

Modern-day Religious and Spiritualism Analysis of Hajra Ahmed's Distinctive Religious Art on the Essence of Tariqat.

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Abstract

Religious art or sacred art is artistic imagery using religious inspiration and motifs and is often intended to uplift the mind to the spiritual. Sacred art involves the ritual and cultic practices and practical and operative aspects of the path of the spiritual realization within the artist's religious tradition. A religious image, sometimes called a votive image, is a work of visual art that is representational and has a religious purpose, subject, or connection. All major historical religions have made some use of religious images, although their use is strictly controlled and often controversial in many religions. *Hajra Ahmed's* as a young artist of the present era engendering a unorthodox contribution towards contemporary art of Pakistan and out of the mundane she has done tremendous religious art with aura of religious places of Pakistan. She has captured the passing moment and grasped the essence of the moment transpiring on the religious spot just like a ceremony of a memory through which an observer can understand the same feel which has been captured by the artist. In her paintings she strives to depict the exact situation by the great combo of naturalism and realism. Fresh colors have been used to enhance the personification of *tariqat*. Apart from the moment she also painted the shrines architecture in an actual manner which represent a symbolism of Islamic art and spiritualism.

Keywords: Religious art, spiritualism, naturalistic approach, architectural Actuality, colors.

Introduction

1.1. Spiritualism in Islam

Without the concept of spirituality it's impossible to claim the understanding of Hajra's work because it's important to understand the core of concern which she to illustrate in her work. The practical aspect of Islamic faith or Islamic fundamentals; which is associated with the outward organs of the body. This includes acts of worship, dealings with people, individual and collective social responsibilities, moral teachings, and all other religious matters that we are commanded to practice. In the religious term, Islamic scholars call it "*Shariat*". Islam has four steps viz. *Shariat*, *Tareeqat*, *Haqeeqat* and finally *Ma'rifat*. *Shariat* is the first step. Only by devoutly following *Shariat* can one advance further. *Tareeqat* is the path towards realization. To walk this path we need a guide.

Haqeeqat is the process of realization and *Ma'rifat* is the actual realization of God.¹

This is the doctrinal aspect of the Islamic faith or Islamic fundamentals; that is related with the heart. These core fundamentals in which a Muslim has to believe from the bottom of the heart include believing in Allah, believing in His angels, His prophets, His divine books, the Judgment day and the divine destiny. How each art form in the Islamic tradition is based upon a science of nature concerned, not with the outer appearance of things, but with their inner reality. Ranging across calligraphy, painting, architecture, literature, music, and the plastic arts, religious art penetrates to the inner dimension of Islam and shows the role art plays in the life of individual Muslims and the community as a whole the role of inspiring the remembrance and contemplation of God.

Method and Procedure

Descriptive research is a research method that involves observing and describing behavior, attitudes, or characteristics of a sample or population. The descriptive way of research has used in this research paper. The aim of descriptive research is to provide a detailed and accurate picture of a phenomenon, without making any causal claims or testing hypotheses. The first step in conducting descriptive research is to clearly define the research question or problem. This involves identifying the variables of interest and the population or sample to be studied. Once the research question is defined, the researcher needs to design the study. This involves selecting an appropriate research design, such as a survey, observational study, or case study. The researcher also needs to decide on the sampling method and data collection tools, such as questionnaires, interviews, or observation forms. The final step in descriptive research is to interpret the findings. This involves making sense of the data and drawing conclusions about the phenomenon being studied.

Discussion

Realistic painting involves using techniques that aim to accurately represent the visual appearance of objects, people, or scenes. To create a realistic painting, an artist may use a range of techniques. The techniques used in realistic painting require skill, patience, and a keen eye for detail. The result, however, can be a stunningly lifelike representation of the subject that captures its unique beauty and essence. And if we talk about naturalism and its etymology we came to know that the term naturalism (in art and literature) is a style and theory of representation based on the accurate depiction of detailⁱⁱ and in a philosophical viewpoint according to which everything arises from natural properties and causes, and supernatural or spiritual explanations are excluded or discounted.ⁱⁱⁱ

"Naturalism" is a term with a vexed and complex history in art criticism. It has been used since the 17th century to refer to any artwork which attempts to render the reality of its subject-matter without concern for the constraints of convention, or for notions of the "beautiful"^{iv}

The analysis on Hajra Ahmed's work will define expression & cerebation process and the theory abaft the painting the techniques utilized by her to portray essence of spirituality which she deeply feels in her work. Hajra as contemporary artist endeavors the incipient dimension in spirituality which se designated the word tareeqat. Through which she painted the tiles, jaali, and charity boxes placed on shrines and the decorative floral motives on the ingresses of grave, and prevalent sitting area in which from first to last there's is feel of connection towards Almighty. Apart from that the tile she painted and the doorway areas she works on the inscription which is interspersed with vegetal adornment consisting of intertwining spiraling stems, with blossoms and leaves. The tiles have a characteristic simplicity, and are of fine coloring and very detailed workmanship. The tiles represent an early example of Ottoman

ceramics, used generally in architecture during the period, and more categorically in the Dome of the Rock.

The usage of color is somehow strong and bright, stimulating & pure and the tone mostly used in her paintings is flat, uniform, unvarying, and smooth, plain. One can see the best formalization in the paintings of Hajra



Figure i Muraqba

Will start analyzing intrinsically as well as extrinsically with the painting which is the earliest work of artist .the composition of this painting is vertical which has its own meaning & explore the moment of “*muraqba*” one can see the females sitting around the holy book shelf the colors are quite natural, clear, compatible and seems harmonious but the figures wearing black and overlapping perspective view is creating the dominancy of spiritual silence. Through this painting one can create numerous meanings. The texture of the painting is flat, polished; smooth especially the smoothness of the wooden book shelf has its own orderly look. most prominent and the delicate part of this painting is the oriental rug it look so beautiful and exotic .which is also known as oriental rugs. The emphasis on the oriental rugs shows that carpet weaving is an important tradition in Islamic culture. Carpets are very popular among Islamic countries and are considered objects of everyday life, regarded with both esteem and admiration. Discussion about the oriental rug we came to the core factor that In Islam, rugs are used for prayer to separate the worshiper from the ground. Prayer rugs have a specific design, similar to a *mihrab*, the element of the mosque indicating the direction towards Mecca. Carpets are also used as decorative flooring inside the mosques. Furthermore, Islam has made carpets a cherished object. They are mentioned several times in the Quran as a furniture element of Paradise and as part of the wellness’s promised to Islamic believers for when they go to heavens. ^v In short the mood of the paintings seems so calm and peaceful.

Lighting in the painting is top lit .its intensity is quiet smooth creates mood of calmness and stillness, and the light source is not natural its clearly showing the ambiance of or artificial light which is minimal, and soft because of precise mark making ,Hajra paintings seems so refined, regular, straight, systematic.



Figure tariqat i

Hajra’s Ahmed religious work has immense structure of creativity. And with mixture of realistic approach she aimed to focus on perspective and vertical composition. With the blend of bright contrast colors she made the scene more captivate and eye-catching. The attractive colors of holy chādur making the environment more pious and truthful. In this painting she has create the focal point which is the calligraphy on the holy chādur depicting another major aspect of religious art famously known as calligraphy. It is also considered as important art domain of Islamic art. A sacred art. **Muslims** believe the Quran is the word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.



Figure iii tariqat

It is the earliest known book written in Arabic and played a key role in the standardization of the Arabic language.^{vi} It's often hard or impossible to see texture in a photo of a painting, as doesn't show unless there's light shining in from the side that catches the ridges and casts small shadows but if keenly observe the paintings the strokes are flat and smooth creating a photographic image. Because all the brush marks are carefully eliminated by the artist but some brush marks seems visible.

To bring the variation in one theme, can only be done with creative mind, Hajra finds too many elements among spirituality within the series of *tareeqat* came to see the same vertical composition of with detailed study angle and the geometric designs of jaali as well. She seems so keen about perspective and she treats it as a first priority of painting. main part of the painting is “jail” and its angle .

hough *jali* (from Sanskrit ‘*Jala*’ and ‘*Jalaka*’) has been described in ancient Indian architectural texts, it owes its growth and development, to this magnificent scale and stature, to the Mughals and it belongs to the 16th and 17th century stone-art of India. It is an essential element of Mughal Architecture.^{vii} The Mughals have mostly used geometrical *jalis*, both with straight and curved lines. Mughal artist’s ingenuity knew no bounds and the number of Mughal *jalis* is legion and variety unlimited. They have also used floral, arabesque and stylized designs.

These designs have separate sense of spirituality and considered as sacred. The feel of marble stone without any doubt can be experienced through this painting she has blended the white and grey so well and make the color as beautiful as it is which creates mood of painting so natural, just like having

indirect light on it there is also a sense of depth in it because of jail work the dark behind the jail creates the natural sense of depth and space. The energy of this painting provoking the spiritual thoughts and respect factor which connects an individual towards sanity and purity. The charity box placed near jail been created with wholeheartedly if we observe the dropping mirror image on the right side of box came to know that it's a clear cut reflection of jali which give you an idea about the metal box of charity . By rediscovering the root of art in the Islamic tradition Hajra Ahmed opens doors to new dimensions of religious art which have seemingly been hidden. In so doing, she extends the significance of spirituality with blend of Islamic art beyond the Islamic belief system to touch the hearts and creative impulses of art lovers from all traditions.

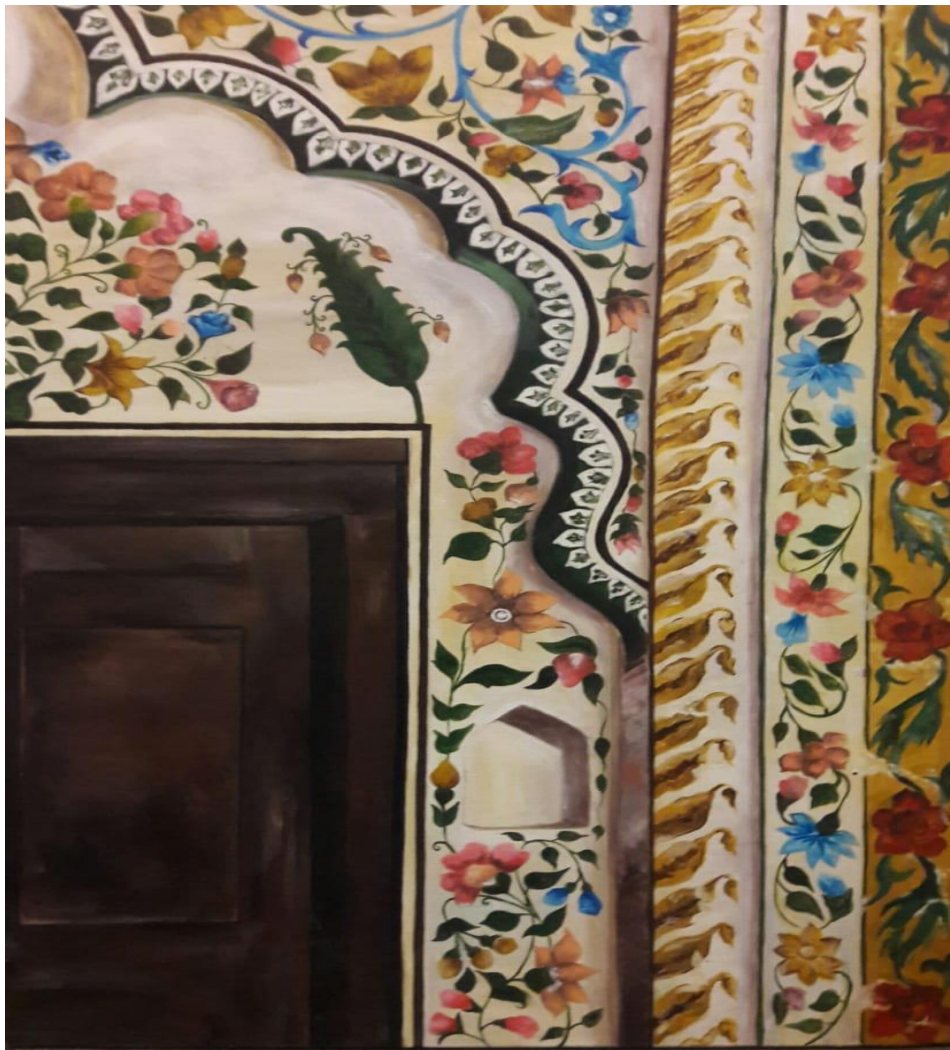


Figure iv miniature boti style

hajra's work is strong-mindedly stick on the essence of "*tariqat*" depicts factor of realism which generally implies a certain grittiness in choice of subject. This subject matter combined with the new naturalism of treatment caused shock among the predominantly upper and middle class audiences for art. We can also consider it to more define term more general stylistic term to forms of sharply focused almost photographic painting with idea of mixing some idealist colors and forms. Talking about the floral patterns on the entrance of shrine , came to know Plants appear in many different forms in Islamic art, ranging from single motifs to extended patterns,



Figure 1 (ceramic tile)

and natural depictions of flowers to plant forms which are complicated and heavily stylised. Artists drew inspiration from different types of plants and flowers at different times.

Patterns were created using a range of techniques, including repetition of a motif within various grids, reflective and rotational symmetry, and freehand design.^{viii} Many of the craftsmen who made the earliest Islamic monuments and artefacts were not yet Muslims themselves, but artisans working in the service of new Islamic rulers. These most primitive craftsmen continued to use techniques and semi-naturalistic motifs with which they were skillfully familiar.

Over time, Islamic art developed distinct characteristics of its own that distinguished it from the earlier artistic traditions. Detailed surface decoration on objects and buildings became popular. Plant-based design was one of the most common decorative elements, in addition to Arabic calligraphy, geometry, and to a lesser extent, figural images. The great geographical extent of the Islamic world led to a wide variety of design traditions. Latest work of Hajra Ahmed has the replication towards ceramic tiles of shrine which is assemblage different pieces of tiles and paint just like they founded on the spiritual places with the same form and condition. Symmetry is created in floral design through the repetition and mirroring of one or more basic design units. And the repetition of leaves the patterns themselves rarely has shading or background foreground distinction. However an artist creates interlocking or overlapping designs that create the illusion of depth and produce an aesthetically pleasing and visually playful composition. No directional light source can be seen in this art work.

Conclusion

Realistic painting is a style of art that aims to accurately represent the visual appearance of objects, people, or scenes. Realistic painters strive to create an illusion of reality through their use of color, light, shadow, and perspective. All her work is realistic and as well mixture of her own thoughts & reminds the connection between ALLAH and human in a contemporary style. Blending of both religious and modern styles makes her out as a contemporary artist of Pakistan. Hajra Ahmed's work is represents the essence of *tariqat* captured the passing moment & The best usage of colors is somehow strong and bright, stimulating & pure and the in her paintings depicts her own creativity and the unique way of feeling the aura of holy place One can see the best formalization in the paintings of Hajra.

ⁱ http://www.islaam.org/tasawwuf/tasa_14.htm

ⁱⁱ <https://www.encyclopedia.com>.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed

^{iv} <https://www.theartstory.org/movement-naturalism.htm>

^v <https://study.com/academy/lesson/carpet-weaving-in-islamic-art-history>

^{vi} www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z89ycwx

^{vii} https://mughalarchitecture.com/?page_id=562

^{viii} <http://www.vam.ac.uk>