

Association of Religion and Indian Art: A Study

Dr. Kharita

Designation -TGT Drawing, Department -Directorate of Education

Abstract

Art is a way of expressing the beliefs, customs and values of religion. Religious art is a visual representation of religious ideas and their association to human beings. Through art, religious experience is expressed and spiritual or transcendental states can be reached. Art has an age-old relationship with myth, magic and religion, just as religious artworks capture our attention. These artifacts' mesmerize with their attractive appearance.

Artwork related to religion develops a better understanding with a deeper truth. India's tradition of diversity creates a deep association between art and religion. The cultural heritage of a country is a mirror of its religious beliefs, with which the artist gives shape to his artwork. In which religion and tradition are naturally reflected. Religion is an important element that deeply shapes cultural expression in Indian society. This paper explores the brief association between all art disciplines and religion in a manner of chronological study. Religion provides to the artist themes, symbols and narratives to express art. To understand the relationship between Indian art and religion, we have to go deep into the ancient civilizations like- Mourya, Gupta, and Cholas dynasty etc. These entire dynasties are deeply connected with religion, who promoted Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Indian art progressed inspired by these religions, for example Khajuraho, Konark, Varanasi etc. The influence of Buddhism is clearly visible in the caves of Ajanta and Ellora. In this way, we can see examples of Jainism in the Jain temples of Rajasthan and Gujarat. India's religious past has emerged very effectively in the context of art in the present times.

Keywords: religion, heritage, diversity, Indian art, relation, association.

Introduction:

An examination of the associations between Indian art and Indian religion may be of great help in elucidating the special characteristics of both. This association not found any kind of dispute. Early European scholarship on Indian art as well as religion assumed that traditional Indian art developed around religious institutions or religious practice. This has been deeply influenced by basic religious activities, and influenced by the basic categories of Indian art forms like- ritual, design and all the various categories of folk art relating to the employment of textiles and costumes, to the making of toys, constructions and ritual effigies, even the setting up of a small shrine. These are non professional arts practiced mostly by men and women in their homes. We are connected to the religion of India and find this helpful to get visual reference. Therefore it is almost always naturalistic of sorts through never badly naturalistic. Religion and art are inextricably intertwined in India, and artistic expressions serve as visible embodiments of spiritual beliefs and cultural values. From ancient cave paintings to modern

temple carvings, Indian art has continually reflected the country's diverse religious traditions, especially Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. This article traces the profound influence of these religions on various forms of Indian art, including architecture, sculpture, painting and literature.

Key Areas of Exploration:

- Chronological Overview:
- Hindu Art:
- Buddhist Art:
- Jain Art:
- Contemporary Indian Art:
- Religious Architecture:
- Sculpture and Painting:
- Literature and Performing Arts:
- Cultural Significance:

1. Chronological Overview:

Art and religion were closely intertwined in ancient India, with religious themes and iconography greatly influencing the creation of various art forms such as sculpture, painting and architecture. From the Indus Valley Civilization to the Gupta period, Buddhist, Hindu and Jain religious beliefs inspired intricate carvings, vibrant murals and grand temple structures.

Early Examples:

- **Indus Valley Civilization (3300-1300 BCE):** Sculptures akin to the "Dancing Girl" and the "Seated Man" make obvious early artistic expressions, often reflecting religious values and practices.
- **Buddhist Art (3rd century BCE onwards):** The Mauryan realm, under Ashoka, promoted Buddhism through pillars, sculptures, and monuments like the Sanchi Stupa. Buddhist art, mainly in Gandhara and Mathura, featured anthropomorphic depictions of Buddha, along with Jataka stories.
- **Hindu Art (Gupta Period):** The Gupta phase saw the classical expansion of Hindu art, with sculptures of deities like Vishnu and Shiva, and temple architecture akin to the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple.
- **Jain Art:** Over-elaborate sculptures, like the ones found in the Jain temples of Palitana, mirror the Jain emphasis on non-violence and empathy.

Visual Examples:

Sculpture:

- **Dancing Girl from Mohenjo-Daro:** A bronze sculpture showcasing the imaginative ability and possible religious implication of the Indus Valley Civilization.



Image :1 Dancing Girl



image: 2 Sanchi Stupa

Painting:

- **Ajanta and Ellora Murals:** Buddhist and Hindu murals depicting stories from the Buddha's life, Jataka tales, and Hindu deities and mythology.

Madhubani Paintings: customary paintings with religious themes, akin to those of deities and mythological characters.



Image:3 Madhubani Paintings



Image: 4 Warli Paintings:

- **Warli Paintings:** ethnic paintings depicting daily life, rituals, and deities, frequently featuring geometric patterns.

Architecture:

- **Sanchi Stupa:** A Buddhist monument showcasing the architectural style of the Mauryan period and promoting Buddhist teachings.
- **Kandariya Mahadeva Temple:** A grand example of Hindu temple architecture from the Chalukya period, reflecting religious beliefs and practices.

Other Examples:

- **Kalamkari Paintings:** A customary painting style from Andhra Pradesh, India, featuring religious motifs.

Significance:

The intertwining of art and religion in primeval India played a crucial role in: -

Encouraging religious beliefs and practices: Art was used to visually depict deities, stories, and religious teachings, helping to expand and strengthen religious ideas.

- **creating holy spaces:** Temples and other religious structures were ornamented with intricate art, creating spaces for worship and devotion.
- **protecting religious understanding and traditions:** Art forms like paintings and sculptures helped conserve religious narratives, myths, and stories for upcoming generations.
- **Mirroring the cultural and spiritual values of the time:** The art of the period provides important insight into the religious viewpoint and cultural values that created ancient Indian society.

2. Hindu art

Hindu art, extremely entwined with Indian religious viewpoint, is characterized by depictions of deities, religious symbols, and mythological scenes. Examples include holy place carvings, paintings, and sculptures, often showcasing complicated details and vibrant colors.

Examples of Hindu Art and holy Symbols:

- **holy place Art:** Holy place, like the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple in Khajuraho, display complicated carvings and sculptures of deities, often with detailed depictions of their features and stories.
- **Paintings:** Tanjore paintings, known for their energetic colors and gold leaf accent, often portray Hindu gods and goddesses like Lord Ganesha, Lord Shiva, and Lord Krishna.
- **Sculptures:** Terracotta and stone sculptures, such as those found in Mathura and Uttar Pradesh, portray deities like Vishnu, often with multiple arms and symbolic aspects.
- **Symbols:** The "Om" symbol, a combination of Sanskrit letters, is a widely recognized Hindu symbol indicating the divine sound of creation.
- **Rangoli:** Rangoli, a customary form of art using colored sand or powder, is often used to create involved designs and patterns, often includes religious symbols and deities. Examples of Religious Beliefs and Practices like- Deities, Puja, Yoga, Dharma, Karma etc.

3. Buddhist art

Begins in India, characteristics a rich symbolism and iconography, with early depiction focusing on symbols like the stupa and the lotus, rather than direct depictions of Buddha. Later, anthropomorphic depiction emerged, influenced by Gandhara and Mathura styles. These depictions often confirm Buddha in the act of teaching, meditation, or offering shelter, and are characterized by their serene and peaceful appearance.

3.1 Key Aspects of Buddhist Art:

- **Early Iconic Phase:** In the earliest period, Buddhist art highlight symbols and avoided direct depictions of Buddha, centring on the stupa, the lotus, and the Dharma wheel.
- **coming out of Anthropomorphic demonstrations:** With the spread of Buddhism, particularly under the backing of Emperor Ashoka, art began to include more direct demonstrations of Buddha and major events from his life.
- **Gandhara and Mathura approach:** Two major centres for early Buddhist art were Gandhara and Mathura identified for their unique styles and influence on later Buddhist art.
- **Symbolism and Iconography:** Buddhist art is prosperous in symbolism, with a variety of elements representing key aspects of Buddhist teachings and the Buddha's life. For example, the lotus symbolizes purity, the wheel represents the Dharma, and the Bodhi tree marks the place of Buddha's enlightenment. Notable Examples like Amaravati Stupa, Bharhut Stupa relief panels, and the Yakshi sculptures.

4. Jain art

A significant part of Indian religious art mainly features sculptures and paintings portray the Tirthankaras, the enlightened figures sacrosanct in Jainism. These artworks, frequently found in temples and holy spaces, showcase the Jain Tirthankara in various seated or standing pose, frequently depicted nude and engaged in meditation. Jain art is also characterized by detailed carvings and architectural facts, particularly in holy places, reflecting the Jain principle of non-violence and veneration for all living beings.

4.1. Key features of Jain art:

- **Tirthankara portrayal:**
- **Nudity and posture:** The Jaina is typically depicted nude, denoting the transcendence of worldly connection. Standing figures have straight postures with hands reaching the knees, while seated figures are often in the Padmasana (lotus) position with hands in Dhyana Mudra.
- **Ayagapatas:** Jain temples often feature ayagapatas, square slabs with scenes depicting Jainism, swastikas, and other symbols.
- **Temple architecture:**
- **Jain Sculptures:** Jain temples in Jaisalmer, showcase beautiful carvings of yellow sandstone,
- **Paintings:** 1810 CE cloth painting from Gujarat,
- **Architecture:** The Dilwara temples at Mt. Abu, Ranakpur in Jodhpur, and the Jain tower at Chittor are examples of Jain architecture.

5. Contemporary Indian art:

Frequently includes religious and spiritual themes while exploring new forms of expression. Many artists blend customary Indian artistic styles with modern techniques, drawing stimulation from Hindu, Buddhist, and other Indian religious traditions.

Examples of Religious Themes in Contemporary Indian Art:

- **"The Mediaeval Saints" by Nandalal Bose:** This mural depicts saints from various Indian religions, demonstrating the artist's amalgamation of traditional and modern procedure.
- **S.H. Raza's "Buddha in Meditation":** This abstract painting makes the most of geometric forms and vibrant colors to represent spiritual awakening and Buddha's meditation.

- **Raja Ravi Varma's "The Birth of Krishna":** This iconic painting depicts the divine birth of Krishna, showcasing the artist's integration of Indian mythology with Western techniques.
- **Ganesh Pyne's "Durga":** This painting depicts the Hindu goddess Durga, showcasing the artist's interpretation of customary religious themes in a modern perspective.
- **M.F. Husain's "Krishna Playing the Flute":** This painting depicts the Hindu deity Krishna playing his flute, highlighting the artist's exploration of religious metaphors.



Image:5 Krishna Playing the Flute



Image:6 Durga

5.1. How Contemporary Indian Art Connects with Religion:

- **combination of Modern and Traditional:**
Artists repeatedly merge traditional Indian art styles with modern techniques, creating unique expressions that resound with both cultural heritage and contemporary sensibilities.
- **searching of Spiritual Concepts:**
Artists look at spiritual themes, such as enlightenment, devotion, and the divine, through a variety of mediums and techniques.

- **Appointment with Religious Mythology:** Many artists draw motivation from Indian mythology and religious stories, creating works that explore into the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the country.

5.2 Some Indian artists influenced by religion

- **Raja Ravi Varma:** He is known for his paintings depicting Hindu gods and goddesses, he considered the "father of modern Indian art" for his mixture of traditional and modern techniques.
- **S.H. Raza:** In His abstract painting he uses religious and spiritual themes with geometric forms and vibrant colors.
- **M.F. Husain:** He uses religious imagery and themes with the exploration of faith and devotion complexity.
- **Nandalal Bose:** His paintings, counting "The Mediaeval Saints," showcase his blending of traditional Indian art with new techniques, often incorporating religious figures and themes.
- **Jamini Roy:** Known for his bold and expressive style, he often incorporated religious imagery into his paintings, such as his depiction of Goddess Durga.

Contemporary Indian art continues to grow, with artists exploring new ways to convey their connection to their religious and spiritual heritage while engaging with the worldwide art world

6. Holy architecture

Indian holy architecture is various, reflecting the influence of various religions and historical periods. Examples include the Nagara and Dravidian styles of temples, as well as Buddhist stupas and viharas, Islamic mosques and monuments, and Christian churches.

6.1. Hindu Temples:

- **Nagara Style (North India):** categorized by beehive-shaped shikharas (spires), as seen in the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple in Khajuraho.
- **Dravidian Style (South India):** Known for very tall Gopurams (gateway towers) and elaborate pillared halls, represented by the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai.
- **Vesara Style:** A intermingles of Nagara and Dravidian styles, found in regions like Karnataka.



Image: 8 temple style of India

6.2. Buddhist Architecture:

- **Stupas:** Dome-shaped structures, often with involved carvings, like the Great Stupa at Sanchi.
- **Viharas:** Monasteries where monks survived and studied.

6.3. Islamic Architecture:

- **Mosques and Tombs:**

Qutub Minar and Fatehpur Sikri incorporate both Indian and Islamic architectural elements.

- **Indo-Islamic Fusion:**

This style combines features of Indian and Islamic architecture, exemplified by the Taj Mahal.

Christian Architecture:

- **Churches:** Gothic, Baroque, and Romanesque styles, with examples like the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa. Other Examples like Sikh **Gurdwaras:** Golden Temple in Amritsar, **Jain Temples:** Ranakpur Temple in Rajasthan.

7 sculpture and painting,

Indian holy art, both in sculpture and painting, is rich in iconography and symbolism, depicting religion, mythological stories, and spiritual perception. Examples include the sculpture of Buddha in the Sarnath, showing him in the Padmasana pose, and the painting of the Birth of Krishna by Raja Ravi Varma, depicting the divine birth of Krishna.

Sculpture:

- **Iconic symbol:** Sculptures frequently depict deities in particular poses and with symbolic substance, representing their powers and attributes.
- **Narrative and Storytelling:** Sculptures are particularly on temple walls narrate the mythological stories and events. **Examples:** Sarnath sculpture of Buddha, with the right hand turning the Dharmachakra, Sculptures at the Sanchi and Amaravati Stupas, Sculptures in the Khajuraho Temples and the Konark Sun Temple.

Materials and Techniques: Indian sculptures are made of various materials like stone, bronze, and terracotta, using techniques like carving, casting, and modelling.

8 Indian culture, literature and performing arts

In Indian culture, performing arts and literature, including music, dance, , and theatre, are deeply entangled with religious beliefs and practices. Many religious texts, like the Vedas, and classical narratives, like the Mahabharata and Ramayana, have served as sources of motivation and subject matter for these art forms. Performing arts, particularly dance and theatre, were often used to visually and verbally express religious ideas and myths, and were essential to temple rituals and festivals.

Here's a more detailed look at the relationship:

8.1. Religious Texts as Literary Sources:

- **Vedas:** The Vedas, ancient consecrated texts, are a primary resource of Hindu religious beliefs and philosophical ideas, and they also served as a foundation for literature and musical traditions.
- **Ramayana and Mahabharata:** These heroic poems, primary to Hindu culture, tell stories of gods, heroes, and moral lessons, providing a rich source of narratives for acting, dance, and other performing arts.

8.2. Performing Arts as Expressions of Religious Beliefs:

- **Dance:** Traditional dance used symbolically expression through religious ideas and narratives, with classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Kathak, and Kathakali.



Image: 7 all dance forms

Music: With devotional songs (bhajans) Music played a crucial role in temple rituals and festivals, chanting of mantras and other musical expressions used to connect with the divine.

- **Theatre:** Indian theatre, including forms like Natyaveda and folk theatre drew upon religious narratives and myths to generate powerful performances that entertained and knowledgeable audiences, and also reinforced religious ethics. **Examples like Lord Shiva as Nataraja, Devotional Songs, Religious Myths in Theatre etc.**

9. Cultural meaning:

Indian culture and religion are deeply intertwined, with religious viewpoint influencing diverse aspects of daily life, including social structures, festivals, and artistic traditions. For example, Hinduism, the majority religion, significantly impacts cultural practices like the caste system and the concept of karma.

Elucidation:

- **Influence on Social formation:** Hinduism's concepts of karma and rebirth have shaped the social hierarchy, leading to the development of the caste system, which historically determined occupations and social roles.
- **Rituals and Festivals:** Religious philosophy is reflected in numerous festivals and rituals, such as Diwali, Holi, and various provincial celebrations. These festivals often involve specific practices, food, and clothes based on religious traditions.

There are several explanations of the relationship between art and religion like Visual representation of religion, Expressing religious experience, Religious education and propagation, Religious symbols and symbolism, an aesthetic connection between art and religion.

Conclusion

By studying Indian art we come to know that all religions have left their indelible mark on art. All religions come as a heritage in Indian art. The work of shaping the art has been played in a special way in Indian religions. This has played an important role in understanding history. Religious artwork

connects us to security, peace and hope. Religious paintings connect society with spirituality. Some artists created religious paintings of that time for decorative and reflective purposes. Paintings related to religion depict a credible story of history. This keeps the religious tradition alive and we can easily transfer it to the coming generations. With the help of religion and art can be keeping the culture alive on a larger scale. In religious art, we often see images of God, which reflect religious beliefs. Uses of is also used for religious education, and the art depicts religious stories and teachings. The association between art and religion is not only important for religious beliefs and values, but it is also important for human culture and society. The association between art and religion is a powerful medium for human emotion and thought, helping us to understand the deeper beliefs and meaning of life.

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