

INTRODUCTION

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Figuring Regional Aesthetics: Women Artists via Regional Histories and Modernisms-1950s to 90s.

This study is about locating the practice of women artists in the region of Andhra Pradesh and understanding them through the regional modernism that emerged in post-independence India. Therefore an appropriate time frame for this study would be from 1950's to 90's.

The focus on the regional comes following its far-reaching significance in contemporary Indian art wherein the questions of authenticity, identity and modernity are often negotiated through the nation/region. In post-colonial/independent India's politics, these national and regional identities run parallel to or compete or oppose one another¹. The intersection of the national and the regional are either in conflict to one another in more ways than one viz. center vs. state and that of the state vs. sub-regional (for instance Jharkhand, Uttaranchal, Telangana etc.).

The emphasis on the local or the region acquires different resonance when placed in relationship with the national as opposed to the international. Given my focus on the dialectical relationship of the regional with the national, my take on the regional differs from those who privilege the relationship between the national and international. As for instance, Geeta Kapur's deployment of the center-periphery model² is more predicated upon the Third world politics within which she situates the relationship between the national and international. Such a model, which tends to undermine the cultural practices at a more local level, is not very productive in my project devoted to the articulation of the regional modern. Geeta Kapur's 'Place for People' catalogue is a case in point about the vexed status of the regional in the nationalist imaginary of a cultural critic.³

1. T.V.Satyamurthy.ed., *Region, Religion, Class, Caste and Gender and Culture in Contemporary India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2000

2. Geeta Kapur, "A Stake In Modernity: A Brief History Of Contemporary Indian Art", *Tradition and Change*, ed., Caroline Turner, Queensland University Press, Brisbane, 1993.

3. Ibid

Furthermore, in contemporary writings on Indian art the compulsion to write a pan-Indian art history is evidenced⁴. Historiography of Indian art which aspires to take in its sweep the national at large cannot do justice to the regional, hence that frame is reductive. In this sort of a schema there is no room for the specific regional struggles or modernisms.

There is an urgent need then to reframe this selective national art history by widening it to figure out its constituent regional histories. As a move towards this direction, Shivaji K. Panikkar states the perils of such omissions in the historiography of modern Indian art as, for instance. Kapur's *When was Modernism*. The complex pattern of Indian modern art is intricate due to the designs and dynamics of the regional modernisms which when omitted would yield to a linear and simplistic progression:

Omitting regional experiences of specific nature, and the very under privileging of local histories while constructing particular kinds of national trajectories lead to the issue of the marginalisation of traditions and the diverse lineage that should be ideally constitutive of our national history. These ignored margins need to be pulled back into the frame even at the risk of disturbing the cleanliness of unilinear schema of a possible national avant-garde.⁵

The author traces the development of specific modernity that emerged in the Madras art school. Writing the region into the formation of modernism is no less fraught. Contrary to his aim of redressing the imbalance in the one sided historiography, in this writing this art institution ironically emerges as another hegemonic center in south India.⁶ Far from being a site of unitary identity, the erstwhile Madras Presidency was in fact a composite of Tamil, Malayali and Andhra zones. But here artists of the two former zones are preferred and highlighted while artists of Andhra region have been under privileged.⁷

4. For instance, in Geeta Kapur's writings on Indian art and other recent publications like Nuvelli Tuli, *Flamed Mosaic: Contemporary Indian Painting*, Heart Foundation, New Delhi, 1997.

5. Dr. Shivaji K. Panikkar, "Reading the Regional Through Internationalism and Nativism: a case of Madras (1950's to 70's)", in Shivaji K. Panikkar, Deeptha Achar and Parul Dave Mukherji, eds., *Towards New Art History, Studies in Indian Art*, D.K. Printworld, New Delhi, 2003.

6. Ibid, p.5.

7. Apart from K. Srinivasulu and Reddapa Naidu, very many important artists of Andhra region who studied at the Madras school such as A. Paidiraju, who was contemporary to K.C.S. Panikkar and Srinivasulu, P.L.N. Murthy, M. Krishnamurthy, Ghokhalay, A. Bapi raju, P.R. Raju etc., are not mentioned.

My project is an exploration of a model of the regional modern that foregrounds the issue of gender in the post-independent modern Indian art. Unless gender component in understanding the canonization of modernism in India is addressed, what is taken as a center and its periphery will only shift in relation to one another but will not be sufficiently interrogated. However, my attempt in this project is not only to write women artists into the mainstream but also interrogate the politics of canonization and historiography of modern Indian art.

My work has been a part of re-thinking Indian art history which began in the Department of Art History and Aesthetics in Baroda around the late 1990's. The cultural politics of historiography along the lines of class, caste and gender were rigorously debated and discussed in the numerous conferences that followed.

Writing about regions such as cities or art centers like Madras or Baroda, can be based on paradigms that are simpler in structure when compared to a region like Andhra Pradesh, which is composed of different sub regions. This also gets more complex when women artists open up the path for tracing regional aesthetics which is seen as a dynamic category by bringing out the interrelations between the component zones and the criss-cross pattern of formation of this aesthetics through national and international planes.

Subaltern Struggles and their Relation to the Regional:

If the regional histories in the national art history are cast aside, then the histories of women artists are doubly marginalized from the mainstream art histories. Women artists' presence was felt in a major way during and after the 70's due to the wake of women's movements, as it was the watershed of feminism in the west and also in India. Feminist interventions within art historical discourses and their re-reading of them from this time onward came to be associated with new art history.⁸ These researches brought to the forefront a number of gender based biases, which inflect the evaluation of male and female artists. Such biases structure the discipline's ideas about art and artist, and often produce the exclusion of art made by women rendering it as marginal. Speaking of or depicting marginality then points out at the location in the center-periphery model of global culture.⁹ In binary oppositions such as center-periphery and man-woman etc., the power seems to be vested in the privileged first term. Early feminist scholarship has helped to comprehend the ways in which these power structures are replicated within art history only to reinforce sexual difference.¹⁰ However, the studies have also showed how the second term (periphery, woman and the like) in these dichotomies find ways to challenge and resist the official discourses. In order to make subaltern voices heard, the subalternist requires, first, to voice out as Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan says:

...the operative premise that such voices exist; second and following upon this, the undertaking of arduous researches, i.e. the search for voices, both archival and anthropological; finally, their retrieval, transcription, translation, documentation, editorial labour, dissemination, critical revaluation and fight for admission into 'canon'.¹¹

However, she cautions that such an enterprise is replete with dangers as it is subject to 'falsification of the subaltern'. Nevertheless, it is essential when the 'subaltern voice is sought to be politically privileged'.¹² When this "small voice of history"¹³ becomes audible,

8. Op cit no:5

9. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Post-colonialism*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000.

10. Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997.

11. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism*, Routledge, London, 1993.

12. Ibid, p.90.

13. Ranajit Guha, *Small Voice Of History*, Subaltern Studies, Vol:

it will disrupt the dominant tales by breaking its authoritative narrative structure. This study hopes to achieve something similar by re-locating the histories of women artists via the region, thereby, interrupting the monolithic modernism in Andhra Pradesh and in India at large, from two intersecting vantage points.

Writings on Women Artists by Women Critics:

Art historical writings on women artists in India are sparse. In 1997, after over two decades of feminism in India, '*Expressions and Evocations: Contemporary Women Artists of India*'¹⁴ was published. Here the focus is on women artists who are well known and who are from major art centers, such as Bombay, Baroda and Delhi. This book offers important documentation as far as writing on women artists is concerned; however, a few women are selected for detail study and are shown to be representative of women artists of India.¹⁵ While just a few artists from South Indian regions find mention, lack of detailed information gives rise to an incomplete picture of women artists of India.

In the opening chapter of her book, "*When was modernism: Essays in Contemporary cultural practice in India*", Geeta kapur , writes about a few 'women artists at work'. She draws parallels from Western feminist art and freely incorporates them to elucidate such 'aesthetics' in India. This kind of methodology can be worked upon only when one pre-supposes through ideological and political conviction that women are more united by the fact of being female, than the truth that in India they are divided by race, class, and caste, region and religion and history etc.¹⁶ These texts in a way have created a parallel mainstream of a few women artists. This replicates hegemony among women artists by privileging those who are working in the metropolitan cities of India by leaving out very many women artists, from different other regions of India, who have been active in the field.

14. Gayatri Sinha. ed., *Expressions and Evocations: Contemporary Women Artists of India*, Marg Publications, New Delhi, 1997.

15. Among the women artists of South India, the author mentions names of Mangala Bai Tamburatti, sister of Ravi Varma and Kamala Poduval Das Gupta and Amavaz.

16. Op cit no: 9

Documenting the Works by Women Artists of Andhra Pradesh:

My attempt to write about women artists within modern art of Andhra Pradesh is due to my own location within the state and may be seen as a case study. Like other states it too has its center. It is one of the politically oriented states: a case in point is the Telangana movement in which women have been prominent but also marginalized.

Writings on Andhra Pradesh art include very many catalogues, monographs and a book which fall under art history's typical procedures. Two types of approaches can be discerned in these writings, (i) Complete exclusion, or (ii) A facile incorporation of women artists in an insignificant slot, which renders their position, marginalized. Two articles from the monograph series published by the APLKA, the issue released on the occasion of the second world Telugu conference¹⁷ called 'Contemporary Art in Andhra Pradesh' are 1. Modern Art of Andhra Pradesh by A.S.Raman and 2. Andhra Schools of Art by V.S.Sarma.

In the latter's article, Andhra art is traced right from the *Satavahana* period to *Deccani* miniatures to the establishment of art schools. Such an approach completely sidelines the socio-historical context of art by viewing it as a isolated activity. For only with such a naïve perspective can a linear progression of Indian or Andhra art from 2nd century C.E to 20th century C.E is possible, although the aim itself remains defeated. As V.S. Sarma touches upon regeneration of Andhra art and the nationalist movement at the centres of Machilipatnam and Rajahmundry, contributions of Damerla Rama Rao and others appear. Somehow, he makes a small amount of space available for women artists such as Damerla Satyavani, Butchi Krishnamma, Vijaya Lakshmi with relation to nationalist art. Also a second-generation artist, Kavitha Deuskar, finds mention.

However in the article by A.S. Raman there is not even a single woman artist mentioned. The text falls into a typical celebration of creative masculine individualism found so abundantly in art historical discourse. To quote an instance on the modernist "attitude", Raman writes "The modernist has to impose discipline on himself. Being utterly

17. The second World Telugu Conference was held at Kuala Lumpur, Malasia, in 1981.

free and uninhibited he has to evolve his own personal and professional ethics. Then he has to achieve through trial and error an idiom that is free, virile and universally acceptable".¹⁸ The definition of 'artist' is clearly given in masculine terms. Hence, it is not surprising the difficulty they face thinking about women as artists.

More recently in 1994 a book on by Sudha Reddy¹⁹ gives a fairly thorough history regarding different art schools / centres that existed during pre-independence phase and also about those that came up later in Andhra Pradesh. She furnishes names of many more women artists who contributed to the A.P. art scene like Fatima Ahmed, Urmila Shah, Usha Shankar, Mohana, etc while no other information about them is given. The author here mentions in a very general manner that "Women too began to get attracted to painting by the early 1950's and began to take it as a profession, competing with their male counterparts ignoring and some times surmounting social barriers". Finally all she adds is that almost "all the artists have faded into obscurity" without inquiring into the politics of canonisation and historiography.

In this approach of writing, the names of women appear and disappear assigning to them a status of arbitrary existence. When it comes to recent major publications like *Contemporary Art in Baroda*, the double marginalization suffered by women artists from the region of Andhra Pradesh becomes evident. While several male artists of Andhra Pradesh have found mention in this book, not a single name of a woman artist from this region appears.²⁰

The dearth of information on women artists creates an acute need for research and recovery of their histories. When people from the art community are asked about their awareness of women artists, the common response is in the form of another question: - 'have there been women artists in Andhra Pradesh?'.²¹ Such is the state of affairs even after decades of feminist scholarship!

18. A.S. Raman Originally from A.P., was elected fellow of the APLKA, he has authorised edited several books on art including the "Southern Accent" which was mainly about artists of Tamilnadu.

19. Sudha Reddy did her research from the Department of History, Hyderabad Central University.

20. Kavitha Deuskar, who studied murals at MSU, Baroda, during the same period as her male counter part, Dakoji Devraj does not find mention in Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, ed., *Contemporary Art in Baroda*, Tulika publication, New Delhi, 1997.

21. A question asked by art community, particularly male artists and critics and also by general public.

Feminism as a discipline has over the years through strategic practices, not only contested, critiqued the biases and inadequacies of discourses productive of knowledge such as art history for the exclusion of women's creative art and its history, but also have proved that feminist intervention in the histories of art are necessary to recover, rewrite and re-present the histories of women artists. The aim is not simply to write their names into history to pay due respect and celebrate their creativity but to question the masculinist premises of modern art. How do we do this in the extreme dearth of written accounts? What other sources can be relied upon? How then do we figure out their specific experience of modernity in Andhra Pradesh? And finally how does one propose to write and read them?

Methodology:

Art works of women artists who are living in Andhra Pradesh were fairly easy to document.²² But many more women artists who once were active in the field, and who seemed to have vanished into oblivion over time by the obliteration of their histories by so called art history, had to be re-claimed and recovered.²³ This investigation had to be done with conviction and perseverance. The very first clues were sought in the annual event catalogues of APLKA and HAS. The reproductions of art works by women artists in most of these catalogues bear testimony to the fact that women artists were a major presence in modern art of Andhra Pradesh. This gave a lead to explore the possibilities of carrying the study further and the hope of unearthing more information and of viewing the actual works.

Interview and conversations with women artists living and practicing in Andhra Pradesh have been very useful in understanding their personal and professional lives. I had to contact artists long forgotten by the art community and those in other regions and abroad to gather information. In case of artists who are no more alive, their family and friends provided the necessary data and materials for study.

22. Artists like Freny Behemenshah, Kamala Mittal, Kavitha Deuskar, Anjani Reddy, Kusum Vishwanath, Padma Reddy, Nandini Goud, Laxmi Reddy are living and working in Hyderabad.

23. Artists from Andhra region such as D.Satyavani, B.Krishnamma, P.Vijaya Lakshmi, Pushkaramba, Shaivalika Kamakshamma and the artists from Hyderabad such as Fatima Ahmad, Farukh Rifaquat, Siddiqua Bilgrami, Urmila Shaw, Usha Shankar, Malathi Varadarajan and others

All of the above sources provided valuable information hitherto unknown about women artists of Andhra Pradesh. However, mere historical recovery will not help us understand the specificity of their art practice with in the larger social systems that produce sexual differentiation.²⁴ Therefore it is mandatory to theorize a framework that can both address their individual practices and their location in the larger social and cultural context.

Feminist scholarship, post-colonial and post-structuralist studies have contributed to and elucidate methodologies to write such histories.

Gayatri Chakroborthy Spivak's important work 'Can the Subaltern Speak' focuses on the task of figuring the voices of the colonized subject. This work is also crucial for any scholarship that concerns itself with, as Ania Loomba states, "recovering the histories and perspectives of the marginalized people be they women, non-whites, non-Europeans, the lower classes and the oppressed castes and for any consideration of how ideologies are transformed".²⁵ Further, Spivak suggests taking up the Gramscian maxim-'pessimism of intellect, optimism of the will'²⁶ however impossible it might be to recover histories. This can be achieved by combining skepticism about recovering with commitment to endow visibility to the marginalized.²⁷

The very project of inquiring into the regional modern which takes us to the realm of multiple histories and alternative representations; this brings us to the limits of modernism itself, gesturing towards the space of the postmodern. In other words, these different and alternative ways of writing histories coincide with the post-modern ideas of multiplicity, plurality and fragmentation, which could be used to clarify and focus on the vantage point of the marginalized subjects.

Post- structuralist and post-modernist thinkers have stressed upon the need for a 'genealogical' theory of history, which could effectively replace the linear mode of knowledge by a more diverse and pluralistic model.²⁸ Further, these theories seek to dismantle the illusion of primacy that settles around the first terms in binary oppositions,

24. Griselda Pollock, *Vision And Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, Routledge, London and New York, 1988.

25. Opcit no:9, p.231.

26. Ibid, p.234.

27. Ibid, p.234.

28. Tim Woods, *Beginning Post Modernism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1999, p19.

for example: male/female, masculine/feminine, white/black, center/margin etc.²⁹ strategies to recover and write about women's histories and questioning through deconstructive methods of the binary oppositions have been some of the prime tasks of feminist interventions in various fields in the West and in India.

Three of the avowed positions of feminists in the West are I. Demand for equal rights and status on par with men. The Anglo-American feminists are well known for this position. II. A position based on refuting the male Symbolic Order in order to assert difference. This is a stance typical of the French feminists. III. To dismantle and subvert the binary opposition of the fixed masculine and feminine identities to prove the theory of subject-in-process. This position is associated with post-feminist criticism, which re-thinks the struggle of women for power and recognition. These theoreticians would like to argue for a feminist perspective through which they examine the marginal meanings of texts.³⁰

But how far are these demarcations between modernism and post-modernism valid in India? And to what extent can any study about Indian or Third World women rely on Western/Euro-American or First World feminist models?

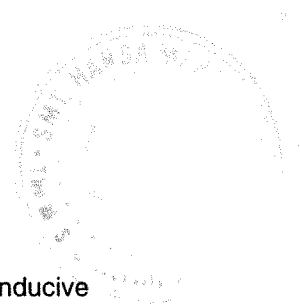
While writing about contemporary art practice in India, Geeta Kapur, in her essay "When Was Modernism in Indian Art?" situates an overlapping and rather ambivalent relationship between modernism and post-modernism:

In India for the moment it looks as though there is modernism that almost never was. The more political among Indian artists may be right after all in believing that the as yet unresolved national questions may account for an incomplete modernism that still possess the radical power it has lost elsewhere... Mapping the chronological scale of realism/modernism/postmodernism on to the lived history of our own deeply ambivalent passage through this century, it may be useful to situate modernity itself like an elegiac metaphor in the 'new world order'.³¹

29. Ibid, p.19.

30. Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory In Practice*, Methuen, London and New York, 1988.

31. Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism? Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika, New Delhi, 2000



Hence, perhaps, this nascent modernism in the new world order creates a conducive space of the postmodern, which allows to contest the grand narratives, particularly through ideological practices like feminism. For it is this space of the post-modern that gives currency to the identity politics and gender intervention.³²

Feminism, as Mary.E.John points out 'is a politics before it is an epistemology, and therefore, is not just about 'what is being said but also about 'who speaks for whom'.³³ As far as the Third World women's studies are concerned, Chandra Talpade Mohanty mounts a powerful critique of western feminist writings on women in the Third World. In her well argued account she proves the inadequacies of methodologies that are reductive even as they demonstrate the universal cross-cultural operation of male dominance and female exploitation. She asserts that the Third World women are capable of self-presentation and need not be represented.³⁴ Adding up to this argument Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan mentions about self-representation by taking recourse to Jacqueline Rose while describing the task of a feminist critic as 'the critique of male discourse' born of 'a radical distrust of representation which allies itself with semiotic critique of the sign'.³⁵ Therefore, one needs to be alert to the political processes by which such representations are naturalized and ultimately become 'coercive in structuring women's self-representation'.³⁶

My account of women artists of Andhra Pradesh is, I believe, in conjunction with the ideological structures of contemporary Indian discourse of women.

In their works, these women artists bring out their identities. Therefore, their works are relevant to the project of women's self-representation. In my choice of writing on women artists a similar process of creation of selfhood and 'self-cognition occurs, identity is taken on, and a politics is initiated'.³⁷

In order to write women's and other marginalized histories in present post-colonial India, we should not only take into consideration these issues but also take care of the

32. Ibid, p.314 -317.

33. Opcit. no: 11

34. Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes." *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Eds. Mohanty, Russo, Torres. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1991.

35. Opcit. no: 11

36. Ibid, p.143

37. Ibid.

'fertile tensions'³⁸ as Ania Loomba states. Therefore, post-colonial theories demand theoretical innovation and flexibility. This is an ambitious project; if the post-colonial studies aim to change the past and analyze the present, then it cannot work with closed paradigms.³⁹

Here, regional aesthetics would be addressed as a heterogeneous category where socio-historical conditions of art production are seen inscribed by the questions of class, caste and gender. The attempt here is to locate spaces of women artists with relation to regional histories and modernisms; by so doing, the aim is not just to write women artists into history by recuperation but also to question the paradigm of monolithic modernity and modernism.

Modernism and its Multiple Trajectories in Andhra Pradesh: The Formation of the Art Schools

In this chapter I attempt to write on the history of modernism at a crucial historical juncture when a region of the state of Andhra Pradesh was carved out of a nation that had recently acquired independence from centuries of British rule. So far, the genealogy of modernism in India has been traced with attention devoted to male artists. In the standard historiography of Indian modernism⁴⁰ a single trajectory has been drawn with the PAG placed at its origin. It is not surprising that metropolitan cities like Bombay and Delhi have been privileged where national institutions of art emerged. Moves towards experimental modernism had been initiated and pursued in regions away from these metropolitan centers. These have been largely ignored giving a false impression of absence of art trends and movements in places like Andhra Pradesh, etc. In a sense, by focusing on women artists active in Andhra Pradesh, I will regard them as doubly marginalized on account of their gender and regional location.

The state of Andhra Pradesh was formed in the 50's. Therefore in the first section I trace the history of modernity through the socio-political context of this decade to comprehend modernism(s) and in the second its implication on the field of art is read via

38. Opcit no:9

39. Ibid

40. See Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism? Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika, New Delhi, 2000 and Nuivelle Tuli, *Flamed Mosaic: Contemporary Indian Painting*.

the art school of Hyderabad. Changes in the education system, formation of several women's organizations⁴¹ were among other factors that contributed to their awareness of the experience of modernity.

This chapter examines the ideologies of 'art' and 'craft' in the art school of Hyderabad and its implication on the notions of 'artist'. This is studied through the curriculum and methods of teaching.

Women artists of the 50's do not show a uniform bent in their affiliation to these categories. Freny Behemenshah, Zainab Razvi and Ferozah Santukh draw more from nationalist art practices in late 40's and early 50's where in the craft was elevated to the status of art while, by mid 50's Freny shifts to more modern Western 'art' sources such as post-impressionism, particularly Gauguin through Amrita-Sher-Gill. And her students Siddiqua Bilgrami, Zehra Rehmatullah, Fatima Ahmed, Dasrath Kumari Mathur, Urmila Shaw and Usha Shankar also did not wish to conform to academic realism of the curriculum and in their different ways took inspiration from Cezannesque post-Impressionism. The progressive ideals and aspiration for the art to go 'international' can be evidenced in this phase of regional modern art among the women artists similar to very many of their male contemporaries.

However, women artists from other regions of Andhra Pradesh during this time were almost on the margins of art institutions. This aspect is dealt in the third section of this chapter. The art schools at Rajahmundry and Machilipatnam and the Women's college at Guntur that flourished from about the second decade of 20th century ceased to exist by late 1940s. Since the aesthetic goals of these schools were toward regionalization of nationalist art, women artists associated with these schools are therefore, taken up for study in retrospect Viz. D.Satyavani, B.Krishnamma, Vijaya Lakshmi. P, Shaivalika Kamakshamma, Pushkaramba and others.

Following the decade of 50's the study proceeds to the next phase in the development of modern art in Andhra Pradesh.

41. Lalita.K.,Vasantha Kannabiran, Rama Melkote,Uma Maheshwari, Suzie Tharu, Veena Shatrugna, *We Were making History: Life Stories Of Women In the Telangana People's Struggle*, Kali For Women, New Delhi, 1989.

Women Artists Of Andhra Pradesh: 1920s to 1990s

The concern in this chapter is to analyze the factors similar to the conditions of being a woman artist in a patriarchal society via social institutions like marriage and family, which are related to other determinants of religion, class and caste. In short, the idea here is to locate women's art practice in a social history of their lives and career. This chapter would do this by examining the biographical information of women artists. Thereby questioning the assumptions of patriarchy about women and their roles as mother, sister, daughter and wife.

Women Artists In Hyderabad: Patronage and Practice During 60's and 70's

The decade of sixties and seventies opened up new avenues of patronage to the artists with the establishment of various cultural organizations,⁴² particularly the Hyderabad Art Society (hence forth HAS) and the Andhra Pradesh Lalit Kala Academy(hence forth APLKA).

A survey through the catalogues of annual art exhibitions held by these organizations through out the sixties would reveal that women artists have helped shape the movement of modernism during this time. Among them were those who had started their careers by the late 50's mentioned earlier and those who joined in this decade i.e., Kavitha Deuskar, S.Vani, Malathi Varada Rajan.

Yet, by the mid 70's when the APLKA decided to publish monographs on 'eminent' artists the list was exclusively of male artists.⁴³ Why did the authorities of the academy exclude women artists? This is a simple question but the answers to it have to be sought in the complexities of gender-power relations and the consequent sexual difference within the system in which these organizations function and attempt to obliterate women's histories so as to re-inforce the modernist/sexist notions of male 'artists' and their 'eminence'.

42 The APLKA was established in 1961 this was followed by the German cultural center, MaxMuller Bhavan in 1964. The earlier established organisations were the American cultural center in 1950 and the Hyderabad Art Society in 1941.

43. P.T.Reddy , Madhusudan Rao , Vidya Bhusan , P.Gourishankar , Sayeed -Bin-Mohammed , D.Doraiswamy , K.Rajaiah , C.S.N.Patnaik , A.Paidiraju , P.R.Raju , K.Seshagiri Rao, Osman Siddiqui, Laxma Goud and Surya Prakash.

In order to effectively critique such structures and re-situate women artists within modernism, there is a need to re-contextualize and re-read the difference in the ways that modernism affects male and women artists through the patronage of the academy and other allied organizations.

The publication of monographs was a significant project taken up by APLKA in its efforts to uplift, develop and support the cause of art, artists and art history.

The asymmetry of women artists in comparison with their male counterparts clarifies in this 'effort'. Aside of gender biases this patronage also revealed biases based on the sub-regional affiliations.⁴⁴

The second important aspect in the policy of the academy was of exhibitions and events. Although, the absence of women artists in any art historical accounts partially succeeds in suppressing women's histories with modern art of Andhra Pradesh, the visuals/artworks of these artists in the collections and catalogues of these organizations are vital evidences that help re-read and write histories from below to re-draw the maps of modernism by including these marginalized histories.

In the early sixties, while artists elsewhere in India had begun a search for a national identity, regionally there was a combination of tendencies. Internationalism in a variety of styles was practiced, which eventually tended toward abstraction and a figurative trajectory looking toward native inspiration. By the mid 70's this regional focus would replace internationalism. Although, this range can be seen in the works of women artists, this shift in the aesthetics displaced women artists who had been working consistently in internationalist mode. In Andhra Pradesh the seventies, decade of feminist movement in India and the West, saw a fall in the levels of participation of women artists.

This raises important questions about women artists with relation to regional aesthetics and identities and thereby about their association to tradition and modernity.

The consolidation of regional aesthetics in the mainstream art of Andhra Pradesh occurs during the 80's and continues in the 90's.

44. Notable aspect about the academy is that most of its members were from Telangana region. In this regard the Andhras felt neglected.

Ornament as Rhetoric of Regional Aesthetics: Andhra Pradesh Art, 80s and 90s

The intensified focus upon the regional concerns in the aesthetics of the mainstream had a distinct bent toward 'ornamentation' and 'decoration'.

If we accept the penchant for embellishment as one of the 'feminine' qualities by the stereotypical views of patriarchal culture,⁴⁵ then what follows during 1980s and 90s may be seen as a feminization of contemporary/mainstream art in Andhra Pradesh. Let us examine how male artists fashion their language of expression around the ornamental and the body of a woman. In this chapter the implication this equation between the ornamental and the female image has for women artists will be explored. Also, the factors that contributed for this we also need to look into larger socio-political and economic contexts.

In the early 80's Indira Gandhi's return to power with a liberalization manifesto introduced a 'free-market' economy.⁴⁶ The consequences of this liberalization was felt by the art world for the first time in 1982 when a series of 'Festival of India' was organized in major centers of the world. These festivals were aimed at creating markets for 'Indian' goods and encourage tourism on an international platform. Even as these festivals effectively boosted the hegemonic frontier of national culture, for the artists who had negotiated their Indian ness during the indigenist phase of the 70's via the locale/region these developments proposed a further consolidation of regional focus. Like in the nationalist phase the regional identities are foregrounded through women as subject matter in the representations of male artists of the mainstream. Among them are K.Laxma Goud, T. Vaikuntam, C.Jagadish and Ravinder Reddy and a host of others. These representations do not merely reflect meanings of 'femininity' but actually construct it. In this chapter the task taken up is to examine how these constructions work to perpetuate the gender-power relations.

45. Griselda Pollock and Rosika Parker, *Framing Feminism: Art and Women's Movement, 1970-1985*, Pandora Press, London, 1987.

46. Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "The Last Decade", in Gulam Sheikh ed., *Contemporary Art in Baroda*, Tulika publication, New Delhi, 1997.

However, the male artists who celebrate their masculinities by painting/sculpting female or other images in varied decorative styles are actually shown to be negotiating traditional and patriarchal definitions of 'femininities' within themselves even as they foreground their so formed regional identities. In the second section of this chapter the aim is to find the ways in which women artists maneuver with their feminine identities. Women artists of Andhra Pradesh who practiced during 80's and 90's put forth regional self-identities through specific class, caste and religious affiliations in their works which either conform to or challenge or disrupt the fiction of femininity constructed by the dominant patriarchal discourse.

The way women artists occupy private and public space is different from that of their male counterparts in the 20th century Andhra Pradesh and else where in India. Also it is a fact that the ways in which modernism affects men and women artists are different. One needs to also know about the struggles of women artists with relation to this aspect. This study is an attempt to comprehend the ways in which women artists have shifted the discourse of modernism in Andhra Pradesh.

