



Impact of Globalization on Tribal Art and Artists of Gujarat

KEYWORDS

Tribal Art, Artists, Culture, Globalization, Pithora Art, Rathwas

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ABSTRACT *This paper aims at studying the problems and challenges faced by the tribal art and the artists of Gujarat in the era of globalization. The main focus is on the traditional art of 'Rathwa' tribes from Gujarat namely - the Pithora artwork. The study is based on secondary sources of data and is analyzed using Orientalism perspective.*

The data clearly shows that the sustenance of the art and artists has become the biggest challenge in contemporary times. New changes have been noticed in the lifestyle; consumption patterns; production, circulation and usages of cultural objects; cultural ecology; habitat and religious practices etc. These changes have altered the traditional modes of cultural expressions, usages of languages and communication at local, regional and national level. The march of civilization, for the very reason of globalization, has a paralyzing effect on tribal people and their art.

INTRODUCTION

Culture represents the arts and intellectual achievements of an individual and community as a whole. It gets its meaning from an individual and community's relationship with that of the others, thus forming a subjective identity. Culture, therefore, engages itself in lot of processes of social change in many forms and at various levels. The transition from the tribal to peasant folk and the contemporary techno-industrial culture reflects one of the major changes. In India, the affirmation of this paradigm in the studies of culture has come from the observational studies of the communities, the explorations of their 'oral' and textual traditions and the studies of the local dynamics of culture and society.

This paper deals with the problems faced by the tribal artists of Gujarat in the era of globalization. The major focus is on the traditional art of Rathwa tribes from Gujarat namely - the Pithora artwork and the challenges faced by the folk art today.

"A tribe is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language, observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation, and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and maturity of obligation" (Majumdar, 1937).

According to Robertson "Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole". Friedman commented that the idea that a social transformation upsets old hierarchies would hearten enthusiasts who think globalization creates a 'flat' world, in which more people have equal access to more opportunities (Lechner, 2009). According to these two definitions to put globalization in simple words, it is a global phenomenon where "new people" settle in "old places", they transform those places and themselves as well, thus unsettling the identities of both.

This global phenomenon has gradually affected the tribal art of Rathwas - Pithora paintings, which often adorns the

walls of the village homes. The art is now dying, as there are not many from the present generation who think of it as lucrative to carry on the legacy. Local leaders say the reason is that each painting takes several weeks to complete and has no takers in this modernized and globalized world. The cost of running family is high and youths are getting attracted towards other jobs that give them better returns. Less than a hundred artists practicing the art are now present in the region. The museum in Chhota Udepur houses several ancient and rare tribal artifacts. Being in the minority and economically vulnerable, these communities and individuals suffer loss of their cultural identity in the contemporary world.

The main objectives of this study are – to know the extent to which the tribal art and the artists are suffering; to analyze the living conditions of the artists; to find out which social segment of the tribe market their artwork; to know how man-art relationship is affected by globalization; and to assess the impact of globalization on Pithora art and the artists.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The Rathwas mainly reside in the Panchmahal District of Gujarat state and they are highly cultured beings. Unconditionally they valued and worshiped their artwork - Pithora paintings. The whole community was engaged in this artwork in order paint their respective houses. The Pithora artwork was previously limited to their house walls and family members. Pithora art is a result of teamwork and not an individual's work. The family sits together on various occasions to work on one wall of the house. This ties family together and the family bonds grow stronger and healthier. Earlier, the artists used natural colours for their paintings. Traditionally they used these paintings for cultural and religious purposes. This artwork was never made for commercial purposes or for their sustenance (Tadvi and Tadvi, 1979).

Today this artwork has lost its unconditional value. It is valued only conditionally if it gets good amount of returns. It is no more practiced by the whole community. Presently the numbers of artists are reduced to a negligible figure

i.e. less than one hundred. A visit to their houses in Tejgadh, Chhota Udepur clearly indicated that these paintings are no more used to decorate their house walls or for religious purposes. Rathwas, as a community, are no more practicing it as a family activity. It has almost become an individual activity only to those who are using it for some financial benefits. As their major occupation is agriculture, all the members of the family hardly get time to spend some time together, and globalization is stealing that away from the primitives. Presently they are using acrylic and fabric colours for paintings instead of natural colours. This hampers the originality and charm of their art.

The Multinational Companies buy a raw product to the tribal artist to get it painted. The best example is that of a 'tea-coaster', they buy a tea-coaster and ask the artist to paint it in a traditional fashion. They buy the raw coaster at 15 rupees, pay 10 per coaster to the artist and in the market they sell this ready coaster at 50 rupees. Therefore, it is quite evident from the example how an artist is exploited. He does all the work and does not even get 25% of the total profit (Tribal Art of Chhota Udepur, The Indian Express, August 30, 2013). Now their art is commercialized. Big agencies and Multinational Companies are purchasing their artworks at a very meager amount. The artists sell their work at a very negligible rate to these MNCs while these companies sell their paintings at booming price in the market. This is how they are exploited by the 'giants'/'haves'.

The tribal artists are easily manipulated for money because they are illiterate, ignorant and ill-informed. They do anything for money. They even sell their self and their identity passively. The art that they and their ancestors carried forward since ages is on the verge of dying. In terms of creativity and uniqueness, the graph is anyway rising at a diminishing rate. The art that was their moral and psychological strength has become an economic weapon steadily and the place where economy/money raises, the question of conflict and stress is bound to come. In a way, the strength has become their weakness. They now find it difficult in finding their self in their art. This is the problem of identity, and this is what globalization does to an individual artist.

Less than hundred artists are left to continue their traditional *Pithora* artwork. The youth today is attracted towards other jobs which give them more returns. As the standard of living is increasing, they have started working outside their hometowns. The rural-urban gap is also disturbing which in a way affects the country's economy as a whole. Earlier, tribal artist used to find himself in his art but, unfortunately, after globalization, he has lost himself. Globalization has radically affected the man-art relationship.

Oriental Reality and Occidental Discourses

The orthodox theories of globalization, as they had been developed in the West, have been challenged by the cultural and ecological critiques (MacKenzie, 2012). Some theorists plead for their abandonment and for some others the Western industrialized countries still serve as the model for the rest of the world. The social changes in the local and the regional cultures now need to be addressed by locating them in the global-national-regional-local continuum and by looking at the ideological components of programmes and actions towards directed/ desired changes. Plea for indigenization of social scientific programmes was a long-standing attempt at the backdrop of hegemon-

ic dominance of Occidental discourses in making sense of transforming oriental socio-cultural reality.

The scope of trade and market, which is accelerated by the process of globalization, poses formidable cultural problems in both the developed and developing societies. In India, which traditionally had quite a developed pre-industrial base of trade and market, the impact of changing role of these institutions has been gradual. The market and trade relations continue to be located in local cultures. The full momentum of the globalization of the economy started from 1990s onwards, but many checks and balances continue to persist. Nevertheless, this historical change in policy has impacts on local cultures deeply in addition to having an overall cultural impact on the society. The new changes have been noticed in the lifestyle, consumption patterns, production of cultural objects and their circulation and usages, in the cultural ecology and habitat and religious practices, etc. These changes have altered the traditional modes of cultural expressions, usages of languages and communication of media at local, regional and national level.

Aesthetic theories say that the form of art depends on the level of social development. The reason for this is quite straight - art tries to reorganize the reality in such a way that it makes it evident to its viewers the possibilities that lie in the world to overcome its various contradictions. Art for all times has sustained its fundamental feature- whether it is *Pithora* art of the primitives or the highly developed murals of Mughal miniatures, art always tries to struggle for a better world by working from within its profane resources in search of the sublime.

CONCLUSIONS

In a nutshell to study tribal art in modern India is a melancholy task. The generation from 1990s has gradually observed and watched the vitality of tribal art fading from the fine sensitive face. The march of civilization, for the very reason of globalization, has a paralyzing effect on tribal people and their art. For the tribesmen, whose taste in his own sphere is so fine and true, both for design and for colour, loses all sense of it when face to face with what he so wrongly conceives to be a higher type of culture.

Can tribal art be saved? Yes, but much will depend on the policy of Government and educationalists to preserve the primitive art. One of the good examples of tribal art preservation is that from West Africa. The Achimota College has had a singular success in reviving Benin art, particularly in the sphere of brass casting. If we regard the tribesmen of India with respect, we shall help them to preserve their self-respect and to keep their pride in their traditions. However, the most potent vivifying force in the world is love and if only civilized and educated people would love our tribesmen; love them, that affection would have a magical effect, both on their life and welfare plus on their art.

Globalization is a process that ushers in many technological, economic, ecological and social changes in society, which affects the traditional cultural styles, forms and ideologies. The traditional artisans and artists do not welcome globalization because they find this process discouraging. They link it to the international market where their ethnic styles, forms and materials are manipulated and imitated as well as there is price discrimination wherein the Multinational companies buy the products from the simpler societies at a very meager amount and then sell those products

in the market at booming price. In a way, globalization hampers their sense of cultural identity leading to its erosion. It has a disruptive influence upon the local culture.

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