

Madhubani Painting: As A Tool Of Women Empowerment

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Abstract - Maithil society although being 'Matri shakti' oriented, where, more goddess in different form are traditionally worshipped as compared to "Pitri shakti". However, culturally the male members were earning ones and female members were instrumental in handling in-house management and household works. The place of women in this society has been very respectful and important. However, exposure to the outside world for them remained a constraint mostly due to customs, traditions as well as a huge level of responsibility and hard work involved in daily household and family activities. At the same time, as far as the art, craft and tradition-cultural activity is concerned, these remained mostly confined in the safe hand of Maithil women. So was in the Mithila Painting activities. Hence, when this art form started spreading in the world, the women folk associated with it also got benefited and women from even most interior and backward areas without much communication and exposure got recognized. This further was instrumental in innovation and skill enhancement in this however common art style. And the resultant was even better skillful art work and very fast growing opportunity and market penetration in art segment. So, Madhubani painting became a tool for empowerment of associated women (since, mostly women were involved) and vice-versa this art style got empowered with strengthening of its practitioners.

keywords - Mithila Painting, women, recognition, empowerment

Introduction

Exposure to the outside world for them remained a constraint mostly due to customs, traditions as well as a huge level of responsibility and hard work involved in daily household and family activities. At the same time, as far as the art, craft and tradition-cultural activity is concerned, these remained mostly confined in the safe hand of Maithil women. So was in the Mithila Painting activities. Hence, when this art form started spreading in the world, the women folk associated with it also got benefited and women from even most interior and backward areas without much communication and exposure got recognized. This further was instrumental in innovation and skill enhancement in this however common art style. And the resultant was even better skillful art work and very fast growing opportunity and market penetration in art segment. So, Madhubani painting became a tool for empowerment of associated women (since, mostly women were involved) and vice-versa this art style got empowered with strengthening of its practitioners.

Objective

Mithila painting and its colour has been a part of Mithila household since time immemorial. For centuries, women have decorated the walls of their houses with intricate, linear designs on the occasion of weddings and other ceremonies. Mainly, it was done in kohbar ghar (nuptial chamber) on the occasion of a wedding. They paint mythological and folk themes and tantric symbolism. For the local people, this art is an asset, inherited and preserved. Women in this region pass on this art to their daughter. Another natural disaster made this art contemporary.

Backdrop

During the terrible famine in Bihar in 1960s, the women of the region were asked by the 'All India Handicrafts Board' to transfer their ritual wall paintings to paper as an income-generating project. Once it became portable, it becomes more visible and noticeable. After walls it was replaced by handmade paper, cloths, canvases and even artifacts. Their work was enthusiastically purchased by tourists and art connoisseurs. Since then, the art has never looked back and is recognised globally. Many women represented India in cultural fairs in Europe, Russia, and the US.

It is reported that the art helped save more than 100 trees in 2012. An NGO, Gram Vikas Parishad, has started the initiative to protect trees that were being cut down in the name of expanding roads and development. What they did was that they invited Madhubani painting artist women and got painted these trees with the Mithila art, mostly with pictures of gods. This step prevented the trees from being cut.

Empowerment of Mithila women

Can we ever imagine a literate or illiterate women from a rural family, sometimes even without a formal education being recognized and receiving accolades globally, further even receiving very high level awards, like National awards and even Padma award. Can we would have thought it being possible that a rural art made to survive just by rural women folks can someday may develop into an fast growing industry. Not many of us have thought a couple of decades back that an imperfect like art form will appear across most used art form in public areas, may it be walls of full buildings to even whole length of

train. But yes, today it has been made possible and stands being real, that too just because of women, mostly from low financial and educational background. At the same time, this art style has offered them an accomplishment of being an artist along with inheriting and preserving their cultural and traditional heritage. Also, it offered them recognition, financial support and a platform to improve and prove their skill set. Thus the Madhubani painting art has become a single largest source of empowering the women folk practicing this art form.

Also, most of the artist recognized for serving this art are women. Some most famous and highly decorated Madhubani painting artists are:

(1) Jagdamba Devi : Jagdamba Devi was an internationally recognized artist of Madhubani painting. She was awarded the National Award in the year 1970. She was the first artist to receive the Padma Shri in 1975 for her outstanding work in the field of Madhubani art.

(2) Sita Devi : Sita Devi was born in Jitwarpur village in Bihar. She was one of the earliest artists who started making beautiful Madhubani paintings on paper. She specialized in the Bharni style of Madhubani art. She was awarded the National Award in the year 1975 and the Padma Shri Award in the year 1981.

(3) Ganga Devi : Ganga Devi was born in 1928 in the Mithila region of Bihar. She was an expert in the Kachni style of Madhubani art. She was awarded the National Award in the year 1976 and the Padma Shri Award in the year 1984.

(4) Godawari Dutta : Godawari Dutta is a well-known name in the field of Madhubani painting. She was awarded the National Award in the year 1980 and the Shilp Guru Award in the year 2006. She was also awarded the Padma Shri Award in the year 2019.

(5) Mahasundari Devi : Mahasundari Devi was born on 15 April 1922 in Madhubani district of Bihar. She was an expert in Madhubani art. She was awarded the National Award in the year 1982 and the Padma Shri Award in the year 2011.

(6) Baua Devi : Baua Devi was born in Jitwarpur village in Bihar. She is an expert in Madhubani art. She uses natural colors on handmade paper to make her paintings. She was awarded the National Award in the year 1984 and the Padma Shri Award in the year 2017.

(7) Bharti Dayal : Bharti Dayal of Darbhanga district, Bihar is a well-known name in the field of Madhubani art. She uses acrylic colors on canvas to make her paintings. She was awarded the National Merit Award in the year 2005 and the National Award in the year 2006.

Apart from these hundreds of decorated & thousands of unframed established artists along with new ones are serving this art. The list is long and the journey is to continue endlessly.

Conclusion

In today world, when we talk about women empowerment and searching ways to achieve it, Mithila art has become a big tool for empowering women, that too majorly hailing from low educational and low income group. It has not only become a tool for cultural, social and economical development but as an art it has also given the women power a platform to express their thinking and desires, to fulfill their dream, to be independent and to be recognized as well. Hence, from above discussions and illustrations, we conclude that Mithila or Madhubani painting is and can be further more instrumental in empowering of women. It has already helped in the empowerment but still there is miles to go and sky to achieve.

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