*dupatta*). The scarf is used by a woman to cover their head, mandatory for all women in Indian culture. In 'Young Girls', women are fully uncovered (their head) because this trend is mostly avoided in the Western culture.

Another painting of Sher-Gil, titled 'Female Torso,' has been taken to compare with the painting titled, 'Women at Bath'. First of all, the theme of both the paintings is entirely different from each other. In both, the paintings woman is depicted as showing her back to the onlookers, but their handling of structure, theme, and sites are entirely different. In 'Torso', the woman is sitting to give posture as a module, while in 'Woman at Bath' the woman is depicted as slightly showing her face and bathing in an indoor of a rural house.

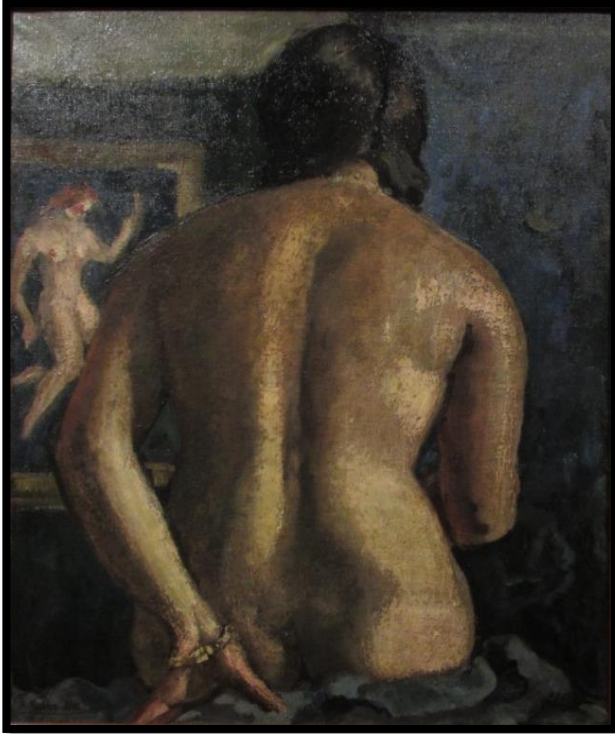


Fig. 5.6 Torso

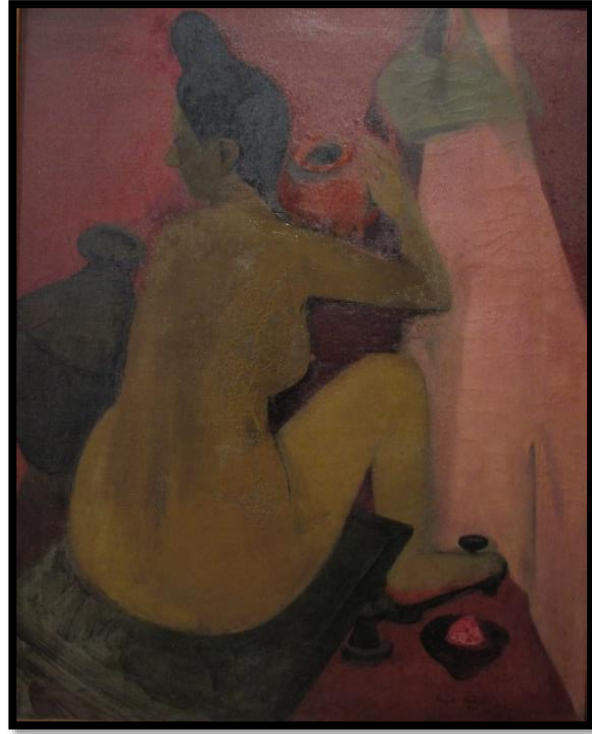


Fig. 5.5 Women at Bath

Fig- 5.5 Oil on Canvass, 1931, Size-62x 81 cm. Acc. No- 50

Fig- 5.6 Oil on Canvass, 1940 Size- 68.5x 92.4 cm. Acc. No- 41

Courtesy NGMA

Sher-Gil has again painted two diverse cultures and ideologies. At first glance, the 'Torso' is representing a scene of an art studio while 'Bath' is based on a private practice. In both the paintings, a nude woman has been depicted as showing her back towards the onlookers. 'Torso' is looking like a piece of studio practice because, in the Western culture, artists do practice through nude study. In 'Woman at Bath', a nude woman is captured as bathing in a private space, because in rural areas women mostly take bath inside their house.

In Indian culture, the nude study was also prohibited before the pre-colonial era; it particularly came into practice after the arrival of East India Company. But it used to be practiced by male artists only. For Indian female artists, it was a taboo till the early 20th century and Amrita Sher-Gil is the first noticeable female artist of India who did so. From the 20th century onwards, the depiction of nudity had been started by some of the female artists. Generally, in art colleges, the frontal body was mostly studied by artists. Sher-Gil painted a woman as showing her back which was singular in itself. The depiction of 'Woman at Bath' is also connected with traditional Indian culture because, in India,

women (specifically in rural areas) take bath in a private space rather than bathing in a swimming pool (like in the West). Indian women or girls have to follow a set of 'dos' and 'don't' from their childhood in which their body is restricted by some rules. In these rules, they have to maintain and hide her sexuality. Shyness and morality are considered her virtues, but these norms of society might have looked strange and shocking to Sher-Gil because she had spent most of her time in the West. Such subjects, which are related to social customs, were projected by Sher-Gil in a very different way.

A bathing woman has also been painted numerous times by artists; but like 'Resting', Sher-Gil again subverted the female imagery from sensual to rational in the 'Woman at Bath'. The title, 'Torso' is again unexpressive as compared to 'Woman at Bath'. The background and interior of both the paintings (Torso & Bath) are very different from each other. In 'Torso', a studio scene has been created through a painting hanging on the wall. In contrast, the interior of 'Bath' is typically Indian because, in rural areas, this kind of bathroom can be seen till today. These small, congested bathrooms are constructed without any decoration because in Indian rural areas interior decoration is not preferred as the urban areas. The woman is having bath through a clay pitcher and using a small clay pitcher jug for taking bath; the clay pitcher is particularly associated with the rural Indian women since a very long time. Women use this to bring water from the ponds and rivers, while in urban areas plastic buckets are used. The pitcher of water is also painted by Sher-Gil in 'Resting' and in many of her paintings. The posture of sitting in the 'Bath' is also Indian because, in rural India, women mostly take bath or change their clothes in the same posture in a group.

The woman is painted with traditional Indian footwear of wood, which is called *Kharau*. This kind of footwear is particularly used by a woman for doing domestic chores and frequently mentioned in Hindu and other religious myths. In Hindu religion, *Kharau* is considered very auspicious. The bra of woman has also been shown as hanging in the interior. But in Torso, these details have been avoided by the artist; she uses a symbolic way to interpret the life of Indian woman. Red is again dominant in the background. The woman in the 'Torso' is looking like an elite, while in 'Woman at Bath' the subaltern or lower-class woman has been shown. The only similar thing in both of the painting is their treatment of handling the onlookers through positioning their backsides. During her residence in Europe, such as the type of depiction (Torso) used to be very common because each and every artistic production is, most of the time, based on the observation of the individual. Then, the response of the individual is directed through his or her inner grasping and inculcating in respect

of an art object. In Europe, she painted subjects, but in India, she painted the reality associated with subjects. At that time, rural women were mostly belonging to domestic and isolated space; so this really part of their life has been explored by Sher-Gil.

The paintings of her European stay are deeply associated with the Western culture. The glimpse of Western culture is not only found in Sher-Gil's paintings, but it can be seen through her living style, dress-up, hairstyle, and other belongings. The self-portraits and photographs of her Western residence have the same cultural semiotics as her paintings. When she was in Europe and painted "Young Girls", she represented personal encounters with the fusion of fair and dark skin figures. She painted a blonde with long hairs because she liked it very much as her sister Indira mentioned: "Amrita was very self-conscious about being hairy (because in Europe her hairs are too short) and also about her ugly nose and receding chin" (**Sundaram 2010**). Going through the words of Indira, it can be observed that Sher-Gil's hair was very short when she portrayed the painting; therefore, she might have painted a girl having very long hair, with nice facial details, and her nose very sharp. The things, which were loved by Sher-Gil, have been focused on the painting. Another girl (sitting with a staring attitude, towards, the fairer one) is probably a form to share Sher-Gil's desires.

When she was in Europe, her subjects were entirely based on studio practice and painted nudes, but when she arrived in India she developed a strong sense in the selection of subjects. She usually avoided nude depiction in the portrayal of women, because in Indian culture women mostly remain fully covered. This custom of remaining fully dressed is not only limited to her painted women but she also adopted this culture in her lifestyle. She was mostly found in a Sari (a traditional outfit of an Indian woman), with the *Bindi* on her forehead (a red dot, usually applied by a married woman in India). In her painting style, she switched from urban and elite class group into rural and traditional one after being influenced by the Indian culture. This ideology of Indian culture has come up so appropriately in her paintings because she has taken her academic qualification outside India. After being an outsider, she might have found Indian culture fascinating and novel and then changed her life and act accordingly. She took the marginalized and subaltern people more seriously because such kinds of issues were alien to her as she belonged to an elite class family (**Herwitz 2006**). The depiction of rural life with traumatic ambiance has emerged as a genuine and sublime approach and her art has become unique and fundamental. She had all the knowledge and experience of Western art but, as an artist, she was not satisfied with her surroundings. She also felt that "Europe was not the place for the blossoming of her art" (**Singh 1975**) because she was searching the identity of her

own, which she found after coming to India. It is also noted further by Sher-Gil that "towards the end of 1933, to be haunted by an intense longing to return to India, feeling in some strange inexplicable way that there lay my destiny as a painter" (**Kapur 1997**). At her foreign residence, the paintings are highly influenced by the Western art; but after the encounter with Indian art and culture, she equipped her artistic style as per Indian module, where culture and traditional values are highly embedded in her work. This inner conflict of Sher-Gil as an artist (in Europe) was also discovered by her mentor, Lucien Simon, and she further realized that, "She was not in (her) element in the grey studio of the West and that her artistic personality would find its true atmosphere in the colors and light of the East" (**Singh 1975**). She also had a very tragic life and suffered reportedly due to her love affairs. So, to paint the similar tragic subjects can be a medium to get rid of those sufferings because it is psychologically proved that art acts as a healing process for such sufferings. Her own dilemma of identity-crisis (because she was connected with India but tried to fit into the West), which has been frequently encountered in her work (like 'Two Girls', and 'Young Girls', where she particularly made two girls, one is having a dark complexion and other is having fair one), has been sorted out after returning to India (as she gets what she longs for).

When she was in West, she was an academic student, experimenting with different painting styles, doing nude studies after following the techniques of Western masters. In India, she became an independent artist who moved towards realistic approach after exploring the frescos of Ajanta and Indian miniature style. She gave preference to gestures in dark complexion rather than body structure which is a characteristic of Indian murals. She started to cover her painted women because her models were Indian. Her work was changed dramatically and she became very elaborative on the painted surface. Her color palette had been turned into brownish and reddish from bluish and whitish tones. Physical structure and facial details have also been changed as per Indian arrangement. After coming to India, she gave preference to larger figure in mannerist style, but in Europe, she painted them as they appear. She chose to paint the rural life without any beautification and ornamentation because she was a true admirer of eternal beauty and the people of the village were satisfying the same thrust in her, aroused after seeing the murals of India.

In a painting, there are mainly two spaces: one is positive and another is negative. The main subject is considered a positive space and the other things, including background, come in the category of negative space. The positive space or woman is representing a typical Indian culture through traditional Indian dress, a way of sitting or lying (in India woman usually use same postures in

bathing and resting), dark skin color etc. In 'Resting', the positive space or woman is the focal aspect of the artist and negative space is symbolically created to support the theme. The negative space is constructed through indigenous things like *Ghara* (clay pitcher), *Chowki* (wooden stool), *Kharau* (wooden sandals), *Bindi* (red dot on the forehead), *Sindoor* (red pigment applied by married women), *Charpoy* (cot) etc.

In 'Young Girls', Sher-Gil focused on the very Western shine and highlighted the girls as wearing beautiful layered dresses, having long and shiny hairs, beautified with jewelry and makeup, having well-proportioned body. In 'Torso', she captured the artist's studio with a model, sitting in front of a painting. She took Indian culture so profoundly in her art after coming to India because she had a mixed parentage and from her childhood, she learned the characteristics of India culture.

In this cultural evaluation, it is observed that paintings of her Indian period have two major approaches. In the first approach, she explores the early Indian art and then took its virtues and attributes in her own way to represent the true indigenous culture. In the second approach, she particularly focused on the depiction of a rural woman and changed the way of sensual or political depiction into significant forms with the help of cultural semiotics. Her art has become livelier in the shade of Indian culture. Sher-Gil has chosen to depict the true spirit of India in its precise situation, while in Europe she sometimes missed that forum.

5.5 NAVIGATION OF FEMINIST IDENTITY: THE PAINTINGS OF AMRITA SHER-GIL

Sher-Gil enlightened the female artists to explore their identity in more subtle ways in two approaches. The first approach is the contribution of woman as an artist and the second approach is related with the projection and opposition of those manipulated and sexualized imagery of womanhood which has been continuously projected by the male artist of her time. In respect of the first approach, it can be considered by her writings that Sher-Gil was influenced by various independent and empowered women including Sarojini Naidu, an activist and poet (1879-1949) and she has also shared intimacy with many women as mentioned in her letters. Thus, Sher-Gil has built her persona under the influence of such empowered and powerful women. She probably looked her identity as a woman as per those grounds and after coming to India, she suddenly gave her focus to the unprivileged and marginalized women who were lacking such privileges in that society. Sher-Gil spent her life in aristocracy with elite class society, was moved on towards the misery of rural women which is an astonishing example of her artistic intelligence and her artistic identity. It was also the time when Sher-Gil was passing through her own tragic life due to her unhealthy relations

with her husband so she has taken such subjects as an interesting story to fight with her inner trauma and to get some relief after projecting the ordinary women. Moreover, she just wanted to depict the mundane to break the trending order in the depiction of womanhood. These particular aspects further became a signpost for the leading female artists of India in the exploration of self and in the projection of womanhood in a more advanced approach.

Sher-Gil was decoding societal injustice from a very young age which has been frequently mentioned in her diary, for instance, she mentioned the child bride in her writing (Sundaram 2010). To observe such issues at the very young age is also very surprising but she was not only the observer of such issues, she adopted those issues in her artwork to show them to the world. This observance of societal injustice has also been mentioned by Pal, during the time of the interview with the author. Pal not only observed the existing society but she also criticized the ancient Indian manuscripts and artworks which are lacking the realistic depiction of womanhood.

5.6 GOGI SAROJ PAL: CONTINUING THE SAME PATH

Gogi Saroj Pal, born in Uttar Pradesh (Neoli in 1945), has completed her study from Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh). She was an enthusiastic child and brought up in a liberal family where her father was a freedom fighter and her uncle was a writer. Her grandmother was also working as a social worker for the women of her state. Pal has remained observant from her childhood, which is quite possible in such kind of family. She is living in New-Delhi with her artist partner Ved Nayar. She works in a different medium and her genius is not only limited to paintings but she is also involved in printmaking, sculpture, installation, studio-pottery, and writing. She is one of the most renowned female artists of India and exhibited her work in various countries. The theme of her paintings is particularly focused on Indian women where a fusion of traditional and modern forms can be observed. The earlier characters of Indian paintings and mythology are represented with a modern approach. These characters are transformed in a unique style to criticize the previous forms of women which were derived from social hierarchies and gender and politics. The female icons of Pal are opposing the traditional myths and representing the realistic issues of the life of the woman. She always opposes the traditional portrayal of a woman because these forms are belonging to beauty and sensuality, as she stated regarding her feminine icons, “Indian mythology had a limited number of *nayikas*. I wanted to add my own. There are several aspects that have not yet been depicted” (Kalra 2015). The series like *Hat-Yogini Shakti*, *Kamdhenu* (wish-fulfilling cow), *Being a Woman*, *Dancing Horse*, *Kinnari* (how much woman you are?), *Swaymvaram* (an ancient practice for girls to

choose groom), *Eternal Bird*, *Nayika* (Indian Heroine), *Aag Ka Dariya* (sea of Fire), *Mandi* (market), *Nati Binodini* have a strong feministic approach. The colors of her paintings vibrate like the harmonious colors of Indian miniature paintings and her paintings mostly executed in the brilliant color scheme. Her favorite medium of painting is a gauche technique but she also explores others to serve her artistic soul.

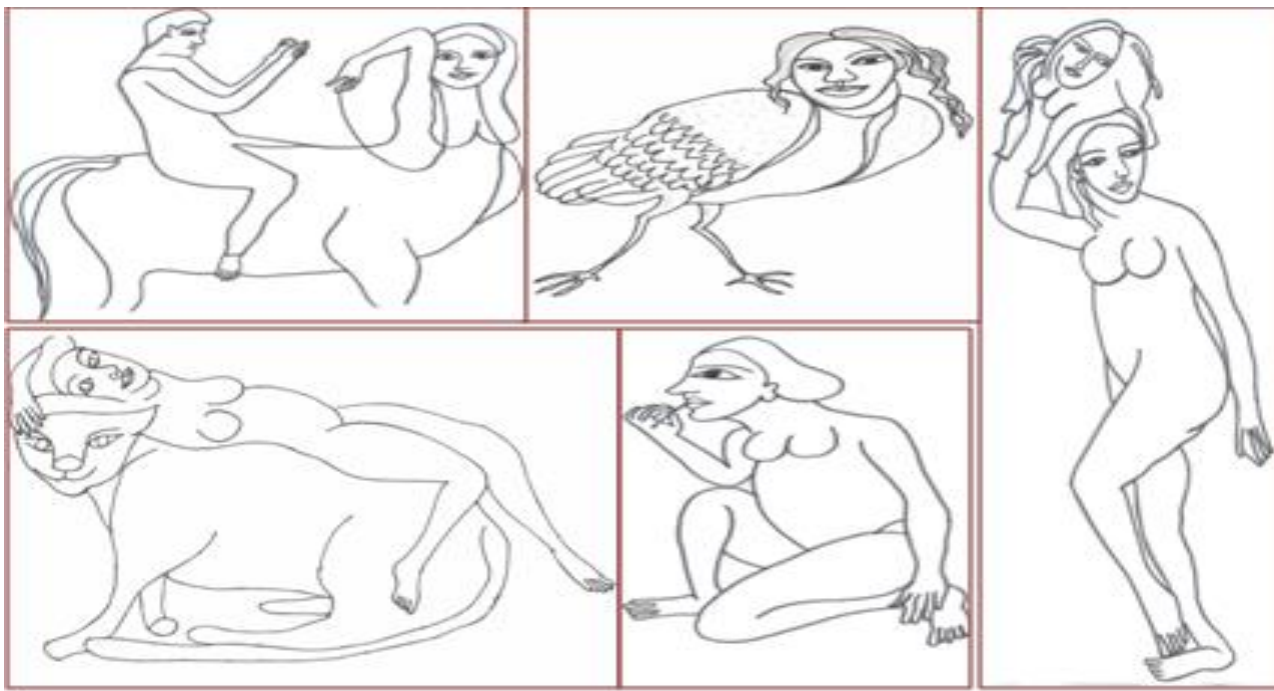


Fig. 5.7 Some Sketches of the Paintings of Gogi Saroj Pal

Pal has represented various aspects, associated with the life of almost every woman. There are women enjoying their freedom, celebrating their sexuality, questioning the patriarchy, protesting for their rights, giving pose in sarcastic ways, portraying the oppressed imagery of woman and so on and on. Her female protagonists are giving their strong contribution to reforming the status of women and promoting the empowerment for them.

5.7 REINVENTING THE MYTHOLOGICAL FABLES AND CHARACTERS

5.7.1 HAT-YOGINI: TAMING THE FORBIDDEN FORCE

Gogi Saroj Pal has invented a remarkable protagonist expression in her series titled, “*Hat-Yogini Shakti*,” in vibrant colors. *Hat-Yogini Shakti* is about a woman engaged in Yoga with energy and force. Pal made a series on this theme in various postures. It can be considered that she has taken the concept of Kali after taking inspiration from mythology. These series have been carried out by Pal with a female figure, which is mostly depicted as sitting or standing on a tiger. The word ‘*Hat*’ stands

for a state of being forceful and '*Yogini*' stands for the practitioner of Yoga or rituals. Yoga is usually performed to gain physical and mental satisfaction and prowess with self-realization from a very long time in Vedic culture. According to Burley, Yoga is "the realization of one's true identity as the self" (Burley 2000). '*Shakti*' word is commonly used for the Goddess Kali, the Black Goddess and also known as Devi or Durga along with other various names in Hindu mythology.

The chronological evidence of Devi has been found in many historical texts of Hindu mythology. The Goddess or Devi is described as the rescuer of all Gods from the devils in *Devi-Mahatmaya* (a literary account, around 400-500 CE) in the form of '*Shakti*'. Shakti or Devi has taken birth from the combined divine power of many Gods, considered as a rescuer of good from the evil forces. The Hat-Yogini Shakti is full of feminine forces, described to be a female version of Lord Shiva in general. Shakti is also known as the wife of Lord Shiva according to Hindu mythology.

Here, two kinds of approaches can be observed in the depiction of Hat-Yogini. The first one is the reincarnation of a woman from the world known imagery of Hat-Yogini (name of Goddess Kali and used for those women who performed tough practices to gain wisdom and supernatural powers). In another, the long prevalent Goddess imagery, associated with beauty and sensuousness has been questioned after setting new paradigms of appearance by Pal. In the series of paintings of Hat-Yogini, a huge tiger, tamed by Goddess Kali, is depicted by the artist. In this way, it appears that Pal has chosen the character of Goddess Shakti and then represented it in a much-subdued tone, which is a deviation from the traditional trend of depicting Goddesses with beauty and sensuousness. The Goddess used to be portrayed as a beautiful and charming woman. This phenomenon of beauty and aesthetical approach has emerged appropriately through the calendar art of Ravi Varma in which a well-proportionate Goddess was painted with delicacy.

Goddess Kali had been created by the Gods to get rid of all the evil, her sinister attribute cannot be controlled even by herself. She is associated with destructive powers and mostly painted with horrifying gestures, where beauty is particularly avoided by the artist. In the most popular images of Kali, Lord Shiva is made as lying under her foot to stop her rage. Her blue naked body is decorated with a garland of the heads of dead people.

From the earlier times, Goddess Shakti is always described and depicted as riding a lion or a tiger, the lion is also worshipped as a '*Vahana*' (vehicle) of Goddess '*Durga*' or '*Shakti*'. The term '*Yogini*' is related to the '*Tantric*' sects of Shaivism, and the images of '*Yogini*' have been

particularly placed at the outside of the temples in naked and semi-naked conditions. The Yoginis had been depicted with sharp features and voluptuousness, which evoke sensual pleasure and aesthetical approach (Fig- 5.8).



Fig. 5.8 Yoginis

Fig.5.8 Image Credit Mb4 travel



Fig. 5.9 Hat-Yoginis Shakti

Fig. 5.9 Image Credit Gogi Saroj Pal

In the above painting, (Fig-5.9) a Yogini can be seen standing above the body of a man. This may be the body of Lord Shiva, who is depicted lying on the earth in an unconscious state. This concept is based on a mythological fable of Goddess Kali. She was born from the brow of the Goddess Durga during a battle and took the terrible form and burst out in anger. She was destroying everything, but Lord Shiva laid himself down in her way and was trampled by Kali. Suddenly she realized the state of her anger and its consequences. The posture of Yogini is very much similar to that fable of

Goddess Kali. In this context, it can be observed that in Indian mythology, there are certain icons, which are somehow related to each other; here Yogini could be an incarnation of Goddess Kali.

On the contrary, Pal's Yogini (Fig. 5.9) is entirely different from the prevalent concept of Yogini and completely devoid of anger and rage. In her painting, Pal has replaced the male figure with a tiger. The Yogini of Pal is standing on a tamed tiger, which is looking like her pet. It seems that the Yogini is not articulating any mythical fable, originated by a patriarchal society, but she is powerful enough to construct her own story. Her divine calmness, which is apparent from her gestures, reminds us of the fact that she is not serving anyone's purpose and is engaged in soliloquy. The tiger in the painting plays a very significant role and it is treated equally by Pal alongside the woman.

The tendency of violence and anger, which is particularly associated with the Goddess's imagery, is entirely avoided by the artist in the portrayal. Pal reinvented the female protagonist along with the tiger to oppose that politicized imagery of womanhood in which the Goddess has been equipped through patriarchal hegemony. It may be said that the origin of Goddess *Kali* is related to the welfare of Gods and society, where her existence is solely dependent upon the needs of men. She used to appear only at the times of war with the evil spirits and demons.

In Pal's paintings, the Goddess serves no one; she is the tamer of the tiger rather than riding on it. After looking at the tiger, it can be clearly observed that he is looking like a pet of the Yogini. He is in a mood of relaxation like the Yogini, who is standing on the tiger in a yogic posture. The color application is quite vibrant and appealing where deep blue and bright yellow has been chosen by the artist. If it is compared with the stereotype of previous Yogini figure, there can be numerous aspects, which differentiate them from each other. Pal has avoided the beauty and ornamentation and replaced the ferocious tiger with the decent one. It is also observed that the protagonist of Hat-Yogini Shakti series is not related to any mythical story; they belong to the women of contemporary era; they are getting victory over the difficulties at their own will. Kali in Hat-Yogini is not born for philanthropic purpose like fighting for others or waging battles for other's sake; she is busy in herself, she is invented for the realm of earthly woman- not for Godly woman, she is a simple creature in herself, and her tiger is like her, very relaxed with its calm gesture.



Fig. 5.10 Goddess Kali on Shiva

Fig.5.10 Source-

<http://cdn4.artofthetitle.com/assets/resized/sm/upload/kn/io/xp/e5/Goddess-kali2-800px-0-660-0-0.jpg?k=32d565d879>

Fig.5.11 Image Courtesy: Gogi Saroj Pal

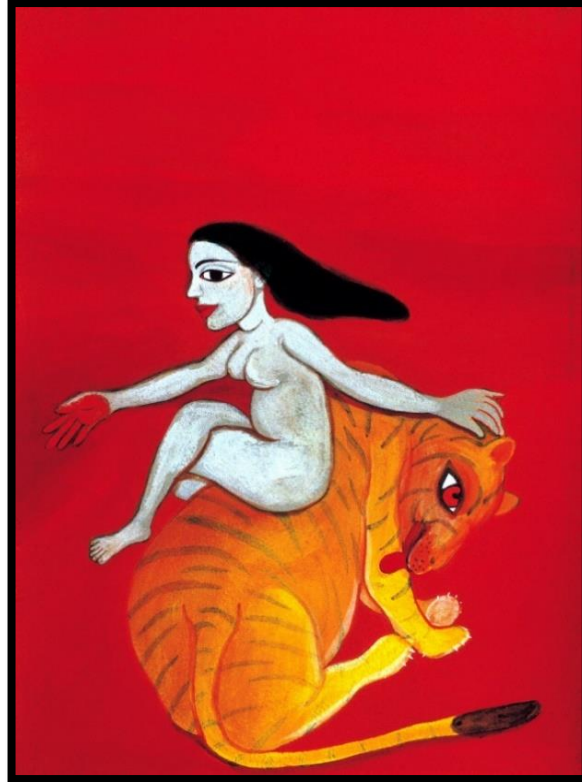


Fig. 5. 11 Hat-Yogini Shakti

Yogini is sitting on a tiger, which represents her supremacy and victory over male sexuality because masculinity which is associated with a tiger or lion is threatened by the female protagonist. From the painting itself, it cannot be ascertained whether this is a tiger or tigress, but the male identity of the creature has been affirmed by the artist during her interview with the author. The anger and strength of the tiger have been tamed by the protagonist after making the tiger her pet. It is frequently mentioned by the artist in a personal interview with the author that she is more concerned about the issues related with the objectification of woman through male-dominated society and the academic/historic reluctance to credit women’s contribution in mythological stories and artworks. In her words,

“I have learned through literary treasure in which I have found mythical icons like Kamdhenu, Hatyogini Shakti and many more. I was also very fascinated during my study that there is a description of nine *rasas* or delight, which was generated through male presence in the female body,

so the representation of woman has been associated with man. A woman has always been associated with man: their existence in art has been dependent on the actual or psychological presence of man. Then I started rethinking and I have got my questions or issues, then I have taken such aspects as a whole and started to initiate a dialogue with them in my paintings”.(Stated during the interview with the researcher)

After observing her statement, it can be inferred that she is questioning the absence of female power to resolve those issues related to gender politics through her paintings. In this way, she has depicted the tiger symbolically for sarcasm where the Yogini is engaged in Yoga and not even interacting with the viewers like the Yogini of Orissa and shifting her very gaze.

She is portrayed naked but her nudity is not so appealing compared to the ancient Yoginis because the main structure of the body has been drawn devoid of sensuousness. The decoration and ornamentation are particularly avoided by the artist because her protagonist attitude is free from the objectification of female. They do not impress the onlookers by sensual display or by commercialization like the ancient Yogini forms that were exhibited with voluptuousness. In her own words: “I don’t want to decorate the surface, I just want to express myself in my own way, even I don’t bother whether the painting is bought or not, it is liked or not, my art is free from such concerns” (Stated during the interview with the researcher).

So, here the feminine icons are celebrating the frivolousness of ancient Goddess in their own manner either for the relaxation of mind or as a satirical comment upon the patriarchal set up of the society. In this celebration, Tiger plays an important role because, without the tiger, the onlookers could not get the point of Pal’s dialogue. As Lord Shiva, the God of Shaivism or Tantrism is often painted seated on the skin of a dead tiger. Pal has depicted the Goddess more powerful than Shiva because Shakti is seen seated on a fearsome tiger. She has invented her own Goddess for the empowerment of woman, where she inspires them to get rid of the shackles of patriarchal society and find their own way to become powerful. According to **Gadon (2011)**,

“In taming the primal power of the tiger, making it their own, Indian women are reclaiming their own unmanifested Shakti (female cosmic energy); even the title of this piece reflects Pal’s desire to motivate women to break their desires and speak up in their own interests” **Gadon (2011)**. (**Gadon 2007**).

Through this series, Pal has constructed a powerful identity of the woman who is exploring her existence after experimenting with various forms. These forms are inspired by those painted images, which used to associate with the man only like the appearance of God, their sitting postures, and belongings. In some of the paintings of this series, Pal mostly portrayed woman as a female version of Lord Shiva. In these paintings, the color of the woman's body has been painted as blue (Fig- 5.12).



Fig. 5. 12 Hatyogini Shakti

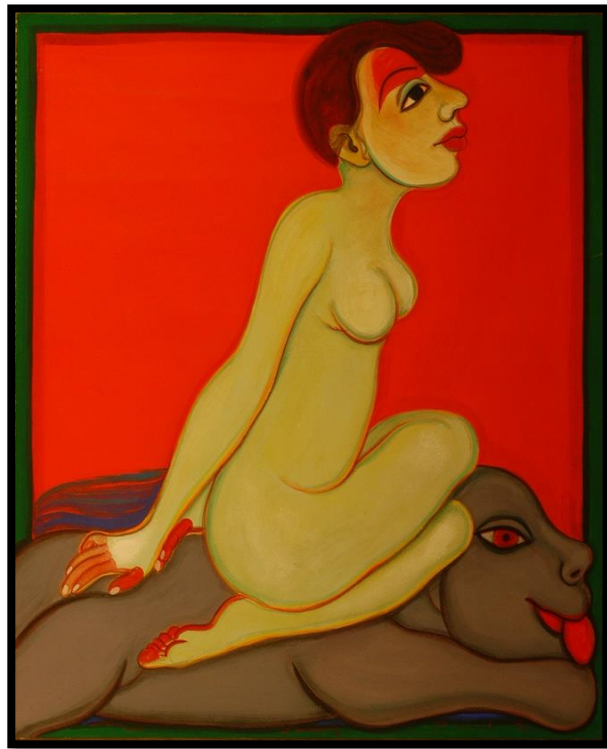


Fig. 5. 13 Hat-Yogini Shakti

Fig.5.12, 13 Images Courtesy Gogi Saroj Pal

The male Gods are often associated with the blue body; for instance, Lord Shiva and Krishna have been painted in blue color. The color is also related with the heroic powers of Lord Krishna whose body turned in blue color after fighting a snake-God. In this way, after using the same color, Pal has questioned mythical fables because these stories are male-centered and reinvented the female-centric story to balance this inequality. Lord Shiva is associated with the blue body and painted as sitting on a tiger-skin; so in Pal's paintings, such kind of symbolic adoptions can be seen. The bun of the hair is also quite familiar with the Indian saint tradition, which is rarely followed by women. The ancient Yoginis were beautifully ornamented with heavy jewelry, but in the paintings of Pal such beautification is entirely ignored because ornamentation of bodies is also related with the sensual pleasure which delights the eyes of the viewers. The purpose of Pal's protagonists is to represent the inner soul of womanhood and beauty is not much value in this context.

5.7.2 KAMADHENU: ENGENDERING THE IMAGERY

In this series, Pal has invented a hybrid woman, who is half woman and half animal. Kamadhenu series is also a remarkable instance of Pal's versatile imagination and metaphysical thinking as a feminist artist. The word Kamadhenu is particularly used for the cow, which is always associated with Hindu mythology. According to the mythological records, Kamadhenu is a spiritual Goddess in the form of a cow and originated during the mythological event of the churning of the ocean. Kamadhenu is also known as the mother of all cows and related to prosperity (Bonney and Doniger1993).



Fig. 5.14 Sculpture of Kamadhenu



Fig. 5.15 Kamdhenu

Fig.5.14 Source

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9b/Batu_Caves_Kamadhenu.jpg

Fig- 5.15 Gogi Saroj Pal, Kamdhenu 1(1995), Gouache on Paper, 56x76 cm., Images Courtesy Gogi Saroj Pal

There is a number of images, in which the body of the cow is considered as the Hindu pantheon. In contrast, the Kamadhenu of Pal has been depicted in a sarcastic way against such mythological interpretations of society because it is the place, where on one hand the cow is worshipped and on the other hand it is mocked for its submissive character. The statement is very common and familiar in Indian society, “*Gaye jaisi hai, or bilkul Gaye hai* (as docile as the cow),” to describe someone’s tameness. In Indian society, approximately all want to have a woman/girl as docile as a cow. It is expected of women that they will remain obedient to the whims and fancies of their male relations,

be it before or after marriage. The cow is taken for granted in contemporary society for its innocence and docile character.

The present scenario of Indian women is not very different than that of the cows, who toil throughout their lives for the prosperity of the family but treated badly by the society. In this way, Pal has merged this dual identity of cow and woman as a whiplash on the face of this patriarchal society.

In the above image (Fig.5.14) of a sculpture found in the cave of Malaysia, there is a cow with a female face, resembling the same hybridism as the Kamdhenu of Pal. In the conversation with Pal, it is found that she explored the mythological fables and ancient literature of the world, where this Kamdhenu imagery influenced her practice immensely. Being hunted by the sad plight of women in the present day patriarchal Indian society, her conscience found some striking similarity between the conditions of the cow and those of the women. As a response, she scripted her own story to question these issues after equating the situation with the gender bias of Indian society. Women in Indian society mostly suffer from dominant patriarchal practices. In society also, there is the existence of two types of woman, the first one is an earthly woman in the form of daughter, wife sister or mother, and another one is worshipped in the form of heavenly women or Goddesses. These perceptions of society are entirely different for the two categories. The Goddess or Devi is worshipped with full respect while the ordinary woman is mostly neglected and treated as an object or commodity.

If the Goddess is compared with the ordinary one, it is found that the imagery of Goddess had only been created to motivate ordinary woman politically as per constraints of the male dominant society. Pal is motivated by the mythical figure of Lakshmi and wishes to mold/transform herself into a mere clone of such unreal figure, while she enters the marital life. She wishes to identify herself as the reincarnated Sita when her husband is in trouble. The psychological transformation of the real self into mythical divine identities helps them to role-play successfully. In this way, it can be inferred that there are plenty of Goddesses, who influence the lives of all women, where their roles and duties are politically misconstrued after giving the instance of these Goddesses. Gogi Saroj Pal has taken this vast majority of mythological politics and then questioned the situation of a woman through this series of her work. In Kamdhenu, she has taken the myth of Kamdhenu and then represented it to spread awareness regarding the social inequality towards women. In this way, the animal imagery has been equipped by the artist to criticize the duality of societal construction, where a woman is often neglected by their self-exploration and identity. These mythological perceptions are often used for the direction of the social code of conducts for the marginalization of women because women

are expected to serve the society in order to satisfy those politicized icons and her will has no value for these gender-bias norms. As **Kaur (2011)** stated that “the kamadhenu (cow Goddess) is a touching trend-in for Indian womanhood-according to mythology, the Kamadhenu would grant its owners all their wishes without requiring anything in return” (**Kaur 2011**).



Fig. 5. 16 Kamdhenu

Fig.5.16 'Kamdhenu - 1' - 1991 'Gouache on Paper' '56 x 76 cm' Source- Gogi Saroj Pal

Kamdhenu is mostly painted in white tones, which is the natural color of the cow, and her legs and hands are painted in bright hues of red and orange. This style of painting hands and legs could be an attempt to portray the practice of *Mehndi* (a mixture of leaves) / *Alta* (a red liquid pigment), generally used on the occasion of marriage and post-marriage ceremonies by women. In Indian society, *Mehndi* is considered very auspicious for a bride or newly wedded woman, but it is forbidden for the widow because it is considered an auspicious thing along with the *Sindoor* (a red powdered pigment applied in the *Maang* by Hindu married women), the *Bindi* (a colorful dot applied on the forehead by the married woman). Women in Hindu culture are socially bound to apply these things after marriage for the long life and happiness of their husbands. The red hands and legs of Kamdhenu are offering the same culture to the onlookers but in a sarcastic way, and narrate the story of a married woman, who is restricted in her sphere. She is not alone but the institution of marriage has also been addressed symbolically in the paintings with the absence of her husband. The red color, which is

applied to the hands and feet, is also a symbol of traditional marriage. The red color is also representing the ambitions and desires of a woman, which also has her own life rather than serving others. The figure is also painted as spreading all over the surface and sometimes it is just coming out of the surface, particularly in Kamdhenu. This adjustment of a figure appearing as to come out from the surface is representing those boundaries of house, where a woman is bound and dominated by the society either physically or mentally. She struggles to break the barriers but, in the process, becomes marginalized. The woman experiences the same situation of a cow in Pal's paintings because the cow is tied by a post in one corner of the house and could not go anywhere without the will of her owner. Likewise, the woman is also bound by the patriarchal hegemonies mentally or physically to act as per the male's command. The naked body of the woman looks melancholic as her face looks pale and her head bent towards the side. Pal's protagonist is making an approach to reconsider the gender binaries and to reform the role of woman as a human being, and they are very engaged in their work and targeting the prevalent hierarchies of Indian society. During an interview with Nirupama Dutt, while being questioned on the issue of her concern for women, Pal stated.

“I have never felt apologetic for making a woman the main focus of my work. I am rather proud of being a woman and trying to unravel through my work what makes a woman, how much of a woman is conditioned and how much natural” (Dutt 2010).

The emptiness of background and space represents the isolation of a woman's life as Pal herself has gone through various complexities in her life and has been emotionally attached to those issues. She reformed and relived those experiences in her own way. About Kamdhenu, she mentioned further that

“Let me fulfill the wish of the cow instead because I am not a blind follower, I have my own perceptions about everything, and when no one is addressing to the wishes of the cow, then why should she fulfill people's demands or desires. Thus, each and every issue for any subject painted by me is a response against such unequal values” (Stated during the interview with the researcher).

Such notions can be directly or indirectly related to the gender politics created by a male-dominated society, in which women play the role of housewife and cater to her family's demands. She is a remarkable artist and a scholar, who not only explored the literary accounts but also adapted those myths and facts after analyzing them with a feministic approach. She realized the lack of institutional

practices and chronological records in respect of womanhood and then worked on it tremendously to reform the status of woman through paintings. She also added that

“People say of Kamadhenu, she is so good-she can fulfill all your desires! It is interesting that no one has ever asked about what Kamadhenu herself may desire-if she desired, how can her own wishes be fulfilled?” (Sen 2002).

The Kinnari series are having a female, having the body of a bird, which represents the world known phenomenon of the life of women. This denotes the wish to fly over the sky or the wish to have wings so that they can fulfill their dreams. Another series titled Nayika is again a composition of the prevalent Indian Nayika trend, but in this series, the woman is not represented as an object. She is represented as a powerful subject.

The prevalent gender discrimination in society, which was focused on the Indian art, has been opposed by Pal. The female protagonists of Pal are free from all the restriction of society including clothes, ornamentation, and well-proportioned body structure and so on. Being naked, they are not adjusting any kind of offering or seduction, but they are enjoying their freedom and spirit of the feminine. The color application is quite supportive of the theme. Their nudity is not executed for giving visual pleasure, but they are enjoying their sexuality for themselves. The nudes of Pal are consecrated exceedingly with the commemoration of self-interpretation in opposition to the male dominating culture of society.

5.8 GOGI SAROJ PAL AND AMRITA SHER-GIL

Amrita Sher-Gil inspired numerous female artists of India and in the work of Pal, there are some elements which bring Pal and Sher-Gil on the same page. Both the artists have a strong visual communication which is usually found in the work of female artists only. Both the artists have an unparalleled persona, but their paintings are derived through one major objective. The objective behind the creation of their art is to show those aspects of the life of women which can be seen through the eyes of a woman only.

Sher-Gil rendered sad faces with bold body structure after coming to India, which is very unique for its time. She belonged to an Indo-Hungarian culture of an elite class family but was attached emotionally to Indian art and culture (Kapur 1997). She found Indian rural women more attractive and subjective because she spent her life with elite class people before coming to India; after coming to India, she realized the strange but true glimpse of woman's life.

Pal has depicted most of the characters in the glorious mood with a relaxing position and sad faces as well, which is related to the current situation of women. They are nude and enjoying their sexuality as a celebration and as well as questioning the previous ancient forms of womanhood in a bold manner (**Chawla 2003**). The rebellious nature of Pal is reflected in her paintings and she tactfully display the societal differences of gender in her paintings. If the paintings of Gogi Saroj Pal are compared with those of Amrita Sher-Gil, their work and representations are quite different from each other. On the other hand, the biggest similarity is that both are women and representing their ideology with respect to feminine.

Sher-Gil used her body as a medium to communicate her feelings and the same style of projection of body is adopted by Gogi Saroj Pal. Gogi Saroj Pal is also representing a novel approach through her paintings and her powerful feminine icons are full of energy and force. In contemporary scenario, numerous female artists are portraying such feministic concept against the phallogentric society and patriarchal hegemony and each artist have a novelty in her depiction. Going through the observation of Pal's paintings, it can be said that the icons of Pal are full of spirit and getting stronger day by day (in series). Their performances on the painted surface are not dictated through social norms of the ideal feminine. They are what they wanted to be or what Pal wanted to make them. They are women of empowered soul and body.

Sher-Gil gave much priority to Indian art, particularly to Ajanta and miniatures of Mughal and Rajput times. In her earlier oeuvre, she has executed nudes (male and female both) in a different manner; this period includes some live studies on women as laying on the bed or two women engaged in conversation at their home, women taking bath and sitting in an opposite direction. These paintings are entirely opposite to the prevalent portrayal of beauty and sensuousness. They have powerful features and a strong persona to attract the viewers and to force them to imagine their (the situation of a painted woman) situation. In these paintings, the thrust for exploring the identity as an artist or as a woman as well can be observed through representations. In this journey of exploring the identity she often used her own body not for the portrait but for the full-size figure also. The self-portrayal is somehow more accessible for the artists, for they do not need any model (it is frequently mentioned by the critics that Sher-Gil used to paint through models). Self-portrayal may be a way to give their

selves that advancement, which artists long in their real life or to which they inspire most as a theme or subject.

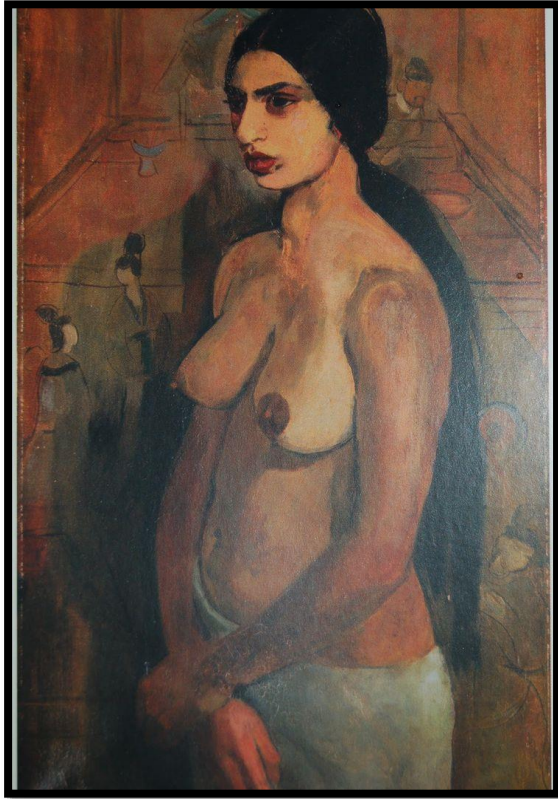


Fig. 5.17 Self-Portrait as a Tahitian



Fig. 5.18 Self-Portrait

Fig- 5.17 Amrita Sher-Gil, Oil on Canvass, source-National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

Fig- 5.18 Gogi Saroj Pal, Self-Portrait, Source-Gogi Saroj Pal

The painting (Fig.5.17) titled self-portrait as Tahitian has been painted by Sher-Gil in 1934, which is portrayed after getting influenced by Paul Gauguin, the French impressionist painter. Sher-Gil made herself a Tahitian because she wanted to do an experiment with herself as a Tahitian. It is mentioned frequently by numerous critics that in this painting, the shadow of the person (a male) has some similar identity to Gauguin's portrait. In this way, Sher-Gil has explored herself as a character of Gauguin's artistic world. After observing the painting, it is clearly seen that Sher-Gil was a big admirer of his paintings and she wanted to live the life of his characters (in paintings). The other secondary elements of the painting are also similar to that of Gauguin because the placement of small figures and other objects with a huge figure was a characteristic of his work. In this painting, Sher-Gil's semi-naked body has been executed with strange features and side angle face.

Like Sher-Gil, Pal has also painted various self-portraits but she was more influenced by Indian mythology and culture. In one of her self-portraits, (Fig.5.18) a semi-mythical being has been depicted as flying in the sky as an eternal bird. Unlike Sher-Gil, her source of inspiration is Indian mythological characters. It is argued by Elinor that “Gogi’s playful depiction of the sensuous female is utterly original, with no counterpart in Western feminist art” (Elinor, 2011). She embedded those cultural fables in her work which she studied from her childhood as Pal stated that she is very fond of literary books and started reading Tolstoy and Goethe and other philosophy, which gave her inspiration to generate her artistic modules (mentioned during the interview). The projection of the figure is not frontal in both of the artists' painting; they are tilted through side angle. This avoidance of frontal placement may be an attempt to avoid viewers gaze directly but to connect them indirectly after shifting this very gaze. There is a spirit of satisfaction and calmness in Pal's portrait because gestures are appearing very calm with a smile.

On the contrary, if Sher-Gil's painting is observed on the perception of her own artistic spirit she has given dull colors and strong meaning to this (Self-portrait as a Tahitian) painting. The dull faces create a melancholic approach and this dullness, which cannot be ignored by its onlookers, makes them uneasy. (Kapur 2009). In “Self Portrait” the artist has presented herself as an object of her own encounter and then settling it as per her perception without preferring the viewer’s desire. The fusion of tragic gesture and nude body is subverting the mindset of erotic depiction into the subjective approach in the portrayal of a woman. The self-portrait of Pal is symbolized in another way. She depicted successfully the desire of a woman to fly like a free bird. Unlike Sher-Gil Pal’s inspiration is Indian mythology but in a very different way. Both of the artists have set their self-portrait in a two-thirds profile, in which their posture may be an effort to convey their neglecting attitude towards their onlookers. Both of the artists, therefore, have portrayed their self in their painting and their style of depiction is much related to their painted iconography of a woman.

In the subjects of Sher-Gil, there are women, resting or sitting in a corner, engaged in work or posing for the societal structure in their own way. In one of her famous paintings, ‘Woman resting on Charpoy’, the subject represents the whole meaning, resting is the only activity in which woman can get some time for herself (Fig.5.19). In this painting, a woman is depicted lying on the bed and attended by another woman. In this image, Sher-Gil has portrayed this figure to represents marital practices, in which married woman has gone through isolation and loneliness. She longs for her counterpart after marriage because man work outside and woman do domestic work in rural areas.



Fig. 5.19 Woman Resting on Charpoy

Fig.5.19 Source-National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi



Fig. 5.20 Kamdhenu

Fig.5.20 Source- Gogi Saroj Pal

The subjects of Gogi Saroj Pal's paintings have been mostly taken from the Indian mythology and from some other issues related to culture and society. Her theme is somehow related to mythological characters but not fully dealt with it because she has only taken the stereotype of that aspect not adopted that as it was, but adopted it in her own way. She has adopted such icons not to promote them but to question them. She has raised issues through her painting and criticized them in front of the onlookers (Nair 1996). It is also admitted by her that she longed for some critical issues of society, but she doesn't paint them sentimentally; she just wants to give her perception regarding such inequality in society. It is her idea that "an artists' work should not be sentimental, but it should be universal" (as mentioned in the Interview). The subjects, which are chosen by Pal are so much enthusiasm and represent rebellious women, fighting for her rights and enjoying her sexuality. As she stated that 'I do not paint a woman, I just paint issues that bother me whether it is a woman or another subject (Mentioned during the Interview).

In this way, the lives of women have been particularly explored by Pal like Sher-Gil through paintings. Pal has taken the same imagery of Indian married women like Sher-Gil but in a very different manner. The universal phenomenon of the life of Indian women is successfully executed by Pal in a symbolic way. She has displayed the same problem of domestic space which is associated with women, whether they do work outside or stay at home. Pal has symbolized this issue in the form of Kamdhenu.

If ancient stories related with women are observed, it is found that there are a number of Goddesses in Hindu culture, who are particularly associated with some temperament or nature. In this context, Goddess *Kali* is being depicted with power and strength, but she is always narrated as using her power to save Gods or other companions. The icon of *Kali* has been politically used to encourage women in some of the situations when they have to protect their virginity; they have to fight for their family etc. These bad situations are pre-decided by patriarchal dominance, like what is good and bad for them; women usually follow these dos and don'ts.

This kind of situation could be rape, harassment of that time, when she has to take care of family, husband and so on. Goddess *Durga* is also a very dominating form of *Devi* but it has been originated through the body-lights of numerous Gods. According to the text, in ancient time, this imagery had been politically used by Gods to seduce the demon because they want a reason for the war with him. Therefore, Goddess *Durga* is being associated as a military Goddess and during the Gupta age, she was worshipped before the battle by the army of numerous kingdoms. Another Goddess, *Sita*, the queen of the great epic *Ramayana*, was politically used for being a cause for fighting and then insulted socially after giving a purity test at the behest of her husband. In social terms, married women have always been advised to exhibit their fidelity as a true and virtuous wife. All these forms of Goddess have a particular role and characteristics, which make their identity.

She is human as per her feminine spirit and animal or cow as per the mindset of a human being. The theme of Pal, thus, is not related to any ism, but it is the issue that she wants to solve through her painting, and mythology plays an important part in it. Here subjects, however, are directly or indirectly related to feministic approach but, unlike Amrita Sher-Gil, her feminine icons are not entirely depicted in the tragic mode.

They are dealing with complex issues like *Hat-yogini*, which is a transformation of an ancient Indian term *Hat-Yogi*.



Fig. 5.22 Hat-Yogini



Fig. 5.21 Hat-Yogini

Fig- 5.21 Gogi Saroj Pal, Hat-Yogini (1997), Gouache on Paper, 30x42 cm. \Source.

http://www.gogisarojpal.com/Hat%20Yogini/B7_PA02.html

Fig- 5.22 Two Girls (1939), Oil on Canvas, 129x89 cm. Vivian & Navina Sundaram Collection, Source Latika Gupta

Pal has modified the term *Hatyogi* in *Hat-Yogini* in a remarkable way to represent the cultural partiality and generated a new term by herself to show the power of women. In this context, now the liberal spirit of women is being engaged in performing Yoga and relaxing after resolving all tensions. The lion, which is an emblem of terror and associated as a vehicle of Goddess in ancient imagery, now replaced by her with a tiger and used as a pet of Hat-Yogini. In this way, *Hat-yogini* has been represented as playing with such mythical characters (Fig.5.21). There are two meaning, which can be derived from this *Hat-yogini* imagery; the first one is that mythological imagery has been entertained by Pal in a very casual manner because societal and religious bodies are much concerned in those myths. The next one is that she has generated her own myths regarding feminine association and criticizing the old one because the old one has not been accepted by her. The Goddess imagery in Indian mythology or painting is mostly depicted with many hands, having various objects in each hand. This imagery has often politically been used at such places, where women have to arrange all domestic and official works, so the concept of *Devi* is politically used for a woman. They are compared to that Goddess imagery for doing various tasks alone. The protagonist of Pal has been

simplified like a common human being or common or earthly woman rather than a heavenly one. In Indian scenario, there is a big difference in treatment of Goddesses or common woman, where Goddesses is being worshipped and considered more powerful than God. But on the contrary, in patriarchal hegemonies, the male is always being considered more powerful and dominant over female.

Amrita Sher-Gil's icons are full of strong gesture and body language. In one of her paintings, titled *Two Girls* (Fig.5.22), a gesture of girls is very appealing. In this painting, an approach of attracting onlookers can be found, which is not served for offering, but it leads onlookers in a room of strange and tragic gaze. This Painting has numerous aspects, which can be explored by onlookers, but sensuality is entirely avoided by the artist. It is free from sensuous desires and has two identities which represent Sher-Gil's East and West roots and relationship. As Kapur argued that "painting is related to her attitude toward Eastern, the Indian girl revealed by her juxtaposition with the white girl" (Kapur 1972). They are not displaying their happiness with smiling faces or sadness with dull faces; they are just representing themselves in a strong manner. As a piece of art, it may not be considered wrong to depict beauty and charm but as a piece of the significant role of a woman, it can be questionable. This very question of the significant role is successfully answered by Sher-Gil in her unique style (Lutzker and Ann 2002). On the contrary, the women of Pal are not representing tension or dullness; they are celebrating their feminine charm along with the ironical setup against male-dominance. Their wild-open eyes are full of light and confidence and their flexible bodies are ready to bear all kind of barriers in their life. The physical structure of Sher-Gil's women are quite impressive in the depiction of rural women of India; they are not depicted nude but fully-covered. Their features are also very strange with powerful steadiness. Their body structures are not appropriately visible as like the other paintings of that time because their body and beauty was not a priority for the artist; it was their gestures, which concentrated more than any other thing in the painting.

The color application of Sher-Gil's last phase paintings is much inspired by frescos of Ajanta and Indian miniature style, which is mentioned by her in her writings; but this influence has been properly seen in the last phase of her painting. She used to apply dark tone for the background and used a black and white tone with the mixture of vibrant red color. The dullness of color can also be seen in many paintings. In Pal's paintings, colors are more vibrant and fuller of brightness. She often used bright shades of orange, blue, and other dark tones, with the combination of white in central

figure. In Pal's paintings, vibrating colors have been used, which are very close to Indian miniature style.

5.9 CONCLUSION

In the comparison of both the artists' works, it is observed that Amrita Sher-Gil has been the one who brought a subjective approach to paintings in the portrayal of women. There is a number of factors which are responsible for executing that tragic and traumatic life of Indian women. The very first reason is Sher-Gil's hybrid parentage and culture and her separation from India during her studies. In European countries, she was not much familiar with this aspect of the life of women. Another is the knowledge of Western styles and techniques and the influence of great European masters of painting. As a Western observer, it is obvious to notice those subjects which are avoided by the Indigenous artists. Apart from this, she spent a tragic life which ended with her sudden death; so it may be assumed that she could feel the state of those women who were suffering due to an unequal social system and patriarchal dominance.

Gogi Saroj Pal is also one among those artists who devoted their entire creativity to oppose gender discrimination of society. Like various feminist artists, her work also reflected that spirit of feminism which originated through the paintings of Sher-Gil. There are several factors, which are quite dissimilar in both of the artists; but somehow their ideology is the same because both of the artists are concerned for the womanhood in their own way. This reformation and adaptation in the artistic endeavor are closely related to the psyche of the artist. Sher-Gil's women are entirely different from those of Pal's in icons, in color, composition, gestures and so on, but they are similar in some aspects. These aspects include concern for womanhood, criticism of society, independent spirit, powerful composition and structure, a sense of self-realization and a thrust for identity. Amrita Sher-Gil's female icons are represented to awake the spirit of feminization through the depiction of tragic and common faces in dark complexion. In Pal's paintings, women are more liberal because they are not only representing the problems of society; they are also engaged in solving such issues. Space is usually left blank in the paintings of both the artists, which show their focal point is a woman only then another pictorial narrative. The ornamentation of woman has been fully avoided by both the artists which may be an effort to free their icons from the parameter of beauty and decoration. In their paintings, only the outer structure of the female body has been drawn and her genitals are not well-executed because they do not want to depict woman as an object of desire. They want to represent the realistic and powerful issues of womanhood. In this context, both of the artists have an

opposite persona, which can be differentiated through their way of depiction or their personality can be somehow observed from their painted images. Amrita Sher-Gil is known for her artistic genius and tragic life, in which her artistic career is ending in early age. Her paintings are also a reflection of her tragic journey as an artist, as well as a human being. Gogi Saroj Pal is more intended for the issues related with woman and society, she is also representing her female protagonist but not in a sadist manner. Her manner of depiction is full of strength and power, which forces its onlookers to consider the dynamic characteristics of the feminine. Pal's characters are entirely based on imagination, originated with the fusion of myth and reality while Sher-Gil has followed her basic academic way to paint through modules. Pal is familiar with Indian roots throughout her artistic journey and also has the power to raise her voice cheerfully. Pal's characters are not just lamenting for their problems, they are happily involved to criticize societal inequality and patriarchal differences. They are not facing the spectator or onlookers with a full glance for male-gaze. They do not bother about the outcome of their display, they are just representing themselves, whether they will be accepted or not. Sher-Gil has also worked to construct the problems of a woman but in sadist form. On the other hand, Pal's work is semi-realistic and for a long time, she is making a bare woman only in her painting. They are not identified by their bareness but identified through their boldness and this boldness can also be observed through the color application and compositional values in Pal's paintings.

6. DIFFERENTIATING THE FEMALE BODY: THE IRONY OF SUBJECT AND OBJECT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with a comparative analysis between the paintings of Gogi Saroj Pal and Francis Newton Souza. The projection of women in their paintings has been evaluated through their painting styles, selected themes, and the physical appearance of the figure, color application, space and background and other related aspects of representation. In the first section, the oeuvre of Raja Ravi Varma and Sher-Gil has been briefly surveyed through some of their prominent paintings to develop a base for the further comparison. Then the work of Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal has been analyzed in their portrayal of women. Some Indian and Western aesthetical approaches have also been used for the discussion of the works of the artist. Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal are one among those artists who took this stereotype of female imagery in their paintings with new advancements. In their works, the subjectivity and objectivity have been evaluated to find out the basic difference between the work of male and female artists.

6.2 DISCUSSION

The woman is a common subject in the world of painting and its association with painting is omnipresent. It mainly remained an eye-pleasing and eroticized object from the earliest history of paintings all over the world. In the earliest Indian paintings, the woman is often made to satisfy the male gaze or to represent the strength and heroism of manhood (**Mode 1970**). These political representations can be seen through the projection of the body, in which they are often depicted in non-significant role i.e. as waiting for their lover, engaged in the erotic display, involved in idealistic representation as per the social code of conduct.

This was the time when the minds of Indian artists were colonized through Western academic style. The Indian artists were seeking their roots in the threshold of British Raj. This was also the time when Ravi Varma became the voice of popular culture. He produced art that was circulated among common people through oleographs. In these paintings, women are portrayed as beautiful and sensual. The impression of Ravi Varma's painted heroines or female figures further became the module of the depiction of women for various modern Indian artists. The hangover of Varma's art is still found in the art of contemporary Indian painters. Ravi Varma painted numerous subjects on

women and his style was a combination of Indian mythological themes and western academic techniques (**Ramachandran 2003**). The representation of Women in Ravi Varma's paintings is full of erotic display and offering for the onlookers (**Varma, 2003**). First of all, in the matter of theme, they are characters of Indian idealistic module and, secondly, they are serving themselves to their onlookers. Space of these paintings is occupied with male-dominated hegemony.

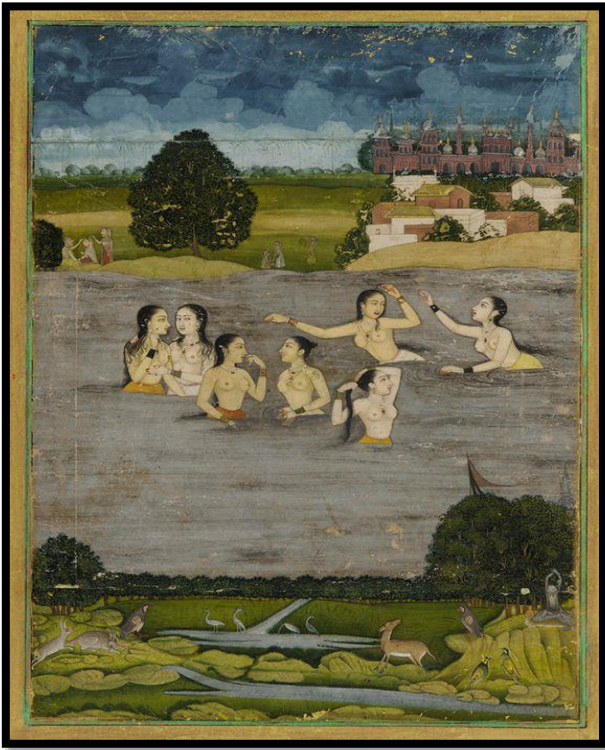


Fig. 6.1 Bathing scene

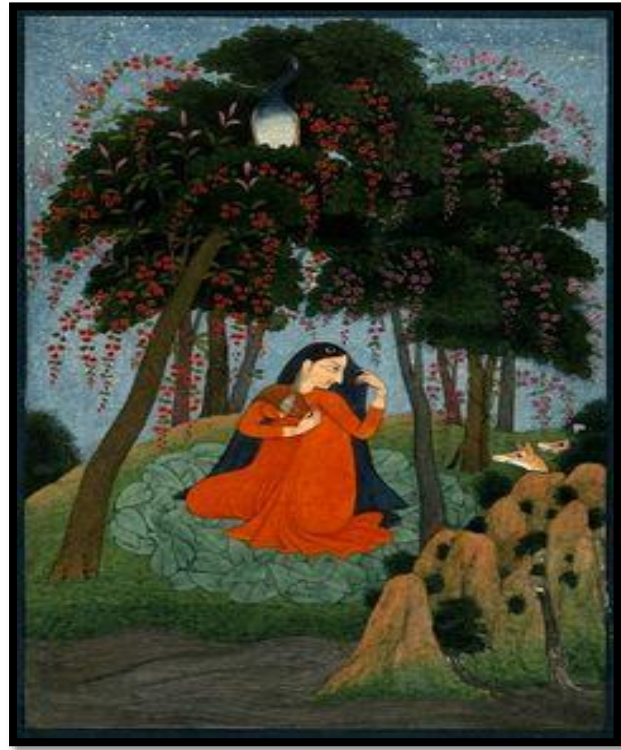


Fig. 6.2 Woman waiting for her lover

Fig.6.1Source-<https://s-media-cache-k0.pinimg.com/564x/5a/f7/b1/5af7b1b43d18eab23f4901f47344793a.jpg>

Fig.6.2Source-<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/7a/4e/04/7a4e044f24f135fcfea5d920f4f6b84c.jpg>

In Sher-Gil's paintings, the female body has been executed as a focal point with the emptiness of background (**Dalmia 2014**).

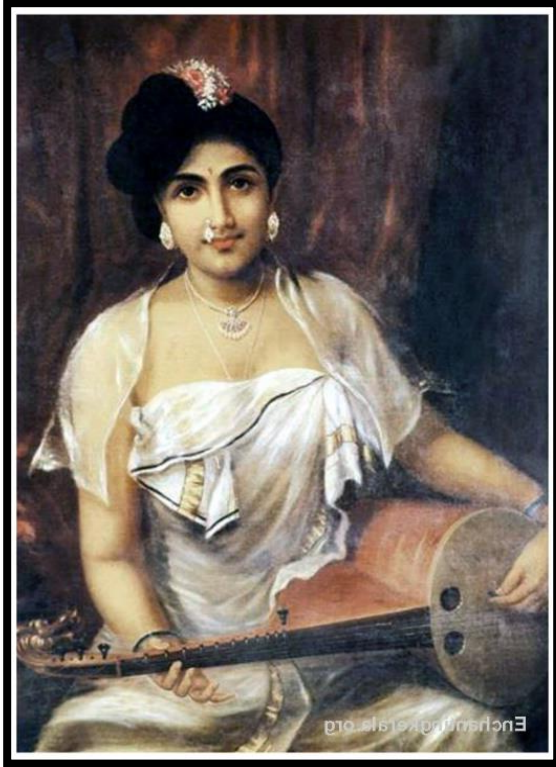


Fig. 6. 3 Lady Playing the Veena

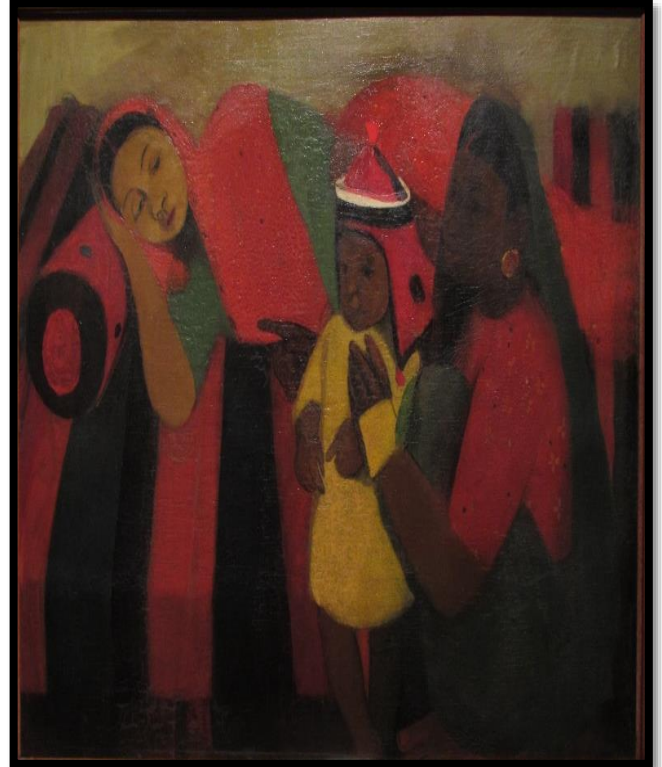


Fig. 6.4 Resting Mother

Fig.6.3 Lady Playing the Veena, Ravi Varma, A print of Oil on Canvas, Kudir Palace, Thiruvananthapuram, height-18 inches & width 12 inches. Source-<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/236298311668968850/>

Fig-6.4 Resting Mother, Amrita Sher-Gil, Oil on Canvas, c. 1940, size- 102 x76.8 c.m., Courtesy NGMA

In this course of observation, it can be noticed that the representation in the portrayal of women varies as per the gender of the artists. The word gender has been derived from societal differences, which are not biological but directed through society on some cultural and traditional values. These values have been derived from a set of practices, in which masculine and feminine terms have their certain discourse to perform with. This gendered aspiration has been raised as a political agenda of identity in respect of feminine. In the field of art and architecture, women artists and architects have differentiated this discourse into a new paradigm, where they explored such issues, which were never considered before. These issues are not related to their physical beauty or sexuality, but to their self-exploration. They are more concerned with the subjective approach of womanhood rather than the objective one. This kind of opposition has led them to the scholarship of feminism. The quest of feminism is a refusal of feminist artists or a "discourse against power" for modern art, and an approach to renovating feministic brilliance through the subversion of gender politics and societal hegemony or "along with such constitutive hypotheses that address the issue of power" (Kapur 2009).

In paintings, such kinds of gender politics have been explored by numerous art critics. In this process of exploration, the theme of representation is not only observed to differentiate such political issues but there are lots of elements which equipped to represent women as something to be displayed. Their own identity was mostly disappeared and they were being portrayed as an object for the onlookers through the process of painting.

In such paintings, space is politicized with various aspects because in positive space the woman is portrayed as a symbol of beauty and grace with sensuousness, and the negative space is always copped up with such objectification. In negative space, surroundings of women have been made through the interior of a house or bank of rivers, gardens and so on. Moreover, male existence is always represented in the depiction of the female, either they (male) are physically shown or not shown, through symbolic significance (**Aitken 1998**). In such symbolic representations, space is a major phenomenon to observe this male-domination in the representation of the feminine, for instance, toilet scenes, scenes of harem (a place, where a bunch of females particularly occupied for a male), bedroom spaces, and places of roofs and gardens etc. can be observed to see the difference.

6.3 RAVI VARMA VERSUS SHER-GIL

The reclining woman is painted by numerous Western prominent artists; the woman in her reclining posture has been frequently executed to evoke sensual pleasure. Reclining woman of Varma has attractive gestures and position and similar treatment like Eduard Manet's 'Olympia' made in the 19th century (1863), which may be a result of western influence (Fig-6.5). In this painting, the main figure has been made in the erotic mood to seduce her onlookers. The background or negative space is constructed through an interior of a bedroom, which is also representing the state of waiting for her male counterpart. She is entirely conscious of her onlookers and staring into the eyes of them with a seductive approach. The ambiance, which is created by the artist, represents a luxurious environment. The way she is lying on the bed looks like a projection of the woman in front of the onlooker.

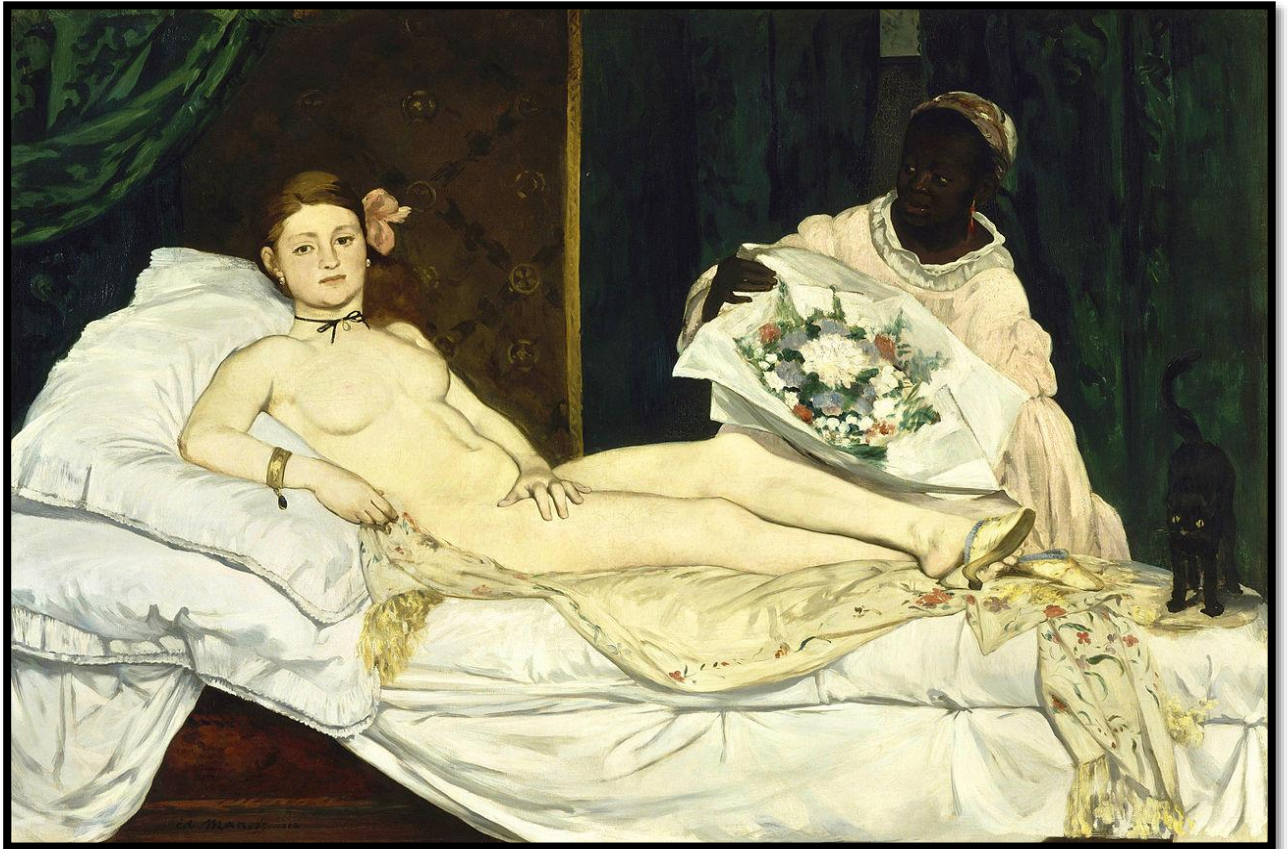


Fig. 6.5 Olympia

Fig.6.5 Olympia, Eduard Manet, Oil on Canvas, 1863, 130x 190 cm., Current Location- Musée d'Orsay (museum in Paris, France,). Source- https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/5c/Edouard_Manet_-_Olympia_-

Reclining figure of this painting (Fig-6.6), has also been made in a sense of consciousness, i.e. she is aware of the gaze of the spectator or she is serving herself through an eye-catching sight. The open book, which is used as a sign of elite class, (because literacy is also related to the upper class at that time), has no use in painting; it is rather a display. Another woman, an attendant, is made in semi-naked condition, which may be a division of elite and low class; but it can be considered that the main figure is covered fully while the attendant has been made in semi-naked posture. But the central figure is looking more appealing than the second one due to the projection and gesture of the figures because the central figure is quite communicating with the onlookers rather than the second one.

If we give a close insight to the woman sitting next to the main figure, we can observe a desire in her eye or a rotation of gaze. After looking at her, we need to look at the reclining figure which makes the aim of the artist stronger because she is gazing at her constantly. The very aim to make the reclining woman as an object to be looked at.

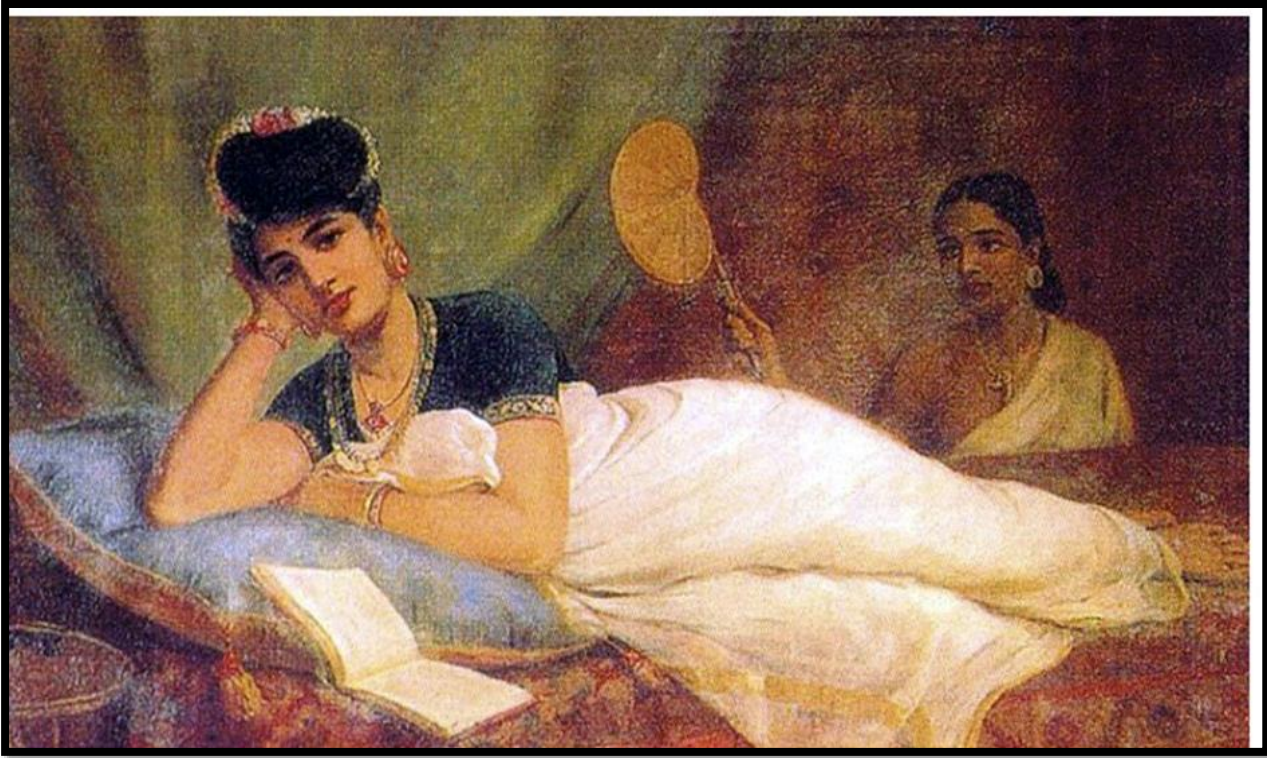


Fig. 6.6 Reclining Woman, Ravi Varma

Fig-6.6 Source-http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/59/Raja_Ravi_Varma,_Reclining_Woman.jpg

Sher-Gil's 'Reclining Woman' (Fig. 6.7) is entirely different from the 'Reclining Woman' of Ravi Varma. In this painting, Amrita has filled her woman with full-red garments and dark complexion, which is very rare during the modern Indian era.

So, the female figures of Sher-Gil have a feministic appeal as she demonstrates their realistic aspect of life. The fully covered figures demonstrate the indigenous patriarchal hegemony with conceptual tension; they are not gazing into the eyes of the onlookers but are engaged in themselves (**Kapur 2000**). The background has been painted as showing an interior of an Indian village. The interior background of the painting is also approaching its viewers, bringing attention to observe the absence of beauty and sensuousness and to explore their domestic sphere, the life of a middle-class woman. Such kind of approach is missing in Varma's 'Reclining Woman' because his work (apart from mythological subjects) largely based on the elite class group. The reason behind could be his rich lifestyle and his connection with Western artists. Although Sher-Gil was also belonging to aristocrat

family, she found these rural sites more attractive because she was emotionally attached to it. For instance, Sher-Gil used *charpoy* instead of bed; the woman of Sher-Gil is laying in a resting posture, which represents tiredness (Doctor 2002). Varma's woman is depicted in a seductive posture in a luxurious room (Thakurta 1991). Colour application is also very dull in Sher-Gil's painting, which supports the idea of the artists to create an ambiance full of sadness. The other woman has a handmade fan but does not look like a maid; same stress can be caught on the faces of both the figures. The feeling of emptiness in painting points to the loneliness of women, a common ailment among rural India. The painting can also be a resemblance to the artist's life because Sher-Gil faced many grievances throughout her life (Chawla 2003).

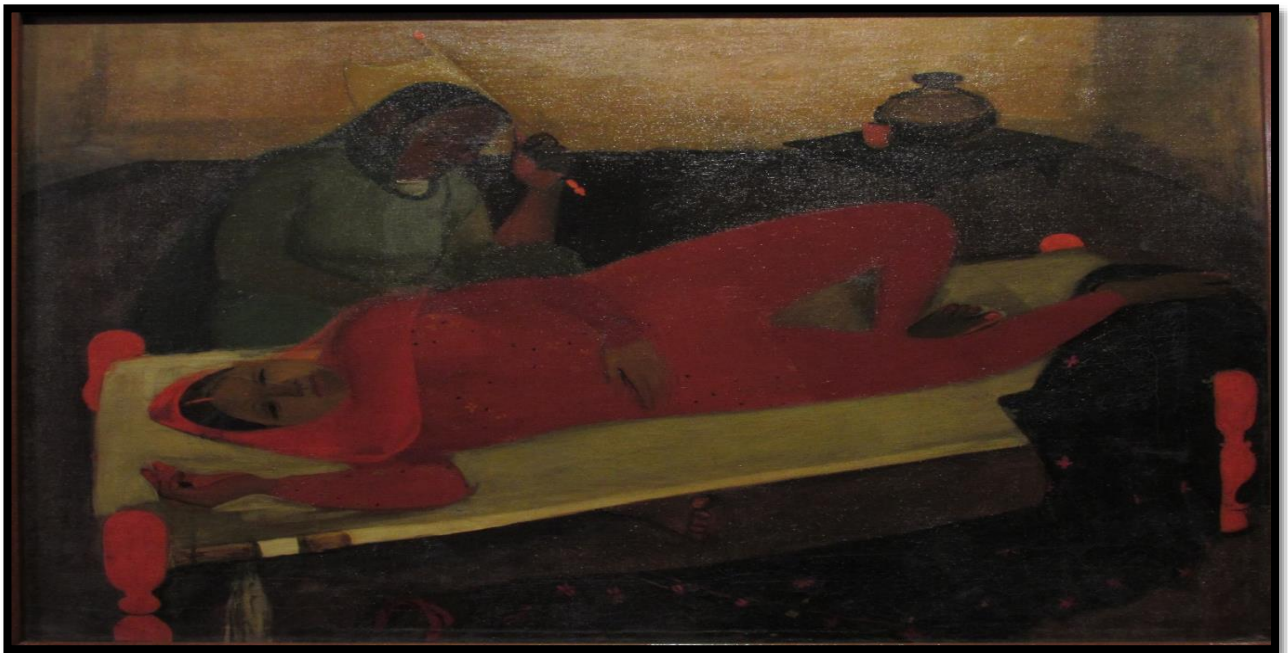


Fig. 6.7 Woman Resting on a Charpoy

Fig-6.7 Oil on Canvass, Size- 74.5x 87.5 cm. Acc. No-129, Courtesy NGMA

The bright red used in painting is a symbol of marriage and the red *sindoor* filled on her head is a sign of her marital life, in which, the women are restricted as per men's wish. Sher-Gil's painting is also looked like a satire for the erotic lover of women. The red four pillars of charpoy seem like a boundary constructed for the resemblance with a cage for married women. The color red has a very special significance in the life of a woman as it is related with fertility, procreation, and pregnancy and menstruation cycle as well. After their childhood, the very change occurs in the life of the woman is menstruation. After menstruation, a girl turned into adultery and then this color associated with their whole life. The dominance of red somehow indicates that concept as well when a woman faces

the pain during mensuration cycle, the laying woman on the charpoy also executing the very picture when a woman bears all the pain. During the time of childbirth, she faces the same and even during the complication of pregnancy she experiences the same. Her womanhood is only judged through pregnancy if she is not fertile she is not a woman at all. Her pudendum and its blood is the major phenomenon which reminds her of the desire of herself, the desire of her family and the desire of her husband. Therefore, the idea of painting her dress in dull red tone may be an effort to symbolize this very blood which is a symbol of a woman's purity and femininity.



Fig. 6.9 Three Graces in Primavera

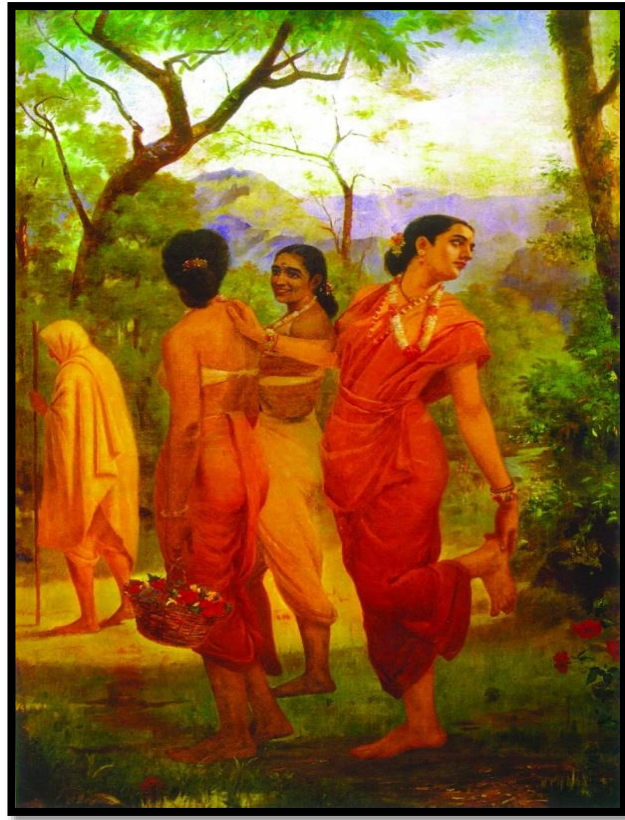


Fig. 6.8 Shakuntala

Fig.6.8 Primavera (Allegory of spring), Sandro Botticelli, Tempera on Panel, painted in Florence c. 1482, Dimension- 202 cm x 314 cm. Collection- Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Source-<https://s-media-cacheak0.pinimg.com/originals/a5/10/2c/a5102c61f73796d7ff267bbd662086c6.jpg>

Fig-6.9 Shakuntala, Ravi Varma, Oil on Canvas.

Source- http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/91ZamkJy4hL_.SL1500_.jpg

In another painting (Fig. 6.9), Ravi Varma has portrayed three women in a garden. This theme could be particularly related to the ancient Indian poetic story, *Abhijnanasakuntalam* of Kalidasa, a legendary poet of India writing in Sanskrit. In this image, Shakuntala has been portrayed with her

attendants, so here are three female figures in three main postures. This kind of theme has been frequently depicted by many artists to depict the structure of woman in every angle. This subject was first depicted by Botticelli (1445-1510) during the 15th century then followed by Raphael (1483-1520) in the 16th century, and many more western artists. According to Greek mythology, these are the Goddess of charm, beauty, and fertility and also known as Charities (**Pierre 1996, Westmoreland 2006**).

For instance, Picasso has also made paintings, in which, three women have been made in etching. According to Greek mythology, three graces are considered the Goddesses of beauty, charm, and creativity. Ravi Varma was also inspired by the western art, so he might have taken the theme and merged it with Indian epical character named Shakuntala, who was a beautiful woman and known as a symbol of love and loyalty, with her counterpart. As per the theme of the painting, Shakuntala has been depicted as removing the thorn from her foot but actually, she is pretending for looking for king Dushyant. In this way, the feeling of first site love or attraction has been symbolized through thorn. The love of king has pierced the heart of Shakuntala and this situation has been portrayed by the artist. So here, the woman is depicted as captured in the love of man and more than that, he is entirely dominating the painting in his absence. In this context, the portrayal of Shakuntala is almost occupied by her lover, in which, the main character and her attendants are only placed to depict the beauty and grace of the feminine. The site and background of the painting have been chosen as per the requirement of the theme. The place is well described in the story of Shakuntala.

Sher-Gil also painted the same concept of three girls, but in sitting posture because the artists did not want to represent their full body as a show. On the contrary, the painting of Amrita Sher-Gil titled, 'Three Girls', in which three women have been portrayed to represent a different approach, which is very opposite to the prevalent depiction of three women (Fig. 6.10).

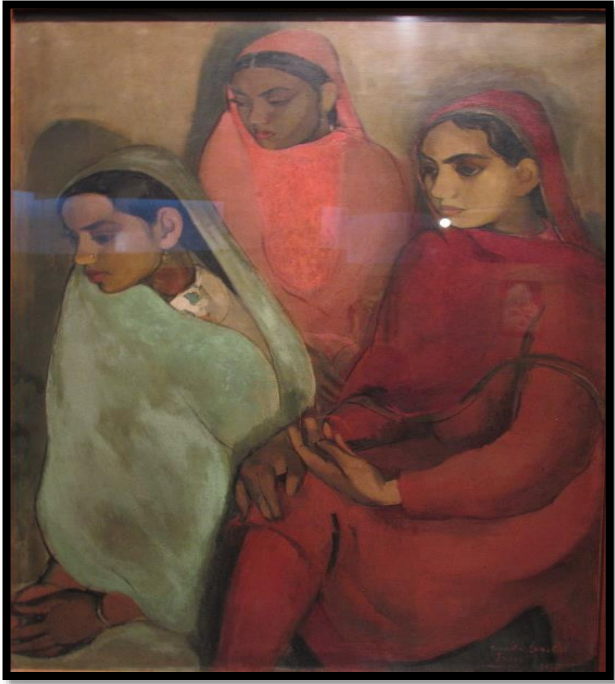


Fig. 6.10 Group of Three Girls



Fig. 6.11 Mother India

Fig.6.10 Group of Three Girls (1935), Amrita Sher-Gil, Oil on Canvas, 73. 5 cm x 99. 5 cm, Courtesy NGMA

Fig.6.11 Mother India (1935), Amrita Sher-Gil, Oil on Canvas, 65 x 81. 8 cm, Courtesy NGMA

The theme of the painting is not related to an ancient story or mythological character, but to a realistic aspect, and almost all of her paintings belong to the realities of life. The characters are not engaged in giving a fake impression of the life, but the women are displaying their life-long experiences. They do not belong to male-centered or cultural hegemony; they are particularly the women of artists' surroundings or her inner quests. They are not displaying themselves as the onlooker wants but they are displaying the condition of being calm and silent without any purpose of evoking pleasure. They are not always photoed ready for their male masters like the other female figures. This kind of observation is the prior concern of Sher-Gil, which may be derived through the opposition of seductive imagery of man-made woman. She painted a painting titled "Mother India" at the same time. In this painting, a dark-skinned woman is sitting with her child. Negative space has again been left entirely blank because Sher-Gil did not want to construct a story through objects. She just put a female in an empty background, so that viewers can only think about a woman rather than anything else connected to her life. The faces are very sad and full of sadness because Sher-Gil was more inspired to paint the backstage story but she gave it an impression of a live encounter. Space might have also been left blank for the reason that Sher-Gil wanted to depict them alone as in real life they are not alone; they are associated with a male in various stages of life. On the other hand, the artists

wanted to portray that stage at which the women have to face all their problems by themselves despite being associated with a number of relationships; they are alone when they actually need someone. So being painted as a subject, they are representing the hierarchy of gender politics as being a mother they need to bear the responsibility of child as the child is the first responsibility of a mother than his father as per Indian society. The character also reminds a well-known Bollywood movie *Mother India* (1957). In the movie, the actress sacrificed all of her life for her children. Being a widow, she was a bearer of all the grief and grievances and became a popular imagery. In Indian society, a mother should put her husband and children first rather than thinking about herself. She needs to act in a channelized form of social structure and in the movie, she gave her life for the sake of it. Sher-Gil may criticize such political practices which used to shape the woman as a mother icon. Moreover, Sher-Gil also may want to criticize the imagery of *Bharat Mata* which has emerged as a political icon against Colonial rule. She executed the real *Bharat Mata* who suffers due to patriarchal politics and not even known as like the voice of the nation.

Gender plays a major role in the depiction of paintings. Gender difference may not be appropriately highlighted by Varma's paintings, but it is much more found in those of Sher-Gil. The women of Ravi Varma are placed in an ambiance of rich/elite premises and that of Amrita Sher-Gil's are surrounded in settings of sorrowful rural background. The women, despite similar postures of lying on the bed, express all through the meanings of seduction and sadness. The spaces of interiors enhance these qualities of seduction and sorrow. The gender placement emphasizes their state of being that brings out different aspects of the feminine in their selection of subjects. In Varma's the subject and space, the background and the interior have been taken as preferred aspects and equipped to represent seductive approach. On the contrary, Sher-Gil gave preferences to positive space for women to communicate their tragic and painful stories. Male presence is always symbolized in Ravi Varma's numerous paintings, including the above-discussed paintings too. This symbolic significance can be traced through the interiors, surroundings, and gestures of the women. Moreover, their absence is being equipped to politicize the space.

In Sher-Gil's paintings, the negative space has been mostly left blank and isolated because her protagonists have been portrayed to tell their stories, which specifically belonged only to them. But Varma's painted women have been politically manipulated to tell the story that is only associated with the objectification of womanhood. Therefore, the negative space of Ravi Varma's painting has lost its identity after the replacement of background; its main objective behind the portrayal has been

entirely interrupted and become questionable in a strange way. The reclining woman in Varma's painting was portrayed to represent elite women with her attendant and she has become only an object of humor and misbalance after the replacement of background. The first impression of the original painting entirely belonged to offering and sensuous appeal, but the edited one is full of strangeness and not fitted into the edited background. Background or negative space of the painting has much importance as the positive one and it helps to generate the identity of the painting. This projection of space varies in both the paintings of both the artists.

On the other hand, Amrita Sher-Gil has represented women, who have their own identity. They are also representing themselves for the onlookers, not for offering but for questioning the objectification of womanhood. In another painting titled. "Group of Three Girls", Sher-Gil has projected the emptiness of rural women with their strong gestures. Varma's painting titled as "Shakuntala", portraying three women, on the other hand, has been associated with an ancient love story. Shakuntala has been depicted with two girls, where she is looking at her lover after being pretentious. Her lover is not depicted in the painting but the painting's main objective may be an attempt to portray that lovelorn woman, who has no individual identity but acknowledged only to represent the manliness. In Sher-Gil's "Group of Three Girls", belonging to manliness has been neglected by the artist and the strong political manipulation has been equipped for shifting this prevailed objectification. To conclude, it may be considered that the characters of Sher-Gil's painting belonged to the real world rather than any mythological or ancient fable unlike that of Varma. The second strong characteristic of Sher-Gil's portrayal is her selection of sad and tragic faces than beauty and sensuousness. In respect of space, Sher-Gil's paintings are more focused on positive space because women are the only concern of the artists, who their story themselves without any supportive elements.

6.4 REVISITING THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN BETWEEN THE PAINTINGS OF GOGI SAROJ PAL AND FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA

The subject is the most influential part of every painting and all paintings have a subject, whether it is represented clearly or presented in a symbolic way. The subject can be expressive, unexpressive, complex, and common and most of the time related to political binaries. The subject of the painting is much dependent on the ideology of the artist and its component of complexity or simplicity is entirely generated as per the wish of the artist. This subject can be anything like nature, all non-living things, animals, buildings and other spaces, human beings. The selection of the subject also

represents the importance of the chosen subject in the eyes of an artist because it is selected from a variety of things. After passing through the hands of an artist, the subject comes to its onlookers. The onlookers collect it when they like it or criticize it when they don't. The subject is not only liked but it is criticized or disliked too when it is not considered appropriate by the majority. In this way, the idea of the artist has been collected commercially to gain market access and the female subject becomes a fashionable thing in the art market. This is not entirely applicable to all subjects but for a female subject, it is quite applicable. In case of the depiction of the female body, the body is often projected as a thing of sensual pleasure and deprived of ancillary subjects. The female sexuality has become the major subject of the entire Indian art (**Mitter 2001**). This main subject which is chosen to be depicted becomes an object of everyone's pleasure (**Aitken 1997**). The imagery of women has become a thing in the hand of the artist and a medium of play. The universal phenomenon of gender difference makes men powerful and women beautiful. This hierarchy is so skillfully manipulated not only in the minds of the men but women also. It is a certain ideology which is programmed in the mind of human beings from the time of birth itself. He and she act to become different from each other and behave consciously as per their gender. Women should be beautiful, delicate, soft-spoken, a balanced physic or a thin body, shy, soon; but she should not be powerful, witty, and courageous. This hierarchy has been appropriately defined by Berger, "by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relationship between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves" (**Berger 1972**).

The painting reflects the structure of society and artists always stay further than the common people and maybe this is the reason that this very concept of beauty and sensuality of women has been projected and highlighted in a hyperbolic way. Male artists may execute such exaggerated forms of erotic and beautiful women to follow the same pattern of gender politics consciously or unconsciously.

The over projection of sensuality, again and again, pushed the majority of female artists to look into it in an opposite or different way; as **Mitter** further argued that "One of the interesting aspects of Indian culture is that women are represented both as an object of the gaze and as part of the sacred- so are feminist critiques applicable here, since women are central to sacred art as the focus of sexuality and auspiciousness" (**Mitter, 2001**). The woman has been represented as an object of desire and a thing to be displayed. When the body became an object of man's desire, female artists started to object to it. It is more like the female artists and critics were troubled by this stereotype of

beauty and sexuality and they started critiquing such models of beauty and turned this objectification of the female body into powerful subjects. The complexity of object and subject still haunts the premises of contemporary Indian painting and frequently inculcated in the work of male and female artists. The female body has become a powerful medium to develop self-expression. Sinha stated that “in the area of still nascent debates, the body and the objectification of its parts has become an urgent concern” (Sinha, 2009).

To evaluate the political approach of subject and object in the paintings of Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal, we can go through the basic outline of their theme in the portrayal of a woman. The subjects of the paintings of both the artists are largely focused on female forms in a very different way. Pal is representing the complex issues of the life of a woman in semi-abstract attire while Souza has gone through the provocative obscene nudity. Souza has basically depicted subjects related to Christian themes and female nudes, and both were sarcastically constructed in his paintings. He was a Christian but always criticized its norms because in his childhood he suffered from chickenpox and was going to die, but was saved anyhow. His mother thought he was saved because of the priest of the church and changed Souza’s initials as that of the priest. To give credit to the priest was not acceptable to him, because in return he had to give his time in the works of the church, so he started to forbid such kind of supernatural beliefs. There are many stories besides this incident which indicates his rejection to accept the ritual of the church.

The second subject was a woman which occupied the space of Souza’s canvass until his death. Souza has chosen his subjects from that part of the life of women which is connected to their sexuality, as there are prostitutes, bar dancers, sitting or lying nudes, Yakshi-like women drowned in fetish lure. If the subjects of these art pieces are closely observed we only find women engaged in lovemaking or sexual activities, seducing the viewers, catching the attention of everyone to earn their livelihood, love play of couples etc. These women also try to attract their viewers as if they are their customers or lovers because all of his women are so equipped to generate the interest of the onlookers. The relationship of Souza with women has also been defined by numerous artists and art critics. They all claim that Souza was a lover of female forms and a hater as well. This complicated relationship between love and hate is the essence of his paintings of women. One of his contemporary and a renowned female artist, **Anjolie Ela Menon** has also written about the strangeness of this connection. The relationship of this kind has been connected with the childhood memories of Souza. He also mentioned in his autobiography that from his childhood his mother preferred his sister rather

than him. His mother also wanted to let him die instead of her sister, who has died at a very young age due to illness. This kind of childhood memories gradually matured in his mind and became the subject of his art. The voluptuousness and muscular body type is surely an inspiration of Indian erotic temple imagery of women because he was mesmerized after seeing them. He is also known for many love-affairs which somehow indicate that woman was always a topic of his interest. The devastation and obscure outline of bodies may indicate that Souza was not much handsome in his looks, and his longtime chickenpox left scars on his face. This particular thing has been described by Souza and he opined that this was the reason for the dislike of his mother and relatives towards him. He was an unhandsome man so he saw the entire world through this perception along with women.

In a painting titled, “Reclining Nude”, Souza has painted a lying woman in brownish and whitish tones. A woman with a distorted face with black cross-hatching lines has been represented as showing her genitals. The genitals are the main focus of the artist while the other parts of the body have imbalanced apparel because the genitals are the only way to emphasize female sexuality.



Fig. 6.12 Reclining Nude

Fig-6.12 Reclining Nude, Francis Newton Souza

Source-http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-OSBLXivihIE/Tt222hSyINI/AAAAAAAAAPY/v2wp1_5QfYo/s1600/souza-francis-newton-1924-2002-reclining-nude-1683461-500-500-1683461.jpg

Souza entirely distorted the fashionable sensuality of reclining woman through his progressive brush and this kind of reclining shocked the viewers. The woman, who has long served as a symbol of beauty and delicacy, now become a vicious witch. But this devastation made her more subjugated. Here, comes the question of what kind of subjugation is this? She is represented as ugly with a monstrous body and face but why she comes in the premises of objectification? As it is mentioned earlier that the beauty and sensuous body of a woman is the only reason for her objectification. In the case of Souza's painting, this phenomenon is gone through at a different level and more aggressive way, because Souza has broken the prevalent norms of aesthetical pleasure. He first breaks the beautiful persona of woman imagery and then reconstituted his own imaginative imagery, which he sees in all human beings. His angle to see the humanity was diverse and scientific and he considered that all are devils in disguise of humans. This perception is applied too in the treatment of woman as a subject and due to this, she becomes a thing of entertainment and sexual pleasure. For Souza, the female seems to be merely a thing which is used for driving the male sexuality. She is vicious, full of evils, having sexual desire, monstrous and so on because he may have the feeling of envy towards the woman. This envy had begun from his childhood when his sister was loved more than him by his mother and all. This envy later became stronger when his mother forced him to involve in Christianity. Due to his rebellious nature, he became rigid and started conceiving a world of his own. In this world, the woman became the main vamp who is served only to evoke sensual pleasure. She is neither beautiful nor sublime, but demonic and lustful.

Another of his painting depicts a couple who are engaged in love-making. The painting is named as Untitled by Souza and has some bright tone of green and brown.



Fig. 6.13 Untitled, Souza

Source-http://www.christies.com/lotfinderimages/D53286/francis_newton_souza_untitled_d5328676h.jpg

The painting is full of erotic display and the woman is painted as lying above a man. Usually, in Indian art, the woman is always painted with a submissive attitude in love-making scenes. She has been mostly shown as shy and hesitating as compared to man, but this painting again depicts a woman overpowered by her sexual desires. The view seems to be a site of an exterior which is also a taboo in society and Souza was a taboo breaker. Yet, the subject of the painting still depicts woman as something to be displayed.

Souza might find these women as appropriate as his subject because he used to go to such places and mentioned this during his conversation with Vinod Bhardwaj (as told to the author by Bhardwaj). Souza also mentioned once that his work is anti-feminist and sometimes he feels that he may be doing wrong with women (as told by Bhardwaj to the author). In his painting style, the hyperbolic display of female genitals was entirely his indigenous thought (**Bhardwaj, 2009**). Souza was a Catholic and born in the state which was influenced by Western trends; so, he selected the voluptuous and over-sexualized imagery of women. He was greatly influenced by the art of European and Italian masters of modern paintings like Picasso, Goya, Degas, Henry Mantis, and Francis Bacon. All these artists have represented women in sensual and bizarre forms. The most powerful was Picasso, who inspired him to the very core of his heart and was his contemporary too. Picasso shared the same

aspects of womanhood in his portrayal. Picasso is known as a lover of every woman who he paints. Various paintings of Souza are much similar to those of Picasso, but Picasso was very much above from Souza in the construction of the sexual identity of women. Souza's advancement can be appropriately considered by those paintings in which he took the glossy pages of adult magazines and transformed them into his art pieces. He called them chemical alteration and these paintings are highly sexualized and represent woman a toy of sexual encounters. The imagery of a woman in this chemical alteration is represented as a thing for man's pleasure. He was very rebellious in his nature and this can be seen in his paintings too. So, the selection of such subjects may be a way to shock the Indian society, because at that time there was no one who took these bold subjects in paintings and for this boldness, he was very much criticized and threatened too in Indian art galleries. These flaming nudes invite their onlookers as like they are their customers. Souza was obsessed with the erotic female body, but he always executed it with a devil like a resemblance with an inviting attitude. In his subjects, he chose women as standing, sitting, lying on the bed, engaged in sexual encounters etc.

Coming to Gogi Saroj Pal, it is observed in the previous chapters that Pal is a feminist artist and paints her powerful characters to subvert the vulnerable imagery of woman (**Bawa, 2000, 2011**). There are some powerful elements which make her art full of subjective approach as she always prefers to explore the mythological and cultural semiotics to build a structure of female power. The specialty of her work is that she usually prefers to paint a series than a single painting which is a way to weave a long fable through representation. She executes series on a particular subject where female forms perform on the command of Pal's imagination. The art of Pal is a fusion of imagination and reality of the life of women. She takes subjects from the ancient mythology, Hindu scriptures, epics and other cultural texts and paintings. She is a great scholar of traditional and religious texts from her childhood and familiar with most of the roles of women in the forms of Goddesses, heavenly women, queens and princess and many more. The imagery of women is very much different than their status in society. In Indian culture and society, the woman is treated as a thing to be displayed, to do household works, to serve her family. The only significant value of her existence is her sexuality and all other roles of her are defined by this. This is the main issue for which almost all female artists of India representing their protagonists to revive the subjugated body of a woman.

The works of Indian Female artists are largely based on the issues of gender discrimination and patriarchal politics. In India, patriarchy and male dominance is prevalent for a very long time and

controls the life of numerous women. The rules and regulations of this political system have been developed to make women weaker and to make them a commodity of men's commands. This system of gender difference can also be seen in the representation of artworks by male artists. This system has been criticized by Pal too.

Gogi Saroj Pal has executed such issues in her paintings (**Lutzker 2002**). Pal spent her childhood in a distinguished family where she was blessed with a social reformer grandmother and a freedom fighter uncle. She was a stubborn child and was always eager to know the societal structure. She considers her role model to be her grandmother because she is the first woman of her state who took an initiative to educate the women of her area. In her paintings, these unique characteristics have been taken many forms and transformations in a rebellious attitude against patriarchal hegemonies. The thing which turned the mind of Pal towards this rebellious attitude had occurred during an incident of her childhood. She was going to the market with her grandmother in Lahore (Pakistan). Women usually used to cover themselves from head to toe when they go out. Pal's grandmother forgot to take the upper cover but she was wearing a saree. She did so because the day was very hot; but as soon as she entered the market area suddenly the entire crowd started shouting and calling her grandmother, "*Nangi, Nangi*" (naked, naked). The whole crowd was hooting and making a mockery of her grandmother (the whole incident described by the artist during the interview).

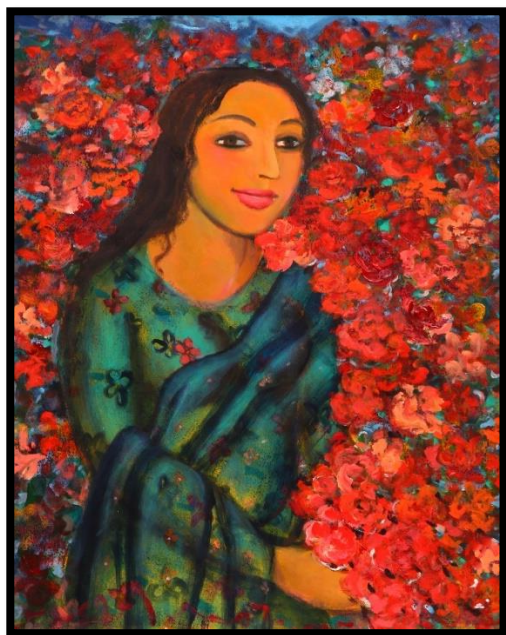


Fig. 6.14 All These Flowers Are For You

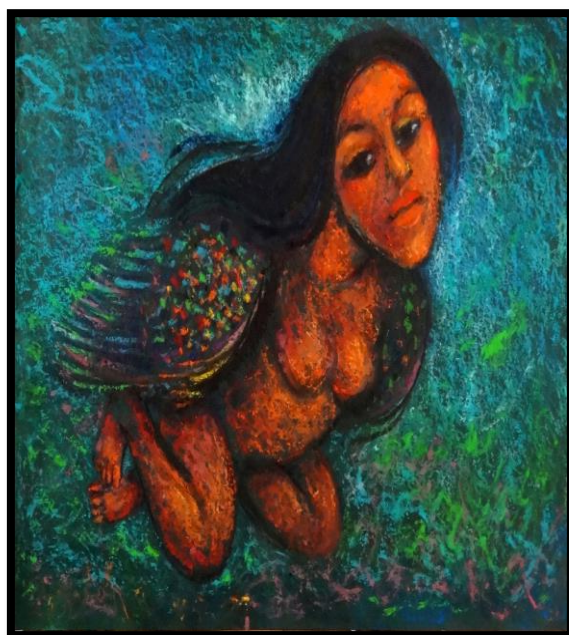


Fig. 6.15 Kinnari

Fig-6.14 All These Flowers Are For You, Export fabric, Canvas, Acrylic, 38x30 cm. Credit, Gogi Saroj Pal

Fig-6.15 Kinnari in Oil Stick, Gogi Saroj Pal and year: unknown, size: unknown, credit, Gogi Saroj Pal

This was the incident, which left a deep impact on Pal's mind and she started to question this unequal system of society. She began to observe her surroundings where women were treated as an object or property. Apart from such observation, she started to calculate the role of women in society and in mythology. Then these issues have been taken by her as a subject of painting and, through painting, she wants to solve the problem of patriarchal politics, gender equality and so on. These subjects are closely related with the life of women and Pal has focused the problem of contemporary women after taking inspiration from ancient art and mythology. In this study, these forms have been critically observed to find out the significance of Pal's paintings that how she has artistically taken up these issues and then tried to resolve them for empowering women.

In her series titled, "All These Flowers Are for You," she depicted women covered with flowers. She used vibrant and fluorescent colors. This series is surely dedicated to the Phulkari embroidery of Punjab. The clothes of Phulkari are embroidered by women in their spare time. She has taken this subject because Phulkari is closely associated with the heart of the women of Punjab. This is an issue of gender politics too because this work is imposed on the girl from a very young age. Their ability and womanhood are judged through their performance in Phulkari.

Another series of Pal, titled *Kinnari* (Fig.6.15), is having again a hybrid being. This being is having a female body with huge wings. According to Pal, the meaning of *Kinnari* is *Kitni Nari?* Or how much feminine are you? In this title, the question of identity has been raised by the artist for the sake of womanhood. This term is used in the Sanskrit language for *Kinnara* (male) which contains the same question, is this a man? Pal used this term in respect of women and asked the question of identity.

Apart from Indian mythology, the word *Kinnari* is used in various mythologies with different stories. In Greek and Roman mythology, this form of *Kinnari* is known as Harpy, the monstrous bird having a female face. According to Asian mythology, the pair of *Kinnara* and *Kinnari* is considered as a savior of human beings in trouble. The *Kinnari* series depicts another major problem of women in a very diplomatic way. In the above-mentioned image, it can be clearly seen that a woman is portrayed with wings. This particular imagery of flying with wings depicts the dreams of every woman because women usually bound at the threshold of their houses. They cannot go anywhere as per their will as they are not allowed to do so. But if they venture out alone, then they are not safe. Constrained by social mores, they have no outlet for their desires except using their imagination for wish-fulfillment.

On the contrary, most of the women are criticized with the sarcastic line, “*Par Nikal Aye Hai*” (her wings are out). Furthermore, sometimes when women try to act as per their will or rebel against unequal practices that usually people said, “*Iske Par katney Padengey*” i.e. her wings should be pruned out. In this way, the wings are closely attached to the imagery of women from a very long time. Pal has used these wings to present the inner desire of women, who want to fly from all the boundaries. Contrary to it, Pal also constructed the situation of gender bias as for how a woman is suppressed and oppressed when she tries to get rid of these man-made boundaries. The figure is made in red color with thick brush strokes (Fig.6.15) and it is looking like she just has taken bath in the red color. The background is filled with green which is a symbol of fertility. The color scheme represents the two universalized factors of a woman’s life, one is fertility and another is sexual union. These two are the only factors which generate the identity of the woman and, in the absence of these two elements, the woman is considered uncompleted. She is abused and criticized for not having a child or for getting married late. If the painting is observed deeply it can be seen that the female bird wants to fly, but could not do so. Her gesture is made in a depressive mood where her side angle face is supporting her emotions of disappointment. The mythological perception of *Kinnari* is revisited by the artist and instructed to comment on the social system. As mentioned earlier the major role of *Kinnari* was only to rescue others in their troubled times, but Pal’s *Kinnari* is more concerned about the issues of women’s lives.

In this context, it is clearly seen that Souza has gone towards the objectification of women and Pal has explored feministic subjects. If we look their paintings through objective and subjective frames, it can be clearly seen that Souza has been obsessed with female sexuality and Pal has been subverting such representations.

In their body representations both the artists preferred to depict nude and semi-nude women. In Souza’s representation, apart from academic studies of nudes, he exhibited a plenty of erotic nudes too. Female nudes have been continuously portrayed in art and architecture in a variety of poses. The nude before the arrival of female artists is particularly meant for beauty and erotic pleasure. To be naked and to be nude is entirely associated with different meaning. When a body is naked for herself or himself, it is called just naked; but when the same body becomes bare for the artist and its owner or spectator, it is academically called nude. A bare body indicates one who is free from all societal, cultural and religious associations because clothes create an identity or societal status. A nude body devoid of any clothes also gets rid of the social identity given by attires. This difference

was successfully defined by Kenneth Clark that “to be naked is to be deprived of our clothes and the word implies some of the embarrassment which most of us feel in that condition. The word nude on the other hand, carries, in educated usage, no uncomfortable overtone” (Clark 1956). We can say that the female nude is always comfortable and confident in her body display; but does its spectator feel so? The answer is probably yes in the case of the male viewer; but what about the female one? Does not she feel discomfort and embarrassment when the image of the nude is seen in a group of both the genders? The female nude, which becomes a source of sensual pleasure for the male spectator, can also become a source of embarrassment for the female. This situation occurs when the artist is male because he displays the possessiveness of the same power on the female body which he possesses or wants to possess in his life. This situation becomes more complicated when the hierarchy of power circulated through the depicted body among the collectors/spectators/owners of the painting. This circulation of male power on the nude body of woman becomes a complex issue for women and is opposed by the female artists.

According to Berger, the depiction of the nude first appeared in the scene of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden garden during the time of the early Renaissance in Western art. Then the nude has become an essential subject of depiction and their shameful gestures were particularly demonstrated by the artists. Gradually the subject female had been portrayed as aware of the eye of the spectators. He mentioned that “When the tradition of painting became more secular, other themes also offered the opportunity of painting nudes. But in then all there remains the implication that the subject (woman) is aware of being seen by a spectator (Berger 1972). In the case of Indian art, the same ideology of depicting subjects has been adopted by the artists. Female artists then took this very subject of the body into the different application to develop the conceptual theme. The concept has been taken politically by the female artist to develop an idea for reverting back the depiction.

In India, the earliest female nudes had been painted on the wall of Ajanta and Ellora. The awareness of female nude as being seen by the onlooker had been particularly noticed in Indian miniature paintings but in a different way. In Indian miniatures, the nude woman has been depicted in toilet scenes, love-making scenes as surrounded by a group of females attended or friends. Another big reason maybe they are not looking back at the Spectator like the Western ones but their bodies have been constructed as posing towards the spectator. They are conscious but pretending as they are not because, in the Indian context, these are some etiquettes which bound women to perform in such a situation. It is advised to them to not show their sexual desire publically. Here comes the political

duality of Indian culture towards women as men want to see them in the erotic display, but in the disguise of moral values.

In these paintings, the woman wanted to be seen because man/artist/spectator wants to see her in some private erotic display but she is pretending that she does not want to. She pretends so because she is an ideal woman who is accepted socially by society. Additionally, male artists may want to portray them as if they want to enter in their private premises, which is not open to the public or they want their spectators to be entered in those private places. In the case of the woman, who has been depicted, they also demonstrated the awareness. Awareness of being seen by the onlookers or displaying their body as per the desire of their spectators. They are quite aware that they are going to project in front of their viewers and they have no objection for it. Contrary to it, the protagonists of female artists are manipulating this awareness of being displayed but are showing the feminist contradictions. They are attracting the onlooker first through their body display then create a sense of illusion in which the onlookers find out a reverse or opposite approach than the objectivity. They suddenly capture the mind of onlookers as per their will to demolish the phenomenon of objectivity. In the case of ancient Indian art, the female icons do not want to spoil the very image of a socially acceptable woman directly but they are doing so through some indications. Another reason for this duality is that artist wants to show her first to the spectator and when the Spectator enters in the premises of painting, the woman suddenly avoids her presence through her sifted face angle. In this way, the onlooker is being attracted first and then being rejected by the woman. This rejection or avoidance of that nude woman bound the spectator to gaze her again and again. She becomes a product of male-gaze. Now coming to the nudes of Souza we find the same relationship of a nude woman with its spectators. The flaming nudes of Souza are painted to offer their sexuality to the spectator, they know that they are being watched and they quite enjoy it. In the below-mentioned image (Fig-6.16), a giant size red nude has been portrayed by Souza.

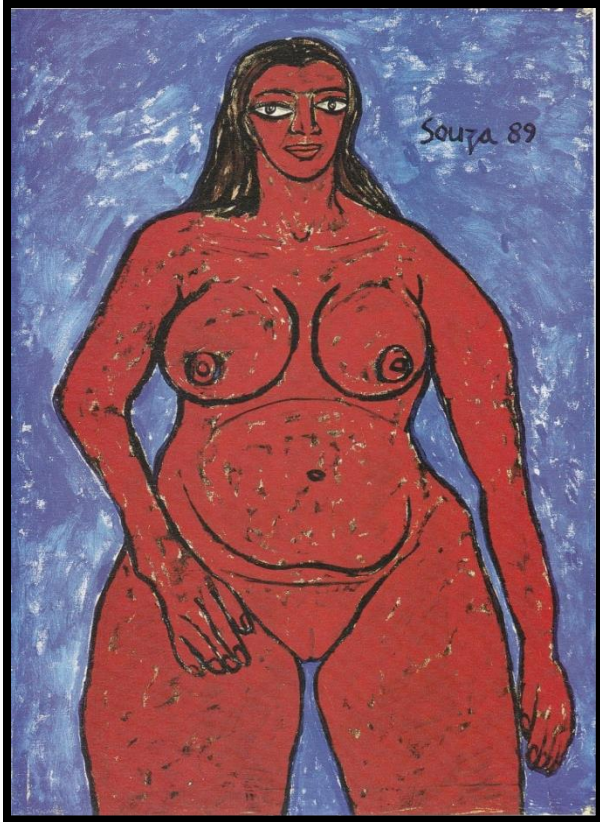


Fig. 6.16 Untitled, Oil on Canvas

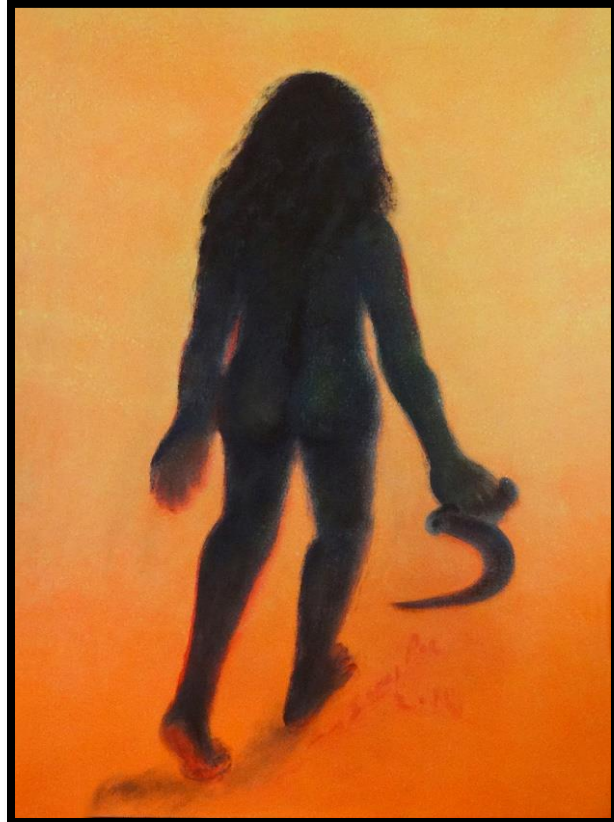


Fig. 6.17 Altar for Nirbhaya

Fig-6.16 Francis Newton Souza, Untitled, 1989, Source Aziz Kurtha, 2006

Fig-6.17 Altar for Nirbhaya, year: 2014, size: 36 x 48 x 3 in, acrylic on canvas, credit, Gogi Saroj Pal

The red nude is having large breast and genitals like the erotic temple imagery of Khajuraho but she is quite frontal, gazing into the eyes of the spectator. The frontal gaze is developing a connection with its viewers but this connection is entirely related to sexual desires. The burning red is a symbol of sexual desire.

On the contrary, Pal has also painted numerous nudes including her recent series titled “Altar for Nirbhaya”. In one of the paintings (Fig-6.17), a woman is painted as heading forward and her back is shown to the onlookers. She has a normal body, not the overemphasized one like that of Souza. Her body is painted in dark shades of black and brown which represents the darkness and evil. Both the nudes want to be surveyed but for different approaches. When we look at the red nude, what we do see first? We see her hyperbolic genitals and breast as the body is depicted to give emphasis on the sexual parts of the body. The Nirbhaya of Pal is derived from the display of her sexuality. She is representing her body to remind the agony of rape cases in Indian society.

The theme of her current series is related to a rape victim. This incident took place in Delhi in which a girl was raped by some people in a moving bus. After two weeks, the girl died and people called her *Nirbhaya* (the fearless girl). Pal has dedicated her series on that girl and named it as “Altar for Nirbhaya” (Fig-6.17). The title of the painting is quite expressive, narrating the whole story of this incident along with the perception of Pal. Pal has contributed this painting as a tribute to all those girls who were raped and harassed. This painting is also giving an inspiration to those women who have no courage to fight against such traumas. The painting shows a woman’s nude body who is stepping forward with a sickle in her hand. In painting, her backside is captured because pal has focused on the narrative through the entire series and the protagonist is showing her back to the onlooker and heading forward to take her revenge. In this series, sickle plays an important role and it is painted as covering the entire surface in many paintings of this series. The sickle has various symbolical associations. In India, It is a symbol of the peasantry and agrarian group and mostly used by rural women of India. In Hindu mythology, the Goddesses *Kali* or *Shakti* is always described and portrayed as holding a sickle in her hand. In other countries, it has another meaning; for instance, it is used as a symbol of the former the Soviet Union with a hammer. It is known as a symbol of communalism and revolutionary socialism. Universally, the sickle and hammer are also considered as a symbol of man (hammer) and woman (sickle); “The hammer is associated with man, whereas the sickle stands for women. Together, they indicate the need for and importance of having the men and women working side by side for the betterment of the society (15, 2014)”. Pal has transformed the rape victim into Goddess *Kali* and given a sickle in her hand to fight for the protection of womanhood. The altar for all *Nirbhayas*, which is needed in a current situation, has been visually communicated by Pal through this series. In this painting, it appears that *Nirbhaya*, who was raped brutally, has been wakening up suddenly and take the sickle to take her revenge on her rapists. She has taken the form of sinister Goddess *Kali*, inspiring all women to become courageous to fight for their safety. Her feet are colored in red as if she just passed the pathway of blood veins after taking her revenge. The combination of bright orange and brown is giving more aggression to the theme.

We can put both the painting in two diverse frames which are connected with each other. The first frame carries the red nude of Souza who is provoking and seducing the viewer; she is desperate to feast the eyes of the spectator. Another frame carries the nude of Pal, a powerful woman who became a victim of sexual abuse but is still ready to fight against such brutal men of society. The red nude remains still at her position because she is simply placed on the canvas to amuse the viewers. The woman in red is placed alone; she is neither engaged with her lover nor is she accompanied with any

of her friends or attendants because she has nothing to pretend, nothing to hide. She is shameless and submissive, surrendering herself to the spectator like the very surrender which she promised to the artists first. The protagonist of Pal also wants to be surveyed but for the opposite quest. She tries to make the surveyor aware of the mythological, societal and cultural significance of female forms through all series. Her Protagonist is conveying the message that how vulnerable the prevalent imagery was and then taking the issue of recent time which oppress women through sarcasm. After representing both the problems she criticizes them and then resolves them in an artistic way. She is showing the spectators that the female nude is not only meant for sensual pleasure, it is also meant for power and strength. Both the artists are mastered in their representation of nude body but in respect of womanhood, Souza is objectifying the nude body and Pal is empowering it.

6.5 APPLICATION OF SIX LIMBS; RASA AND DHAVANI & SOME WESTERN PHILOSOPHIES OF ART AND AESTHETICS

Ancient Indian art has been often looked through the lenses of aesthetic philosophy. In the early Indian text of Vatsyayana, the Kama Sutra, there is a description of six limbs of painting through a shloka or verse: - (**Appasamy 1968**)

“Roopabhedah pramanani bhava-Lavanya-yojanam

Sadrishyam varnakabhangam it chitram shadakam”

These ‘*Shadang*’ or the six limbs of painting or art have been followed for the creation of artworks from the ancient times and it is mentioned that without these limbs an artwork cannot be completed (**Appasamy 1968**). *Rupa-bheda* stands for differentiation of forms.

These are described as *Rupa-bheda* (secrets of differentiation of forms), *pramanani* (proportion), *bhava* (emotional feelings), *Lavanya-yojanam* (gracefulness and charm in artwork), *sadrishyam* (similitude) and *varnika-bhanga* (application of brush strokes and color application as per the artwork).

The traditional philosophy of aesthetic somehow changed its true meaning in contemporary times because previously the artworks usually used to be meant for beauty. It is mentioned by **Sridharan** “Ideas of aesthetics seem to be changing and what is novel and has not be seen before is considered art. Alka says that what is prized greater than skills are new ideas” (**Sridharan 2011**). From the remote past, the artist is more involved in the projection of conceptual themes in abstract or semi-

abstract patterns. However, some of the parts of the six limbs can be applied to the works of these artists. Going through the very first limb which is *Roopa-bheda*, '*Roopa*' means tangible or the outer appearance of a subject or art form which is entirely related with the perception of an artist and the '*Bheda*' means differentiation of the form. Additionally, the creator of an artwork must have accomplishment in the understanding of a variety of forms and their uses on the surface. If we observe the works of Ravi Varma as per this very canon of a variety of forms, we can see his expertise in it. He has created multiple figures in different poses in the depiction of a woman. He has executed various woman of the elite and lower-class group, mythological characters after embellishing them in a proper attire. In the observation of forms, he has established a deeper insight into a particular subject, like when he depicted rich and elite women he displayed the very attire which was popular among the high-class society. Additionally, when he executed their attendants or slaves, he has shown the same proficiency to build a connection between the real and painted forms of them. He has used an ornamented and glossy approach in their attire when he has shown elite classes, but in the depiction of marginalized or lower cast women, he has avoided the same. He usually executed the lower caste women in naked or semi-naked while in those of elite groups, he has executed the mostly covered. The ambiance of the painted space particularly indicates the difference of economic or social status of the women of all groups. In the depiction of Goddesses, he maintained to give a charming attitude with silky draperies and heavy jewelry, to differentiate the very concept of earthly and heavenly women. Ravi Varma was a genius in the differentiation of particular forms and we can understand at a first glance, what is the status of the executed women. If he portrayed the mythological theme, he accomplished the same calmness and peace on their faces, in their body postures, which have been described in mythology.



Fig. 6.18 Harischandra and Tharamathi



Fig. 6.19 Hamsa Damayanthi

Fig.6.18 Harischandra and Tharamathi

Fig.6.19 Hamsa Damayanthi-Princess Damayanthi talking with Royal Swan about Nalan.

http://ravivarma.org/Mythological-Characters-by-Raja-Ravi-Varma/Harischandra_and_Tharamathi#.W1wdMNiza00

Fig.6.19 <http://navrangindia.blogspot.com/2016/10/alluring-painter-raj-ravi-varma.html>

The painting titled Harischandra and Taramati has been executed by Varma (fig.6.18) to show the great sacrifice of the great king Harischandra who sacrificed all his life for the sake of his promise and morality. As per the story, the king was examined as a saint to prove his loyalty towards truth and his nature of giving. One day when his own wife came on the very cremation ground, where the king was doing his duty as a guard. He rejected to cremate the body of his son because his wife had no money to pay for it. He was so affirmed for his duty that without the payment he did not allow the cremation ceremony. Then, his wife gave him a piece of her mind, which she was wearing. The same story has been depicted by Varma in the painting. We can see the perfection of forms in the depiction of figures. Both the figures are looking very poor even their bodies have been showcased as covered in rags and dirt which represents their economic and societal status. The woman has been represented without any make-up or jewelry except some of the essentials like the glass bangles (may be a projection of her marital status). On the other hand, another painting titled “Hamsadamayanti” showcases a beautiful elite class woman, who is a princess as talking to a swan. The princess has been executed as wearing an expensive dress with the jewelry. She has been shown beautiful and fair with perfect appearance. Both the characters represent a contradiction of the

society, where one aspect is representing the poverty and another is representing the economic stability of the elite group in the portrayal of a woman.

His painting also has the proportion and emotional sentiments which varies as per the theme. In the painting, Harischandra (**Patriot Forum 2016**) the emotional sentiments of a mother can also be seen who is requesting her bound husband for mercy. After looking at the painting, the onlookers can feel the emotion of pity for the women. At the same time, the onlookers can also feel the power of giving and truth, which is considered the first duty of all the human-beings among all deeds. In most of the paintings of Varma, we can see a charm and grace in the faces of women. This perfection can also be found in various gestures and body postures in almost all of his paintings. The selected color scheme with all contrast always goes with the theme of Varma's work. He was very powerful to create the harmony through color with his brush strokes. He has taken dull colors to depict the tragic stories and also have taken bright shades to depict the casual or erotic ones. He was a master to give a realistic proportion to the figures after creating a balance between the light and dark tones. He usually used to execute voluptuous bodies with sharp features which is a prevalent trend of traditional Indian paintings and this has been followed by most of the artists who used to follow the six limbs norms. The *Lavanya-yojanam* or the appearance of paintings is quite remarkable which gives an aesthetical pleasure to the onlookers. The onlookers can enjoy an appreciable beauty in all of the projection related to female figures. Even a common person without any philosophical or critical knowledge of art field can appreciate and enjoy the works of Varma that are again a basic purpose of all ancient Indian art pieces. Even without any social or moral message, the projection of figures is a visual feast for the lover of beauty that is again very appropriate as per the six limbs trend. The theory of mimesis or imitation which has been given by the great philosopher Plato indicated the theory of imitation of nature in paintings. The theory has been followed until the Renaissance period and continued up to a late eighteenth century in the Western art world. It is stated that "The idea was still very strong in the Renaissance, when Vasari, in his *Lives of the Painters*, said that "painting is just the imitation of all the living things of nature with their colors and designs just as they are in nature." It may still be the most commonly held theory. Most people still think that a picture must be a picture of something and that an artist is someone who can make a picture that "looks just like the real thing". It wasn't until late in the nineteenth century that the idea of art as imitation began to fade from western aesthetics, to be replaced by theories about art as expression, art as communication, art as pure form, art as whatever elicits an "aesthetic" response, and a number of other theories" (see web link no 6). The realism and naturalism art movement which have been

founded after following the same theory. In recent time, the word has been taken as to copy something but as per the philosophical thoughts of ancient times, the word stands various meanings. The popular schools of Athens had been nourished under the faculty of great philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The theory of imitation also changed as per these three major aestheticians. Plato was the disciple of Socrates who has given a remarkable approach to decode the existing norms of the philosophical and metaphysical world of art. Then, Plato has narrated the theory of imitation in art and accepted it as an imitation of nature as a passive and faithful act of the world. Although he criticized the worthless attributes of coping something irrationally and he has given the priority to the carpenter rather than the artist because a table is more useful than a painted chair. If the paintings of Varma are observed as per the platonic view of imitation, he mostly depicted woman as a mere component of physical or materialistic value. They are not having any metaphysical or external values. They are just the imitation of the imitation i.e. the reality and morality are not there in the images.



Fig. 6.20 Mother India



Fig. 6.21 Resting Mother

Fig.6.20 Mother India, Sher-Gil, Oil on Canvas 1935, 65x81.8 cm.

Fig.6.21 Resting Mother, Sher-Gil, Oil on Canvas c.1940, 102x76.8cm.

Amrita Sher-Gil has taken the variety of forms in the depiction of womanhood, but the variation is closely associated with the life's experiences of the woman. She has virtually depicted the glimpse of the life of ordinary women if we observe her painting, the very *Rupa* or its variation has been

taken through a different approach but it does not look unfamiliar. It is familiar because it is common rather than the uncommon fables of deities. It has no division on the bases of class or cast because Sher-Gil has executed all the women with the same appearance in a painting. She was more focused to depict the far bigger issues, which are somehow connected with the life of all women and that is the problematic status of patriarchal hegemonies. This approach is very living and lively as per the intention of the artist. Her first and foremost aim was to capture the realistic life, but she has also used some symbolism to make the subject more powerful. She has depicted the figures in dark complexion and simple clothes and the paintings like “Mother India” (fig 6.20) and “Resting Mother” (fig.6.21) can be taken into consideration to observe the deeper impact of it. The color scheme and adjustment of darkness and lightness are very suitable for the theme. In both the paintings, Sher-Gil has tried to streamline the real situation of the mother in Indian society. She has executed them fully covered with inexpensive clothes without any ornamentation. The very title of the painting is indicating the same issue which Sher-Gil wanted to introduce through the painting but both the paintings have some additional detailing as compared to the realistic images. Sher-Gil has quite established a difference between the young and middle age woman through the gestures and details of a face which is appropriate in the variation of forms. Both the paintings create the feeling of pity and concern in the eye of the onlookers. The figures are having a strange kind of grace on their faces but there is also a sad feeling or distress which is a unique style of Sher-Gil in most of her paintings. In the works of Sher-Gil, we can see the projection of Catharsis, theory which has been described by Aristotle, another great philosopher. He has given the theory of imitation in a positive way as compared to Plato. As Plato considered imitation as a bad thing, but Aristotle considered imitation as a good thing, and it provides an idealized version of reality. He admired works of art and defined that,

“And since learning and admiring are pleasant, all things connected with them must also be pleasant; for instance, a work of imitation, such as painting, sculpture, poetry, and all that is well imitated, even if the object of imitation is not pleasant; for it is not this that causes pleasure or the reverse, but the inference that the imitation and the object imitated are identical, so that the result is that we learn something” (Braun 2006).

Sher-Gil's paintings on womanhood particularly evoke the feeling of Catharsis in the onlookers which are explained as a purification and purgation of the human emotions, the emotions which have been aroused after feeling the sense of pity and fear through art. Sher-Gil's depicted women are more

like a dramatic illusion of living characters and after observing those the onlookers feel a strong feeling of empathy and sympathy. Sher-Gil has created the reality of the life of women on her canvass rather than imitating the false imagery.

Varma and Sher-Gil have projected the body of a woman in a very juxtaposing way but somehow reflected the idea of six limbs in their projection. For Varma, the physical appearance is more preferable which has been used to create the variation in forms. The similitude has been created after taking inspiration from imaginative or so-called ideal norms of Indian beauty. Sher-Gil has given priority to the theme and subject and similitude has been created after exploring the realistic state of the woman of that time, they are more realistic and do not belong to any imaginative world. The well-proportion of figures in the works of Varma shows the appropriate balance but Sher-Gil did not take it utterly. She has followed mannerism in the depiction of female figures at most of the times because she was influenced by the European modern artist of her time. She has maintained to capture the similitude but in her individualistic style which is particularly influenced by Paul Gauguin. E. Narayanan has recorded, 'that Cezanne inspired her beyond all others but that she liked Paul Gauguin best of all' (**Appasamy 1965**).

Contrary to it, Varma has learned to capture the human figures in European academic styles. According to Mitra, "Ravi Varma struggled to introduce a great many new elements into the Indian painting perspective, European drawing, construction and composition and a new medium altogether: oil. He tried to wield the new tools in the Indian context and what he produced was not European painting at all but a new way of seeing" (**Mitra 1965**). He was inculcating the indigenous subjects in these techniques but his approach was symbolic and causal. Amrita Sher-Gil has given more stress to the thematic values in the depiction. The graceful and charming appearance or *Lavanya-yojanam* in the works of both the artists are different as Varma has depicted the woman in full of charm and grace which is connected to the very notion of male-oriented norms. There is no charm on the faces, which have been depicted by Sher-Gil but there are a strangeness and tension. The strangeness is not attracting its onlookers through visual pleasure but disturbs them to know the mystery of these faces. It can also be said that the paintings of Sher-Gil may not fit as per the graceful attitude which has been directed through the six limbs but we cannot entirely neglect a melancholic call, which is very attractive too. The *varnika-bhanga* (color scheme) is creating a juxtaposition in the paintings of both the artists. The color application is very vibrating in the paintings of Varma which is a need to support the very theme and it has delightful shades of white and golden tints and

hues. Varma has taken inspiration from European artists so he adopted the same in his application of colors. Moreover, the very approach which he wanted to give in the projection of women can only be presented through the selection of academic European palate. In Sher-Gil's paintings, we can see the dominant of red with the mixture of dull colors which is quite appropriate for the projection of the required ambiance to project the tragic life of the women. In faces, and in the color of the body, she mostly preferred dark tones as those of Varma's, even her painted women have very common features. Her color palate was very much inspired to Ajanta and as well but when the colors of Ajanta has been intermingled with the sadist demonstration, all colors have been transformed to provide a realistic approach towards the life of the woman. Although, she was quite equipped to create the balance and structure through colors which is very suitable as per the demand of six limbs norms. Sher-Gil has executed the gesture in a sadist way to support the necessity of the theme. Varma has mostly depicted the romantic or erotic themes in his works which evoke sensuous feelings. Sher-Gil's artworks produce a sense of melancholy and sadness and the Bhava is simultaneously ascending a feeling of stress or tension. When a common person sees her works, her works can be easily connected to their life and when an elite person sees the same, he or she may think again and again about the status and tragic domain of these rural women.

The protagonists of Sher-Gil are not celebrating happiness or projecting cheerful faces they have their tragic encounters to be displayed. Opposition to it, Varma's execution of female body attracts the onlooker on the bases of their beauty and seduces them sometimes for the enjoyment.

During the course of the discussion, it is unfair to not observe the particular time frame of all the artists. Sher-Gil and Varma were still very close and observant towards the traditional Indian aesthetics but not entirely connected to it. After the modern interventions, the traditional norms need to be revisited and revised as per the demand of time. However, it can be clearly observed that Varma was very close to the pan-Indian aspects of beauty but Sher-Gil was much closer to the Universal approach in regards to philosophical aesthetics. She has incorporated the international aesthetical approach in the depiction of women. The approach belongs to realism which is closer to Satyam Shivam Sundaram ideology as well, which is a core tenet of Indian spiritual philosophy.

If the works of Post-colonial artists i.e. Souza and Pal are taken into consideration, Francis Newton Souza who is very progressive in the depiction of his artworks has taken an eccentric approach. Although the deformation which has been done by Souza has its own unique character but not for those who seek pleasure in the art without any theoretical knowledge. He mentioned once that he

doesn't see any bifurcation between the Western and Eastern traditions of art like his contemporaries: "Even then, I never agreed with this division between "Indian" and "Western art". To me, knowledge was universal and aesthetics were Catholic" (**Bhardwaj 2009**). His notion of seeing aesthetic value was quite different as compared to most of the artist of his time. He was a vigilante who was very scientific as well in his thought process and development of forms on the surface. He used to be criticized for his flaming nudes and used deformation and deconstruction in his artworks. Sharma mentioned that "In his lifetime, Souza's paintings barely sold in India. He never had showpiece works like serene landscapes or spiritual abstracts or interpretations of Indian myths that usually appeal to Indian art buyers. Most of his paintings ridicule everything from Christianity to sex. "I use aesthetics rather than bullets or knives as a form of protest against stuffed shirts and hypocrites", he once said (**Sharma 2015**).

Souza was belonging to the age where deformation and abstract expressionism was on peak in the art of the Western world. After the mark of the cubism, the meaning of aesthetic has been entirely changed and various isms and art movements supported the realistic encounters in the depiction of their artworks rather than the materialistic notions of the physical or outer body. The very phenomenon of gracefulness and physical beauty has been transformed into anti-beauty and ugly creations, which is the uttermost reality of life. Souza shared the same notion of projection and he was very close to the philosophy of Croce where he has depicted his subjects in an expression of his inner intuition. Most of the aesthetical theory indicate toward an aesthetic value of an art object, the very value which can be defined through the cognitive assets of the individuals. On the contrary, the works of Souza denote precognitive dreams and thoughts and most of the times he portrayed women with an anti-art approach. The art which is entirely opposing the notion of delightedness and pleasure. He has gone over the human psyche to depict metaphysically and sometimes he is also very connected with the philosophy of Plato, who considers art as an organic production of reality rather than imitating the morality of good art. He is also somehow envisaging the onlookers to the phenomenon of Catharsis through creating tragedy on the surface. But, in the discussion of his painted woman, the sexuality is still dominant as it was dominant in his life.

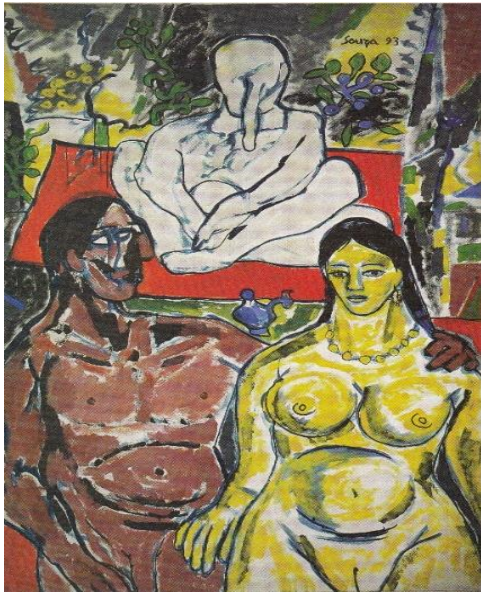


Fig. 6.22 Triad



Fig. 6.23 Altar for Nirbhaya

Fig: 6.22Triad, Francis Newton Souza, Acrylic on canvas, 70x45 inches, 1993, Source Kurtha

Fig.6.23 Altar for Nirbhaya series, Acrylic on canvas Gogi Saroj Pal, Source: Maddox, 2016

<http://www.artculturefestival.in/first-person-making-red-moon-songs/>

In the paintings of Souza, we can see a majority of different forms, but they do not belong to real life, they are neither human nor deity but they are beyond these two standard forms. In ancient Indian art, basically, the artist used to make familiar forms either in the shape of human beings or other creature and supernatural beings. The female figures of Souza are beyond such familiar or known shapes and figures. He has used multiple forms but as per his observation, he modified them first and then turned them into art forms. If we take the aesthetical beauty into some philosophical ways than they all might be acceptable but if we judge them as per the concept of beauty or visual pleasure, they are entirely shocking and disturbing first. He was the follower of aesthetic realism in the production of his artworks. As Souza has taken fellowship from his contemporaries like Bacon who was merely engaged in the production of aesthetic value in his artworks but his artworks do have an artistic or cognitive value, which arrests the gaze of the onlookers towards the thinking of a deeper subject, and that is the deformation of humanity. For the works of Bacon, Kieran argued that “Moreover grotesque, ugly and incoherent artworks may be valued by virtue of the way they enable us to explore our cognitive attitudes, beliefs, and desires. So, in the case of a Francis Bacon, though horrifically ugly and repulsive, the work may have great appeal and artistic value because it enables us to confront and explore what it would be like if humanity were rotten, diseased, corrupted and

distorted. Through engaging with such artworks, we may learn and develop our cognitive understanding of what certain human possibilities would or could be like (**Kieran 1997**). Souza also experimented with some chemical effects in the last phase of his life; those paintings are known as chemical paintings. In these chemical paintings, he has used some printed images, which are closely related to man-woman intimacy after burning or scratching some of the parts of these images. So he entirely devastated the application of colors in his paintings.

Gogi Saroj Pal has also taken the variation of forms into new paradigms of representation in some abstract ways like Souza but her approach is also very different. So, we can assume that both the artist is somehow not on the page of creating eye-pleasing art forms. Their purpose is to give the concept first and for the construction of concept, they have created their own values regarding the creation and variation of forms in the depiction of womanhood. The painting titled “Triad” (fig.6.22) represents a female figure with two male figures and the title of the painting is suggesting towards the three, the three-way relationship has been projected in the painting. The painting is also projecting the gigantic female nude who is the center of the painting. The painting indicates the complexity of the relationship triangle but the structure of the body is very strange. One of the Pal’s series titled “Altar for Nirbahya” has various forms of woman as engaged in powerful display against rape and social injustice. In these painting (fig 6.23), Pal has used the symbolic significance of different objects to depict the inner trauma of the rape victim and to suggest a solution towards such traumatic incidents. This kind of projection is also somehow subverting the very norms of traditional Indian aesthetics or the six limbs of Indian paintings. The proportion of the figures is not well-maintained by both the artists. Both the paintings are creating two opposite sentiments one is pointing towards the strangeness of the man-woman relationship and another is proposing a thoughtful approach towards rape victims. In concern of grace and charming appearance, both the paintings are not getting fit into the *Lavanaya-yojnam* concept because they are not having anything like this. The aspect of similitude is again juxtaposing the thought of six limbs tenet. The color application of both the paintings are very strong and going with the themes.

Souza was highly conceptual in his way of depiction like the Dadaist and the Surrealists or the Futurist as he first of all target the trending norms of beauty, then he distorted its organic nature with rampant unrealism in the milieu of precognition. The paintings of Souza are far beyond the traditional norms of aesthetical delight or the norms of traditional Indian Six Limbs. He has developed a sense of variety in forms as per his experimental cliché where he was always roaming

around. The imaginative diversion has been found in almost all of his painted nudes. The dramatic figures of his surface are not measured by aesthetic norms of proportion or similitude or gracious, as he is rejecting the very notion of beauty several times on his painted canvasses. Additionally, it can also be presumed that he was not showing the man-made concepts of beautiful art but he is taking the real or truth first in his depiction. He then made this truth as ugliest and filthy as he can make to show the reality in an imagined world, which could be scientific and supernatural at the same time. In this very notion, the woman who has been depicted by him is most of the times became an object of manipulating this rebellious attitude towards the so-called norms of beauty and society. She has become a tool in the hands of the artists to heal Souza's scars which he has got from his very childhood after suffering from such manipulation of beauty and pleasure. In respect of emotional sentiments, his numerous paintings take his onlookers into a nightmare where they feel hatred, alarmed and helpless at the same time. The woman who has been painted in their lusty attitude, also evoke sexual desire as they are inviting the onlookers into their dirty world. The onlookers can hardly get back to the reality without getting shocked or seduced by their hyperbolic appearance. He has shared the same ideology as like Duchamp and preferred sexuality and nudes at the first place among all the subjects as it is stated that "A final confirmation for this double-sided intent may be observed in some remarks Duchamp makes about his interest in sex: "I believe in eroticism a lot," it is "a thing that everyone understands," and "It replaces, if you wish, what other literary schools call Symbolism, Romanticism (McMahon 1992).

The color application has also been taken to envisage the fire to scare and problematized the very notion of delicate beauty and charm. It can be taken into consideration Souza was on his way to distort the prevalent imagery of beauty and aesthetics and woman somehow came in the way of it and became a tool of objectification and gender politics.

Coming towards the art of Gogi Saroj Pal, it is very clear that she is not executing his female protagonists to depict the beautiful woman, though her female icons are full of a feminine grace. But as per the six limbs of Indian paintings, she does not follow any norm she is not taking similitude in her forms or not executing proportionate bodies as she usually does not work in realistic forms. Her work is also imaginative and contextual while most of the times we can observe generally there is a feeling of calmness and peace in most of her works. The most dominated sentiment which has been evoked by her female figures is strangeness in a balanced peace. The applied colors are also driving the same feelings in the onlookers. Numerous of her paintings are also have the bizarre approach as

she usually executes half human and half animal in most of her series. After seeing the painting one can observe a sense of detachment to the existing world. The detachment which is not quite unknown, but reminds the supernatural depiction of ancient Indian art, where we can see the supernatural beings as having the body of human and animal. These earlier images used to be associated with the divine being, but Pal has given those powers to the early or common woman. She gives her the divine importance after being earthly, they are significant, and they are powerful in their respective world. There is no limit to how art can be used to make life more sensible. Gogi Saroj Pal, as per Western Aesthetical norms displaying the realism through her artworks, though her works are coming out a fantasy like Souza's she analyzed the reality first then takes a cognitive and precognitive discourse to compose the realistic encounters, associated with the life of the common woman. During the narration of aesthetic realism, it is mentioned by the great American poet, critic, and educator Eli Siegel that,

“To see art as making life more sensible it is first required of one that he respects art, know what it is, not make it less than it is. Art, Aesthetic Realism believes, shows reality as it is, deeply: straight. All art does that. The possibilities of reality are a reality. The more we see reality as having order and strangeness, form and wonder, the more reality we are seeing. Art is a way of seeing reality more by seeing it more as it is” (Koppelman & Wilson 2002).

6.5.1 RASA AND DHVANI THEORY

In Ancient Indian literary writings, Bharata has given the theory of Rasa in his famous *Natyashastra*. These *rasas* have been known as delight or pleasure in almost all kind of arts but Dramaturgy in particular. Abhinava Gupta is known for developing the theory of *Rasa* in semantic ways, which is called *Dhvani* theory. Anandavardhana is considered the main exponent who further explored the *Dhvani* theory through structures. These poetic theories of *rasa* and *dhvani* can be applied to almost all kind of fine arts including painting. There are nine *rasas* which are considered the chief components of any produced artworks. An accomplished artwork has such emotional relish or *rasa* which can move the mind of its spectators. The artwork usually produces a desire or different moods in the mind of its onlookers. The very theory of *rasa* is based on what the artist suggests not what he expressed through the production. These ways of suggestions have been properly described by the theory of *dhvani* theory of Anandavardhana. The quality of performing such suggestions has been judged by the *rasa* theory. As per these theories, an artist should be equipped to give the artwork this universal bliss of moods and sentiments, which can reach the heart of its onlookers. The *dhvani*

style has been observed through three major aspects i.e. *abhidha* (the literal meaning of the expression), *laksana* an (external quality of the expression) and *vyanjana* (the suggestive approach of the expression or what has been suggested). In this way, if we observe the paintings of the taken artists, we can assume all their paintings have a majority of particular delights or *rasas* and suggestions of the artists are also manipulating the very same through *abhidha*, *laksana*, and *vyanjana*. Every *rasa* is related with a particular *sthayi bhava*. In the paintings of Varma, we can usually feel the sentiments of love, attractiveness which is called *shringara* (erotic) *rasa* (sentiments) and its *sthayi bhava* (emotions) is *rati* (delight). In the paintings of Varma, a woman has been particularly depicted in this a particular emotion which creates the feeling of love and attractiveness. The painting of Varma titled “A Nair Lady adorning her hair with a Garland of Jasmine is creating the sentiment of delight with erotic feelings. As the title of the painting and subject suggests, the lady is adorning herself. The suggestive theory by the artist is to depict a picture of a woman as involved in beautification for her lover. She is beautiful and depicted as staring in the eyes of its onlookers as she is conscious and aware that she is being looked at by someone. The literal meaning and external quality of the expression of the woman are also suggesting the same to make her as an object of onlooker’s desire. The *vibhavas* or determinants which have been suggested or inherited by the artist is the emotions of the woman named as *alambana-vibhava*. The surroundings of the surface or *uddipan-vibhava* have been the created through the adjustment of background and details as she has been depicted alone in her chamber. Her privacy has been exposed to the onlookers and after viewing her privately, the onlookers feel delighted to have a look at such a situation. The settlement of *uddipan-vibhava* or environmental causes is a major phenomenon in the creation of aesthetic delight or juice for the senses. Additionally, the two major reactions in the way of delight are physical reactions or *anubhavas* and mental reactions *vvabhichari bhavas* are also suggesting the same feeling of erotic sense.



Fig. 6.24 A Nair Lady

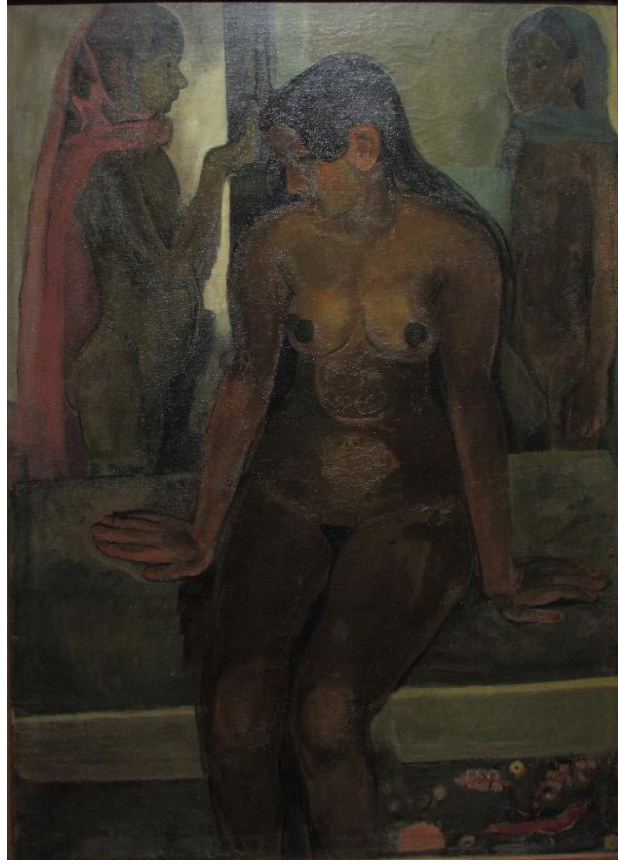


Fig. 6. 25 Nude Group

Fig. 6.24 A Nair Lady adorning her hair with a Garland of Jasmine, Ravi Varma, Oil on Canvass 1873, Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nair_Lady_Adorning_Her_Hair_\(Varma\)#/media/File:Nair_Lady_Adorning_Her_Hair.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nair_Lady_Adorning_Her_Hair_(Varma)#/media/File:Nair_Lady_Adorning_Her_Hair.jpg)

Fig.6.25 Nude Group, Amrita Sher-Gil, Oil on Canvas, 1935, 81x 115.5 cm. Image Courtesy NGMA New Delhi

The very first aspect of *dhvani* is which *abhidha* or the literal meaning of the painting displaying the same concept to show a woman as engaged in her beatification with flowers. The external characters of the painting or *laksana* are indicating towards a reverse approach as she is not only engaged in adornment but she is offering herself towards the onlookers in her private movement. In this way, the suggestive approach or *laksana* of the painting are projecting woman as an object to be displayed as pretending to be alone. She is not alone as she is waiting or preparing for the male lover to meet with. Moreover, the onlookers can also imagine her to be waiting for them which has been suggested by the artist. These all adjustment are creating a strong feeling of enchanting and erotic desire in the eyes of its observers. The onlookers feel pleasure to look a woman in a state of waiting or adorning herself in privacy. The male presence is also celebrated through the components of external objects like flowers, the arrangement of light and grace in the painting. As per the *Dhawni* theory or the

theory of suggestions, the paintings indicate the same with the adjustment of positive and negative space, background detailing and other supportive gestures. Varma was a master in the creation of *rasa*, apart from erotic delight we can see there are other prominent *rasas* in his paintings but all subjects have been taken specifically by him. For instance, he has executed religious theme so he tried to depict *Shanta rasa*, but if a subject is related with a female, he just gave priority to generate or suggest, the erotic feelings and sensuousness. In the paintings of Sher-Gil, we can find the plenty of *Karuna* *rasa* with its *shoka bhawa* or the feeling of compassion as she used to capture the sadness of the life of women. She painted the dark side of womanhood in the form of simplicity and peacefulness. Moreover, her paintings, suggest multiple emotions of wonder and pity too at the same time. The painting, *Nude Group* (Fig 6.25) displays a group of three women where one figure is depicted in the center of the painting and the remaining two have been placed in a secondary position. The painting as per the *rasa* theory develops a feeling of sadness which evokes *Karuna rasa* with the tragic settlement of the subject. Unlike Varma, Sher-Gil has removed the component of materialist beauty first, then she has given priority to the inner quest of the state of the nude woman. The woman who is sitting in the same private place but not adorning herself. She is not making an eye-contact with the onlookers as if she is not aware at all that is being looked at. Moreover, she does not bother if she is looking at someone as she is involved in a deeper thought. The suggestive theory is quite opposite with that of Varma, the suggestion has been given to the sadness of life of the woman than the erotic settlement. The literal meaning of the painting is juxtaposing the theme which has been given as a nude group. The nudity has been overlooked in a very different way. The uncovered body in the painting (fig 6.25) is very neutral and direct in their approach of realistic projection than the semi-covered body of Varma's painting (fig 6.24). The darkness has been projected through the dark color scheme which is again suggesting the tension and uneasiness so the environmental or surroundings have been settled to create the feeling of grief or sadness which is *Karuna rasa*.

In the paintings of Souza, the majority of *Rudra* (terrible) *Bibhatsa* (Disgust) *Bhayānaka* or fearful (horror) and *Adbhuta* (wondrous) *rasas* through can be seen through multiple suggestions. These multiple impulsive components are also similar to the notion of catharsis as well. The painting, *Nude Queen* has been portrayed by Souza in a very strange manner. It is appearing that he has torn apart the normal human body into many pieces and then recollected them on his canvass. The woman with her naked body with so many scars and marks on her body is having an absurd posture and projecting her genitals parts as placing her hands near them. The hips and pudendum have been shown as placed

at one point which is indicating the progressive attitude of the figure. The painting is indicating towards multiple strange feelings and then ending as a permanent mood of *Bibhatsa* (disgust) and *Bhayankar* (horror) at the same time. The body of the woman has been projected as a vulnerable object what the artist has suggested is to give a shock to the onlookers after deforming the very body. The literal meaning of a painting is to project an image of a nude queen but after seeing the painting it is very difficult to guess the suggestive title and the meaning. The meaning is quite strange and horrifying which hit the very idea of the imagery of the queen as the queen usually depicted as having a beautiful body with ornamentation. If she is depicted nude then she has the graceful body with the possession which a queen should have. The surroundings or background of the painting, the color scheme and the gesture of the woman is also supporting the same deconstruction and deformation.

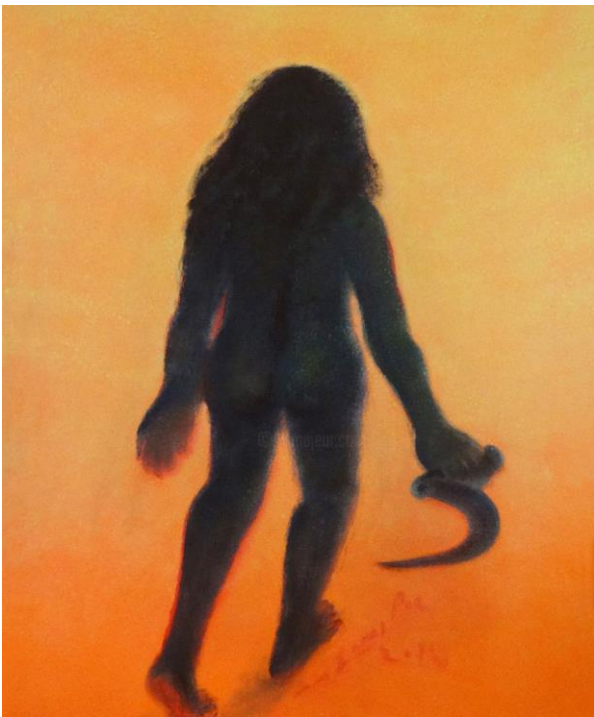


Fig. 6.27 Altar for Nirbhaya



Fig. 6. 26 Nude Queen

Fig.6.26 Altar for Nirbhaya, 2015, Acrylic on Paper Board (10x2x13.5 cm), Image Curtsy, Gogi Saroj Pal

Fig.6. 27 Nude Queen, 1962, Oil on canvas, 57.25 x 47.25 in (145.3 x 119.9 cm). Source:

<https://www.saffronart.com/auctions/PostWork.aspx?l=2452>

In the painting of Pal, a deep sense of *Shringar*, *Raudra*, *Veera* (heroic), *Adbhuta* (wondrous) and *Shanta* (peaceful) *rasas* can be observed in various themes. In her latest series, known as Altar for Nirbhaya, Pal has depicted a protagonist who is stepping forward with a sickle in her hand. The suggestive approach of the artist is to project the need of the society in which women have been

raped and suffered due to crime and gender politics. The painting creates the permanent mood of *Rudra* (terrible) rasa and the very components of emotions are indicating the same approach through the help of color application and empty background.

The painting of Varma, by all means, denotes a relishing fest for the onlookers in regards to aesthetical pleasure. On the contrary, the execution of woman is only serving for creating the beautiful art objects as living beings. The forms which have been presented by Varma on the surface, are projecting the complexity of desire, which is indicating towards the satisfaction of visual pleasure only. They are fine instances of beautiful art but in the case of reality, they are nothing but a fake imagery of an imaginative world. It is mentioned in ancient Hindu scriptures that the truth or reality is the only beauty i.e. *Satyam* (truth) *Shivam* (good) *Sundaram* (beauty). This very sentence is also known as the foundation of Indian aesthetics. In this way, the aim of the artist is not only represent the beautiful and eye-pleasing art but to execute meaningful art as well. The paintings of Sher-Gil represent a larger insight of the reality rather than the imaginative or spiritual world. She somehow managed to create the opposition of beauty through her artworks but the real beauty, not the imaginary one. If the painting is observed on the bases of onlookers, the *rasanubhuti* can varies as per the gender of them, for instance, the painting which is erotic to the male viewer can be offensive or vulgar too for the female viewers. In the *rasa-dhavni* theory, the male artists are going towards the projection of sexuality and erotic desires while female artists are going towards the deeper reality of the life of the woman. In the age of post-modernism where the norms of aesthetics have changed into beautiful projection to realistic and anti-aesthetic norms, the gender is somehow directing their manipulations in a symbolic or non-symbolic way.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Gogi Saroj Pal has depicted all the traumatic experiences of women's lives in a creative way to spread awareness in respect to gender politics. For this, she has gone through various literature and myths and developed a sense to represent those issues in an artistic way. She is a true thinker and a virtuous artist as well because she knows the art of representing such problematic aspects in a symbolic way. She just explores the hindrances and barriers of the life of women and then executes powerful female icons to set new paradigms of power and force. The socio-cultural aspects and patriarchal domination are successfully criticized by the artist in a sarcastic way. The protagonists of Gogi Saroj Pal are full of feminine force. They are nude and enjoying their sexuality without being shameful, for they are offering themselves to the onlookers. In all of her works, there are two

major approaches; the first one is the critical representation of society through the vulnerable image of women. The sarcastic way to depict ancient Indian characters is very novel and thoughtful. She particularly criticizes the previously structured images of Goddess and other characters. She points out that, “mythology is a system of our society and it needs reinterpretation; if we don’t change our mythology as per the situation, the society will die soon”. Another approach is generated through her powerful female icons like *Hat-Yogini* and *Nirbhaya*. She challenges the patriarchal system which directs the lives of women as a commodity and resolves this issue after suggesting the solution. First, she just gets them aware through an alarm and then she asked them to change this unfair social system.

The angle of Souza to see the humanity was diverse and scientific and he considered that we all are devils in disguise of a human. This perception is applied too in the treatment of woman as a subject and due to this, she becomes a thing of entertainment and sexual pleasure. For Souza, the female seems to a thing which is used for driving the male sexuality. She is vicious, full of evils, having sexual desire, monstrous and so on because he may have envy towards the woman. Due to his rebellious nature, he became rigid and started manipulating a world of his own. In this world, the woman became the main vamp who is served only to evoke sensual pleasure. She is neither beautiful nor sublime but demonic and lustful.

The paintings usually go for only two main objectives, first one is its visual appearance and another is visual communication. Mostly, if the woman is portrayed by male artists either her beauty and sensuality or a form of social ideals is served to the onlookers. Contrary to it, this very form of beauty and sensuality is not preferred by the female artists in the depiction of a woman. Apart from these physical and moral values, female artists are more concerned regarding the acknowledgment of the power and strengths of the feminine through narratives. In this way, a strong visual communication is found in the paintings of female artists rather than the appearance of the female body. These kinds of narratives make their art more subjective as compared to the so-called man-made art. In respect of the portrayal of a woman, there are numerous aspects which differentiate the art of male from those of female artists; like the selected theme, the title, space and composition, color application, symbolism, physical appearance, body and gesture, and so on.

In the work of male and female artists, it can be observed that male artists have executed the sexualized imagery of woman which is according to them, is real or true whether it is bizarre or common. It is supernatural or humane, both the male artists have depicted woman as a tool of sexual

manipulations. On the contrary, both the female artists have changed their definition of beauty on their surfaces as compared to their male contemporaries. Female artists have explored the variety of forms as per the realistic encounters of the life of the woman. Their canvasses have its own aesthetical pleasure but this has been derived from philosophical or conceptual norms rather than the sensual or moral ones. Their painted themes are suggesting the onlookers experience the real encounter of the life of women.

7. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

7.1 SUMMARY

The first chapter titled, “Introduction,” provides the detailed account of women with respect to paintings from pre-historic to contemporary Indian art after focusing on male and female representations. The second chapter extensively examines the existing literature on ancient to modern art in general and discussion on the portrayal of women with respect to body display, sensuality, beauty and other detailed features in particular. It also reviews the work of male and female artists in modern Indian paintings with special reference to Ravi Varma and Amrita Sher-Gil, Francis Newton Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal. There is also the inclusion of some miscellaneous studies, which provide some other aspects related to gender politics, nude and erotic consensus, feminism etc. The third chapter titled, “From Caves to Canvasses: Mapping the Portrayal of Women from Ancient to Modern Indian Paintings,” reveals the representation of the female body from pre-historic to contemporary Indian paintings. The chapter has been divided into two sections. In the first section, the application of women has been observed from pre-historic rock paintings to miniature painting style. Alternatively, it can also be inferred that the artists were not male because the rock paintings of the period were similar to the folk-art tradition of India. Numerous folk arts are usually depicted by female artisans to decorate the house on various religious activities. In the second section, it has been observed that the paintings after the colonial encounters (company style) where the women have been depicted beating their husbands, going to market, doing worship as the British people wanted to capture the women of contemporary Indian culture. There are also some paintings containing several societal issues like religious scandals, domestic life in which humor and irony can be seen. It was this time only when Raja Ravi Varma started to represent typical Indian women after relating them with Indian mythology. The sensual display of the female body is still prevalent in the works of male artists like Jatin Das, Francis Newton Souza, and M.F. Husain etc. The female artists are questioning this very norm of sexual delight and physical beauty.

The fourth chapter titled, “Ravi Varma and Francis Newton Souza: The Prevalent Stereotype of Sensual Display,” is based on a critical evaluation of the paintings of Ravi Varma and Francis Newton Souza. In this study, the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma have been observed to seek the significance of the depiction of women from the pre-Independence times. The oeuvre of Ravi Varma has been evaluated through the study of some of his paintings in the retrospect of objectivity and

sensual display. After this, a critical appraisal of the paintings of Francis Newton Souza has been carried out to trace the connection between the works of both the artists.

It appears that Varma initiated the trend to represent women as decorative elements. Then the portrayal of women has become a projection of female sexuality in a more retrogressive way. The complexity of human desire reached its zenith in the paintings of Francis Newton Souza. This kind of treatment can also be the revenge by the artist for some personal issues, which cannot be expressed directly but can be represented through paintings. His approach is quite socio-political but is exclusive in itself, where women may serve to frame the utmost bitterness on the surface. His paintings, therefore, have devil-like figures constructed with horrifying or vicious gestures, fully destroying the phenomenon of the six limbs of Indian paintings.

Chapter five titled, “The Foremother and Her Successor: Amrita Sher-Gil & Gogi Saroj Pal”, deals with the comparative analysis of their work to trace the impact of Sher-Gil on the works of Gogi Saroj Pal. There are several factors, which are quite dissimilar in both of the artists but, somehow, their ideology is the same because both of the artists are concerned with the womanhood in their own way. These reformations and adaptations in the artistic endeavor are closely related to their psyche. Sher-Gil’s women are entirely different from Pal’s icons in color, composition, gestures and so on, but they are similar in some aspects like criticism for society, independent spirit, powerful composition and structure, a sense of self-realization, and a thrust for identity. Amrita Sher-Gil’s female icons are represented to awake the spirit of feminization through the depiction of tragic and common faces in dark complexion. The reflection of Pal’s personality is more visible in her work. Her critical way of thinking, her strong argument, her habit to question the problems, her preferential attitude is quite relative to her protagonist.

“Differentiating the Female Body: The Irony of Subject and Object,” is the title of the sixth chapter. This chapter deals with a comparative analysis between the paintings of Gogi Saroj Pal and Francis Newton Souza. The projection of women in their paintings has been evaluated through their artistic approach: painting style, theme selection, and physical appearance of figures, color application, space and background, and other related aspects of representation. In the first section, the oeuvre of Raja Ravi Varma and Sher-Gil has been surveyed briefly through some of their prominent paintings to develop a base for the further comparison. The subjectivity and objectivity have been evaluated to find out the basic difference between the work of male and female artists.

Gogi Saroj Pal opines that “mythology is a system of our society and it needs reinterpretation; if we don’t change our mythology as per the situation, the society will be dead soon.” Another approach is generated through her powerful female icons. She challenges the patriarchal system, which directs the life of women as a commodity and resolves this issue after giving the solution. At first, she just makes them aware through an alarm, and then she asks them to oppose and change this unfair social system. The angle of Souza, to see the humanity was diverse and scientific. He considered that we all are devils in disguise of the human form. This perception is applied too in the treatment of women as a subject and, due to this; his paintings have become a thing of entertainment and sexual pleasure.

7.2 CONCLUSION

In respect of the portrayal of women, there are numerous aspects which differentiate the art of male artists from female ones, like the selection of theme, the title, space and composition, color application, symbolism, physical appearance, body and gesture, as the artists consciously or unconsciously choose their representational style as per the societal structure of gender.

From the very pre-historic times, it is the sexuality and physical appearance of women which is equipped to set a universal phenomenon to define the prevalent female identity. In the earlier representations, there are mainly two kinds of women; one has been executed as Goddess and another has been displayed as common or ordinary women. In both the representations, the body has been equipped as well-proportioned/sensual/beautiful and having the political form of patriarchal dominance.

The majority of earlier artists, who depicted such sensuous and beautiful imagery of women, were male because after the encounter of female artists such politicized imageries have been transformed in a different way. The opposition and subversion of those identities became the major objective of the work of numerous female artists.

The main emphasis was given to elaborate the strength and power of man where the women only had the subordinate roles like mothers, counterparts, dancers or servants in mural art. The woman was only known for beauty and this very beauty has also been frequently described in Indian literature and mythology. The woman had become a graceful being with the feminine characteristic as ‘*Darbar Culture*’ flourished. The Gods or Men have been frequently depicted having a group of lovers, but it is difficult to find the same in the representation of Goddesses or women because women were not allowed to do so in the Indian society.

The Imperial Mughal art and its influence was the biggest reason for the vulnerable imagery of women because the artists were busy in cheering their patrons. The glory and manliness of their kings was their major concern so they have been depicted as overpowering the body of women as they used to do in their real life. Another reason was the encounter of the artists and rulers with the Western art as the art pieces used to be gifted in which women were represented as beautiful and sensual. The Emperors used to keep these paintings for their personal collection because, at that time, paintings were the only medium to capture something which they like.

In Rajput and Pahari miniature style, the heroic power of Krishna was celebrated due to Vaishnava cult and kings often imagined themselves as Lord Krishna. They also wanted to be served like Gods and this desire had been depicted by the artists, and so the women were entirely subjugated through the erotic and sensual display.

In the paintings of Ravi Varma, the Western influence was the main cause behind the sensual body display of women. This influence can be observed through the treatment of the body, gestures, curves of the figures etc. Varma mostly selected lying or sitting women when he portrayed them without a mythological theme. This indicates that he painted them to satisfy the male gaze because they are placed in an inviting posture.

The paintings of Ravi Varma were particularly demonstrated as having Indian body type and offer their body in so-called modern ways. Their Indian belonging and Western appearance point towards the desire of people because at that time a majority of India people were living at the threshold of two different worlds. One is related to their inferiority and personal desire to adopt the Western culture. Another is their show off toward indigenous culture and their desire to look superior. In Ravi Varma's paintings, this complexity of desire has been successfully depicted in the portrayal of women. On one hand, they are an equipment to display the Indian Puranic anecdotes, and they are also desirable to adopt the Western culture.

The strange and vicious representation of womanhood in Souza's paintings led its onlookers into the new world of imagination. It can be said that the erotic depiction of women has been equipped for the satisfaction of psychological restlessness of the artist because he was very much troubled due to his fate and destiny. The women depiction in the paintings of Souza may be a reflection of both his appreciative and critical attitudes toward women because he was very much obsessed with women throughout his life. On the contrary, it may be an approach to criticize the orthodox society; as being an artist, he had the right to express his aspects and views on anything. Women in his paintings are

full of lust and ugliness, which on one hand represents an artistic thrust to paint whatever he wants but also represents his anger on the other.

He is also known as a passionate being and considered a lover and as well as a hater of the feminine. This kind of projection may be a response to some traumatic personal experiences. He chiseled a way to come out from his deep love towards such sensual imagery through distorting the previously accepted icons. Or, it may be a way to express his anger and a medium to shock people by subverting the previously depicted female icons.

In the work of Raja Ravi Varma and Francis Newton Souza, the woman is particularly found as a decorative object. She is neglected as a significant subject in the paintings and overpowered by male desire. Both the artists noticed only those identities of women which are politically manipulated by man-made hegemonies because their gender is so imbibed in those structures.

The reflection of the life of Amrita Sher-Gil has been found in all her artistic representations. After coming to India, she was very much connected to the Indian rural women an issue of their life. As a female, she could feel the struggle of their life and somehow relate them to her own. Her major concern was the patriarchal politics which was the core issue of the time.

There is a number of factors which are responsible for executing that tragic and traumatic life of Indian women in her paintings. The very first reason is her hybrid parentage, hybrid culture and her separation from India during her studies in Europe, which helped her to analyze this aspect of the life of Indian women. Another is the knowledge of Western styles and the influence of great European masters of painting on her. As a Western observer, it is obvious to notice those subjects which are avoided by the Indigenous artists. Apart from this, she spent a tragic life too which ended with her sudden death. So, it may be assumed that she could feel the state of those women who are suffering due to an unequal social system and patriarchal dominance.

In Pal's paintings, women are more liberal because they are not only representing the problems of society, but they are also engaged in solving such issues. Space is usually left blank in both the female artist's paintings, which show their focal point is a woman only rather than other pictorial narratives. Pal's characters are not just lamenting for their problems; they are happily involved to criticize societal inequality and patriarchal differences. They are not facing the spectator or onlookers with a full glance for male-gaze. They do not bother about the outcome of their display;

they are just representing themselves, whether they will be accepted or not. Sher-Gil too worked to construct the problems of women but in the melancholy form.

In all the paintings of Pal, there are two major approaches; the first one is the critical representation of society through the vulnerable image of women. The sarcastic way to depict ancient Indian characters is very novel and thoughtful. She particularly criticizes the previously structured image of Goddess and other characters.

The ornamentation of woman has been fully avoided by both the artists which may be an effort to free their icons from the parameter of beauty and decoration. In their paintings, only the outer structure of the female body has been drawn and her genitals are not well-executed because they do not want to depict woman as an object of desire.

On the conclusion, the approach of Varma is surrounded by a complex attitude of society in which women are performing as per the patriarchal display. They are presenting their body but in a very sophisticated manner i.e. as the society wants them to be looked at. They are offering their body in the disguise of the ideal woman as the society wants to see them. On the contrary, Souza's women are rebel enough as compare to Varma's because they are quite modern in their approach. They are also served but in a very progressive or direct manner. This difference somehow showcases the difference between the psyches of both the artists. They project only what they see or what they want to see in the body of a woman. The female body has become a commodity and vulnerable to manipulate the power of the male.

On the other hand, Sher-Gil has discovered a different view towards the depiction of woman as she showcases the very association of their life and used their body as a medium to construct the same. In the work of Sher-Gil, the body is a tool only to execute the reality between the real and the imagined world. The priority is not to showcase the body but to showcase the inner quest through the projection of the body in a very different page. Pal continued with the same approach but not limited to the urban-rural dimensions like Sher-Gil. She has explored more intriguing issues related to the growth and sustainability of woman. It is more like Sher-Gil Started to explore the very context, which is dominant at that time, and Pal has picked the same way in a very advanced manner. She is living in an imagined world where realistic encounters happen only to build a connection between the imagined and real world.

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ANNEXURE I

Francis Newton Souza

Indian Modern Artist

Biography

Country: India

Birth: born in 1924, Saligaon Goa, Died on 2002, Bombay

Lived and Worked: Lived in Bombay, London, New York

Education: 1940-45- Diploma in Painting, at JJ School of Art, Bombay, 1949-55

Studied at Central School of Art, London, 1960-Study tour of Italy, Italian Govt. Scholarship

Exhibitions in India

Posthumous solo and Group

- 2001 Souza: A Modern Myth: Gallery 88, Calcutta
- 2002 Souza in Bombay and Goa: Art Musings Gallery, Mumbai
- 2003 Francis Newton Souza: Works on paper: Saffronart, Mumbai
- 2003 Manifestations: Delhi Art Gallery
- 2004 Manifestations II: Jehangir Gallery and the Delhi Art Gallery
- 2004 Souza in London, curated by Yashodhara Dalmia from the Bhayana family collection: British Council, New Delhi
- 2005 A Tribute to F. N. SOUZA, Kumar Gallery, New Delhi /Manifestations III, Nehru Centre, Mumbai; Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi, and Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2007 Bacon, Freud, Mehta, Souza: Grosvenor Vadehra, New Delhi
- 2008 3 Masters Briefly: Akar Prakar, Kolkata
- 2008 Frame Figure Field: 20th Century Modern and Contemporary Indian Art: Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2008 Freedom 2008: Sixty Years After Indian Independence: Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata
- 2008 Modern and Contemporary Indian Art: Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2008 Tales, Reflection, and Constructs: ITC Windsor, Bangalore

- 2009 Armory Show, New York Presented by Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2009 Master Class: The Art Trust, Mumbai
- 2009 Tracing time: Bodhi Art, Mumbai
- 2010 A SYCO: The View Room, Mumbai
- 2010 Celebration 2010, annual Exhibition: Kumar Gallery, New Delhi
- 2010 Manifestations IV: Delhi Art gallery, New Delhi
- 2010 Paper Trails: Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2010 Roots, 25th Anniversary Exhibition of Sakshi Art Gallery, Mumbai at the Park, Chennai
- 2010 Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai
- 2010 Vahana: Bombay Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 2010 Volte-Face: Souza's Iconoclastic Vision Presented by Dhoomimal Gallery at Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi
- 2011 Anecdotes: Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai
- 2011 Celebration 2011: Kumar Gallery, New Delhi
- 2011 Continuum 2011: Delhi Art gallery, New Delhi
- 2011 High- Light Presented by Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai at the Oberoi, Gurgaon
- 2011 Ida Kar: Portraits of F. N. Souza: British Council, New Delhi; Grosvenor Vadehra, London; Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai; Sunaparanta Goa Centre, Panjim
- 2011 Manifestation VI: Delhi Art gallery, New Delhi
- 2011 Manifestations V: Delhi Art gallery, New Delhi
- 2011 Masterclass: Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2011 Natural Bodies, Subverted Cannons: Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2011 Seduction by Masquerade: Nature Morte, New Delhi
- 2011 Times Unfolded: Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), New Delhi
- 2011-2012 Picasso Souza: Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2012 Contemporary: A Selection of Modern and Contemporary Art Presented by Sakshi Gallery at the Park of Chennai
- 2012 Crossing: Time Unfolded, Part 2: Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), New Delhi
- 2012 Extending the line: Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2012 Gallery Collection: Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi

SOLO

- 1962 Kumar Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1963 Taj Gallery Mumbai.
- 1966 Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1976 Volte-Face: Souza's Iconoclastic Vision: Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1983 Souza in the Forties: Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1985 Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1993 Souza, 1940s-1990s: Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1995 The Chemicals of Souza: L. T.G. Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1996 'Souza from the Alkazi Collection', Academy of Fine Arts and Literature New Delhi
- 1996 The Acrylics of Souza: L.T.G. Art Gallery, New Delhi

GROUP

- 1948 Progressive Artists' Group, inaugural exhibition
- 1949 Bombay Art Society Salon, Mumbai
- 1986 Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1986 East-West Visual Arts Encounter, Bombay
- 1993 LTG Gallery, New Delhi
- 1996 The Modern Inaugural Show National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai
- 1997 Six Modern Masters: Kumar Gallery
- 1999 The Demonic Line: Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2001 Souza & Baiju: Saffronart and Apparao Galleries, Mumbai

EXHIBITIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

- 2002 Souza and Friends: Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2003 F.N Souza: A Definitive Retrospective: Gallery Arts India, New York
- 2003 Modern Indian Painting: Grosvenor Gallery London
- 2004 Ethos: Contemporary Indian Art: Indigo Blue Art, Singapore
- 2005 Ashta Nayak: Eight Pioneers of Indian Art: Gallery Arts India, New York
- 2005 Francis Newton Souza, Saffronart and Grosvenor Gallery: London/New York
- 2005 Modern Indian Paintings: Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2005-2006 F. N. Souza, Religion & Erotica: Tate Britain, London (Publication)

- 2005-2006 Self-Portrait, Renaissance to contemporary: National Portrait Gallery, London
- 2007 From the Vault: Aicon Gallery, London, and New York
- 2007-08 India Art Now: Between Continuity and Transformation: Province of Milan, Milan
- 2008 F.N. Souza, presented by Saffronart and Grosvenor Gallery, London: Saffronart, New York
- 2008 Multiple Modernities: India, 1905-2005: Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA
- 2008 Summer collection, works by modern and contemporary South Asian artists, Aicon Gallery, London
- 2008 The Ghost of Souza, an exhibit of works by acclaimed artist Francis Newton Souza, together with Indian and Pakistani artists influenced by Souza's work: Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2008 Winter Moderns, an exhibit of five senior modern Indian artists - M.F. Husain, F.N. Souza, Shyamal Dutta Ray, Satish Gujral and B. Prabha: Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2008-09 Expanding Horizon: Contemporary Indian Art Traveling Exhibition Presented by Bodhi Art at Ravinder Natya Mandir: P.L. Deshpande Kala Academy Art Gallery, Mumbai; Sant Dyaneshwar Natya Sankul Art Gallery, Amravati; Platinum Jubilee Hall, Nagpur; Tapadia Natya Mandir Sports Hall, Aurangabad; Hirachand Nemchand Vachanalay's, Solapur; Acharya Vidyanand Sanskrutik Bhavan, Kolhapur; PGSR Sabhagriha, SNOT, Pune; Sarvajanic Vachanalaya Hall, Nasik
- 2008-09 Modern India Organized by Institut Valencia d' Art Modern (IVAM) and Casa Asia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture of Valencia, Spain
- 2009 Anglo-Indian Express: Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2009 Bazgasht: Traditional Methods and Modern practices, The Revival of Miniature Paintings from the Sub-Continent: Art Gallery of Mississauga, Mississauga, Ontario
- 2009 Bharat Ratna! Jewels of Modern Indian Art: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- 2009 F.N. Souza: Heads, Landscapes, and Nudes: Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2009 In Search of the Vernacular: Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2009 Indian Art After Independence: Selected Works from the Collection of Virginia & Rani Akhoury and Shelley & Donald Rubin: Emily Lowe Gallery, Hempstead
- 2009 Kalpana: Figurative Art in India Presented by The Indian Council for Cultural Relation (ICCR) at Aicon Gallery, London; The Indian Council for Cultural Relation (ICCR)

- 2009 Progressive to Altermodern:62 Years of Indian Modern Art: Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2010 A Missing History: The Other Story Re-visited: Aicon Gallery, London
- 2010 Cross Purpose Shock and Contemplation in Images of the Crucifixion: Macalls Gallery, West Kent; Ben Uri Museum, London
- 2010 From Miniature to Modern: Tradition in Transition: Rob Dean Art, London in association with Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 2010 The Modernists: RL Fine Arts, New York
- 2010 The Progressives & Associates: Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2010-11 Figure/Landscape: Part One: Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2010-11 Figure/Landscape: Part Two: Aicon Gallery, London
- 2011 Ethos V: Indian Art Through the lens of History (1900 to 1980): Indigo Blue Art Singapore
- 2011 Goddess, Lion Peasant, Priest: Modern and Contemporary Indian Art from the Collection of shelly and Donald Rubin: Museum Oglethorpe, Atlanta
- 2011 Modern Masters: Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2011 POP: Progressives of Paper: Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2011 Roots in the Air, Branches Below: Modern & Contemporary Art from India: San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose
- 2011 States of Departure: Progressive to Present Day: Aicon Gallery, London
- 2011 The Path of the Lotus: Indian Art: Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2011-2012 The Body Unbound: Rubin Museum of Art, New York
- 2012 F.N. Souza: Landscapes Head and Nudes: Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2012 Migrations Journey into British Art: Tate Britain London
- 2012 Through the Ages: South Asian Sculpture and Painting from Antiquity to Modernism: Aicon Gallery, New York

SOLO

- 1951 Indian Embassy, London
- 1954 Gallery Creuze, London
- 1954 Institute of Contemporary Arts, London
- 1955 Gallery One, London.

- 1957 Gallery One, London
- 1960 Gallery One, London 1959 Gallery One, London
- 1961 Gallery One, London
- 1962 North Audley Street in London.
- 1966 Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 1968 London Arts Gallery in Detroit, USA.
- 1975 Arts 38, London.
- 1976 Arts 38, London.
- 1997 Julian Hartnolls Gallery, London
- 1997 Souza: A Retrospective: Julian Hartnolls Gallery, London
- 1998 Bose Pacia Modern New York
- 1999 Copeland Fine Art Gallery Columbus, Ohio, USA

GROUP

- 1954 Institute of Contemporary Arts, London
- 1954 Venice Biennale Italy
- 1956,57,59,60 Gallery One, London
- 1957 John Moore's Exhibition, Walker Art Gallery Liverpool
- 1958 Guggenheim Museum, USA 1958 Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
- 1961 Museum of Modern Art, Sao Paulo/Rio de Janeiro
- 1964 1962 Commonwealth Exhibition, Commonwealth Institute, London
- 1964 Exhibition of Drawings: Delacroix to Souza, Grosvenor Gallery,
- 1965 Art Now in India, Arts Council of Great Britain, London
- 1967 Guggenheim Foundation USA
- 1968 Tate Gallery, London
- 1972 Minneapolis International Art Festival, USA
- 1977 Commonwealth Artists of Fame, London
- 1982 Contemporary Indian Art, Royal Academy, London
- 1982 India: Myth and Reality, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, UK
- 1982 Modern Indian Paintings, Hirschorn Museum & Sculpture Garden Washington D.C.
- 1987 Coups de Coeur, Halles de L'Ile, Geneva

- 1989 The Other Story: Hayward Gallery, London

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

- 1946 Founded Bombay Progressive Artists' Group
- 1957 John Moores Prize, Liverpool
- 1959 Published 'Words and Lines', his autobiography
- 1960 Italian Government Scholarship (through the British Council) 1967 Guggenheim International Award, New York
- 1999-2000 Kalidas Samman

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi
- Baroda Museum, Baroda
- National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai
- CIMA - Centre International Modern Art, Calcutta
- Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi
- Tate, London, UK
- Glenbarra Museum, Himeji, Japan

ANNEXURE II

GOGI SAROJ PAL

Country: India

Birth: born in 1945 to Present, Neoli Uttar Pradesh,

Lived and Worked: Lived in New Delhi, India

Education: 1961-62, College of art, Banasthali Rajasthan

1962-67 Diploma in Painting, Government College of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow

1968-69 Postgraduate in Painting, college of art, New Delhi

Teaching Experience: 1970-72, 1976-77 Lecturer, Women's Polytechnic, New Delhi

1975-76 Lecturer, College of Art, New Delhi

1979-80, 1982-83 Lecturer, Art Department, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi

SOLO EXHIBITIONS IN INDIA

- 1969 Delhi Shilpa Chakra, New Delhi
- 1974 Triveni Gallery, New Delhi
- 1975 Black Partridge art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1979 Art Heritage Gallery, New Delhi
- 1981 Art Heritage Gallery, New Delhi
- 1982 Sarla Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1982 Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1982 Vithi Art Gallery, Baroda
- 1986 Art Heritage Gallery, New Delhi
- 1986 Gallery Chemould, Bombay
- 1987 Gallery Aurobindo, New Delhi
- 1988 *Kala Yatra*, Sista Art Gallery, Bangalore
- 1989 *Kala Yatra*, Sista Art Gallery, Bangalore
- 1989 *External Bird*, Artist's Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1990 Safdar Hashmi Memorial Exhibition, New Delhi
- 1990 Cymroza Art Gallery, Bombay

- 1990 Artist's Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1991 *Homecoming and A visit to the Valley of flowers*, Artist's Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1991 'Painted Pottery', Artist's Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1991 Artist's Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1992 Cymroza Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1992 *Kinnari*, Alliance Francaise, New Delhi
- 1992 *The Expressive Line*, Art Age, Calcutta\
- 1992 Sparrow, Bombay
- 1994 *Swayanbram*, Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi
- 1994 Artist's Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1995 Art Today, New Delhi
- 1997 *Indian Contemporary Art, Post-Independence*, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1997 *Women Artists*, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi
- 2000 *Being a Woman*, Jamaat Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 2001 *Embroidering Phulkari and Memories*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi and Garhi Artist's Studios, New Delhi
- 2002 *Embroidering Phulkari and Memories*, Jamaat Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 2002 Dhoomimal Art Centre, New Delhi
- 2002 Crimson Art Gallery, Bangalore
- 2003 *Mahasnan*, Pioneer Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2004 *Embroidering Phulkari and Memories*, Crimson Art Gallery, Bangalore
- 2004 Revisiting Amrita Sher-Gil, Crimson Art Gallery, Bangalore
- 2005 *Embroidering Phulkari and Memories*, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 2007 *Embroidering Phulkari and Memories*, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 2010 *Kinnari & Kinnari Mantras*, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai

GROUP EXHIBITION

- 1965-68 Uttar Pradesh Lalit Kala Akademi, Lucknow
- 1967 *Women Artists Exhibition*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
- 1967 National Exhibition, Arts and Crafts Society, Calcutta
- 1968 Delhi Shilpi Chakra, New Delhi

- 1971 UN Council of Indian Youth, New Delhi
- 1975 International Women's Exhibition, New Delhi
- 1976-90 Annual National Exhibition, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
- 1978 Garhi Artist's Studios, New Delhi
- 1979 Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
- 1981-84 Karnataka Akademi of Arts, Bangalore
- 1982 *Five Women Painters*, shridharani gallery, New Delhi
- 1982: 5th Triennale, India - participated by contributing an "Installation".
- 1983 *Karu Group*, Garhi Artist's Studios, New Delhi
- 1984 Cymroza Art Gallery, Bombay.
- 1984 Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1984 Jehangir, Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1986 Paintings by contemporary Indian Women Artists, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi
- 1987 Sculptures by contemporary Indian Women Sculptors, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.
- 1987 Triveni Art Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1989 Group Show at Village Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1989 *Contemporary Artists from Delhi*, Sakshi Gallery, Madras.
- 1990 Conceptual Self-portraits, Artist Studio Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1990 Kala Yatra, Bangalore.
- 1990 Group Show of self-portraits, Chemould Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1990 SAHMAT, New Delhi
- 1990 L.T.G. Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1990 National Award-winning works, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
- 1990: A group exhibition on the occasion of the visit of Nelson Mandela at the Little Theatre Group Art Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1990: A group show along with Ved Nayar at the Artist Studio Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1991 *Year of Girl Child*, Welcomgroup Maurya Sheraton Hotel, New Delhi.
- 1991 Group Show of Ceramics, Artist's Studio Gallery, with the color of the Earth, British Council, New Delhi.

- 1991 Group Show organized by HelpAge India and Aspery, London at Jehangir Art gallery, Mumbai
- 1992 Sparrow, Bombay
- 1992 *The Expressive Line*, Art Age, Calcutta
- 1993 *Women Artists*, L.T.G. Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1993 *More Than a Decade Age, The Artist's Choice*, Display Gallery, New Delhi
- 1993 *Wounds*, Organized by the center for international modern Art Kolkata at National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi
- 1993 *Sihanvlokam - Red Saryu has Eyes*- installation in 8th Triennale - India.
- 1993 Exhibition for Maharashtra Earthquake Relief, organized by the Faculty of Art, Baroda.
- 1993 Child Relief and You (CRY) Welcomgroup Maurya Sheraton, New Delhi.
- 1994: *The Blind Eye*, paintings in weaving - participated in a Group Show at L.T.G. Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1994 *The Blind Eye'*, Centre of International Modern art (CIMA), Calcutta
- 1994: *Paintings in Weaving*, a group show at Artist Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1995: *People for Animals* at Taj Palace, New Delhi
- 1995 Bombay' organized by R.P.G., Mumbai
- 1997: '50 years of Indian Independence' _a group show organized by Vadhera Art Gallery at the National Gallery of Modern Art
- 1997 *Self and the World* exhibition of Indian Women Artists organized by Gallery Espace at the National Gallery of Modern Art
- 1997 *Post - Independence Art Trends '* organized by Lalit Kala Academy.
- 1997: *The Looking Glass -Self'*_a group show at Lakeeren Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1998: *Unmasking* Group shows conceptual self - portraits organized by Om Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1998 *Works on Paper*, Gallery Escape, New Delhi
- 1999 *The Creative Process*, Guild Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1999 *Extending Parameters*, Indian Printmakers Guile, New Delhi
- 1999 Water, Art Indus, New Delhi

SOLO EXHIBITIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

- 1986 Montreal, Canada

- 1988 Gallery Rohtas, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
- 1990 Westmount Public Library, Westmount, Canada
- 1996 *Icons of Womanhood*, ARKS Gallery, London
- 2001 *Mother icon – Photographs of Ma Hidamba*, FIA, Amsterdam
- 2004 *All These Flower Are for You*, London Art Gallery, London

GROUP EXHIBITION IN OTHER COUNTRIES

- 1980 *Six Women Painters*, Indus Gallery, Karachi
- 1980 Third World Print Biennial, London, and Baghdad
- 1981-83 14th & 15th Print Biennial, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia
- 1982 Bedford Print Biennial, UK
- 1982 International Print Biennial, Cuba
- 1984 International Print Biennial, Trino, Rome.
- 1985 International Painting Festival, Cogne-su-Mer, France.
- 1986 Indian Graphic Print Exhibition in Finland, Germany & Yugoslavia.
- 1986 Inter-Asian Biennale, Ankara
- 1986 Second International Biennial, Cuba
- 1986-92: International Biennial, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1987 Indian Art Exhibition, Japan & South Korea
- 1987 International Biennial of Plastic Art, Algiers
- 1987-88 '*Printmaking in India*' a Travelling Exhibition in the U.S.A.
- 1988 *Paintings of Indian Women Artists*, India Festival in USSR, Moscow
- 1988 *Work on Paper*, Graphic Prints by Indian Artists, Frankfurt, Germany.
- 1989 Contemporary Paintings, from India, organized by 'Art Wave, New York
- 1991 Group Show Kunsthalle Maine, Maine, Germany
- 1991 Indian Artists, Lotus Gallery, Amsterdam
- 1991 *Two Indian Women Artists*, School's Art Gallery, Amsterdam.
- 1992 Exhibition of Paintings, Bilder Aus Indien, Hamburg, Germany
- 1992 *To Encounter Others*, International exhibition of contemporary art Kassel/Hann Mundane, Germany

- 1993 *A Critical Difference: Contemporary Indian Art* Charles Wallace Art Trust and British Council.
- 1993 Contemporary Indian Art, Yokohama, Japan.
- 1994 Liverpool Festival, U.K.
- 1995-96 *Inside Out*, an exhibition of Indian Women Artists at Middleborough, U.K. Funded by Charles Wallace Art Trust
- 1996 *Icons of Womanhood*, gouache' paintings at ARKS Gallery, London
- 1997 *Kali*, Tropical Museum, Amsterdam
- 1997: ' *Women Artists of India* Celebration of Indian Independence ' at the Mills College Art Gallery, Oakland, USA.
- 1997 Kalart Gallery, San Francisco, USA
- 1998 Holland Art Gallery & Gallery Foundation for Indian Artists, Amsterdam
- 1999 *Kunst Rai*, International Art Fair, Amsterdam

ARTISTS' WORKSHOPS & CAMPS

- 1977 Graphic Prints Workshop, Lalit Kala Academy's Garhi Studios, and New Delhi.
- 1978 Artists' Camp organized by Punjab University Museum at Kasauli.
- 1979 Graphic Prints Workshop, organized by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.
- 1981 Graphic Prints Workshop, Santiniketan
- 1981 Graphics (woodcut) workshop, Chandigarh _ Conducted by Carol Summers.
- 1983 Graphic Prints Workshop, Faculty of Art, Baroda University
- 1985 Graphic Workshop, Lalit Kala Academy, Garhi Studios _ Conducted by Krishna Reddy.
- 1989 Artists' Camp, Srinagar organized by N.Z.C.C
- 1990 Artists' Camp, Karna Lake organized by Sahitya Kala Parishad
- 1995 International installation Workshop on Art and Ecology organized by Max Muller Bhawan, New Delhi
- 1998 Artist's camp organized by Alembic Chemicals, Vadodara
- 1998 Uttarayan, Sculptors Camp, Vadodara.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1969: Oil Paintings at Delhi Silpi Chakra, New Delhi

- 1972: Water Colours at Triveni Gallery, New Delhi
- 1975: Water Colours at Black Partridge Art Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1979: Graphic Prints at Art Heritage Gallery, New Delhi
- 1981: Oil Paintings at Art Heritage Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1982: Oil Paintings at Sarla Art Gallery, Madras
- 1982: Paintings & Graphic Prints at Vithi Art Gallery, Baroda
- 1982: Oil Paintings, Ceramics & Graphic Prints at Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1986: Oil Paintings at Art Heritage, New Delhi
- 1986: Graphic Prints, Montreal, Canada
- 1986: Paintings at Chemould Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1987: Gouache' Paintings, Gallery Aurobindo, New Delhi
- 1988: Oil Paintings at Kala Yatra, Sista Art Gallery, Bangalore.
- 1988: Acrylic and Gouache' Paintings at Gallery 'Rohtas', Rawalpindi, Pakistan
- 1989: Gouache' Paintings, Kala Yatra; Sista Art Gallery, Bangalore
- 1989: Gouache' Paintings of the series, Eternal Bird, Artist Studio Gallery, New Delhi.
- 1990: Paintings and Prints, Westmount Public Library, Westmount, Canada
- 1990: Gouache' and Acrylic Paintings at Cymroza Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1990: Watercolour Paintings (1972-73) as a support activity to Safdar Hashmi Memorial Festival at the Artist Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1991: Gouache and Acrylic paintings from the series, "Home Coming" and "A Visit to the Valley of Flowers " at the Artist Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1991: Painted Pottery and Bonsai Pots at the Artist's Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1991: Miniature format paintings to form part of the "Installation " later shown in Germany & U.K. in 1992 at the Artist Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1992: Miniature format paintings to form part of Installation, later shown in Germany & U.K., in 1992 at the Cymroza Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1992: 'Kinnari', gouache' paintings at Alliance Francaise, New Delhi
- 1993: Exhibition of Paintings organized by Anwar Siddiqui in London
- 1994: Miniature Format Paintings at the Artist Studio Gallery, New Delhi
- 1994: Display of the Installation, "Swayambram" at the Max Mueller Bhawan, New Delhi

- 1995: Exposition of recent paintings and two Installations at the 'Art Today', art gallery, New Delhi.

RECENT SHOWS

- All these flowers are for you, London Art Gallery, London and Mumbai in 2004 and 2005 respectively
- Revisiting Amrita Shergil, Bangalore in 2004
- Embroidering Phulkari's & Memories, Mumbai in 2002
- Mother Icon, Photographs of Ma Hidamba at Kulu Dassehra and the paintings inspired by this experience at FIA, Amsterdam in 2001
- Icons of Womanhood, gouache, London in 1996
- Swayambram, installation at Max Mueller Bhawan, New Delhi in 1994 and so on. Her group participations include: Frame Figure Field: 20th Century Modern and
- Contemporary Indian Art, New Delhi in 2008
- Tiger by the Tail, Women's Studies Research Centre, Brandeis University in 2007

AWARDS

- 1978-79-81 Group "8" Medals at All India Graphic- Prints Exhibition, Chandigarh & New Delhi
- 1980 Sanskrit Award, Delhi.
- 1981-82 Fellowship of Lalit Kala Academy, Garhi Artists' Studios, New Delhi.
- 1986-88 Fellowship, Department of Culture, New Delhi.
- 1987 Jury's Commendation Certificate in the First International Biennial of Plastic Arts in Algeria.
- 1990 National Award, Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi
- 1995 12th Cleveland international Drawing Biennial, Middleborough, U.K.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- i) Mandakini, Gupta, I., (2013), “**Implication of the Elephant in Indian Art to Mughal Art and Architecture**,” *Shodhak- a Journal of Historical Research*”, Vol-43, pp. 226-241 (ISSN: 0302-9832).
<http://ichr.ac.in/BI.doc>
- ii) Mandakini, Gupta, I., (2014), ‘**Women Empowerment through Aipan Paintings in Utrakhand**’, *Shodhak Journal*, Vol-44, pp 134-146 (ISSN: 0302-9832).
<http://www.worldcat.org/title/shodhak/oclc/1790577>
- iii) Mandakini, Gupta, I. & Jha P., (2015) "**An Encounter with Gogi Saroj Pal: A Feministic Quest**" *Art & Deal*, Vol-11, No-52, Issue-85, Vol 11, October. (Magazine)
<http://artanddeal.in/cms/?p=4197>
- iv) Mandakini, Gupta, I. & Jha P., (2016) "**Revisiting the art of F. N. Souza through some Dadaistic perspectives in the Portrayal of Woman**" *Art & Deal*, Vol-12, No-57, Issue-90, March. (Magazine)
<http://artanddeal.in/cms/?p=4540>
- v) Mandakini, Gupta, I. & Jha P., (2016) "**Gender and Space in the Paintings of Raja Ravi Varma and Amrita Sher-Gil**", ‘Understanding Built Environment: Discussion of Architectural Advances and Sustainable Urban Regeneration’, Transactions in Civil and Environmental Engineering published by Springer vol-1, 2016 (ISBN: 978-981-10-2138-1).
https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-10-2138-1_20
- vi) Sharma M., Gupta I. & Jha P., (2016) "**From Caves to Miniatures: Portrayal of Woman in Early Indian Paintings**", *Chitrolekha International Magazine on Art and Design*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp.22-42 (ISSN: 2231-4822).
<http://chitrolekha.com/v6n1/>
- vii) Sharma M., Gupta, I. & Jha P., (2016) “**Significance of Female Encounters in the Paintings of F. N. Souza**”, *Bharatiya Prajna: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Indian Studies*, Vol-1, No-1, pp. 63-74, Inaugural Issue (ISSN: 2456-1347).
<http://www.indianstudies.net/v1n1/>

viii) Sharma M., Gupta, I. & Jha P., (2016) “**Amrita Sher-Gil's Paintings: A Cultural Evaluation**”, “THAAP Journal 2016: People's History of Pakistan” Journal, pp. 254-265. (ISBN: 978-969-9359-12-5).<http://www.thaap.pk/assets/thaap-journal-2016.pdf>