

Between the Object and Subject : F.N. Souza and Gogi Saroj Pal

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ABSTRACT

Female is a popular theme in art, and there is no shortage of references to it. From the very beginning of painting in every country on earth, it largely remained an aesthetically pleasant and eroticized object. These political representations can be seen through the body's projection, where they are frequently shown in insignificant roles such as waiting for their beloved, engaging in sensual exhibition, or participating in idealised representation in accordance with society norms. . Many art critics have examined these types of gender politics in paintings. There are many aspects that are equipped to portray women as something to be presented in this process of investigation, thus the theme of representation is not simply noticed to distinguish such political issues. Their own individuality had mostly vanished, and via the act of painting, they were being presented to the audience as an object.

Keywords: Subject Vs Object : A Critical Examination

INTRODUCTION

SUBJECT VS OBJECT: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

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. The women is frequently made to appease the male gaze or to symbolise the courage and glory of men in the oldest Indian art (Mode, 1970). 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 appraise 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, 1998**). 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. Souza used to frequent these locations and revealed this to Vinod Bhardwaj during their talk, so he might find these women to be as fitting as his subject (as told to the author by Bhardwaj). Additionally, Souza once stated that he sometimes feels as though his treatment of women is inappropriate because his art is anti-feminist (as told by Bhardwaj to the author). His native mindset was totally responsible for the exaggerated depiction of female genitalia in his paintings (Bhardwaj, 2009).

Coming to Gogi Saroj Pal, it is observed 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.

Conclusion

As a result of this study, it is clear that the gender of the painters influences how women are portrayed in art. The term "gender" derives from societal distinctions that are not biological in origin but rather are influenced by certain cultural and traditional beliefs. These ideals have been derived through a series of activities, wherein the discourse that is used to perform with masculine and feminine terminology is specific. This gendered goal has been brought up as a political identity agenda with regard to femininity. Pal performs a series on a certain topic in which female shapes are

animated by Pal's imagination. The work of Pal combines fantasy and the reality of women's lives. She draws her inspiration from ancient mythology, Hindu scriptures, epics, and other literary and artistic works. She has a deep knowledge of ancient and religious books and is well-versed in the majority of the roles played by women, including those of goddesses, celestial beings, queens, princesses, and many more. Women are portrayed in quite different ways than they actually are in society. In Indian culture and society, women are viewed as objects to be shown, used for housework, and to support their families. For Souza, the female appears to be nothing more than a tool for fueling male desire. He might feel envious of the woman, thus he may think of her as wicked, full of evil, having sexual desire, hideous, and so on. When his sister was adored by his mother and everyone else more than he was as a child, this envy started. Later, when his mother had him convert to Christianity, this envy grew worse. Because of his rebellious character, he became inflexible and began to imagine his own world. In this universe, women have taken on the role of the principal vamp, serving exclusively to arouse sexual desire. She is evil and lustful rather than exquisite or attractive.

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