

Relationship Between Art And Religion

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- For **comprehending Art**, we should concentrate on the relationship of Art and Religion. The primitive art of India is closely connected with Indian way of life and philosophy. **God** has been regarded as the **formless** in India, but in order to prove His supremacy, many **heads and hands** of the God are made by the artists.

- By this, the artists show different forms of **God** and His superhuman aspects, **Shri Iyar** says that, “**Hindu view of life is essentially of spiritual progression.**” But, it does not imply only on the views of the Hinduism, but also the views of the **Buddhism and Jainism**

- In India, all these three religions have considered **self-realisation** and **eternal bliss** to be the main objective of knowledge which implies that every kind of unawareness has to be left behind. Various forms of art like poetry, drama, dance, painting etc. were all planned for spiritual awareness.

- It is evident in many famous specimens. **Shri Iyar** rightly says that personal act has no place in the Indian tradition. According to **Shri Iyar**, the Indian views form a relation between **man and soul**. They are not opposed to each other, but they fill each other, i.e. they cannot survive without each other. They are related to each other.

- In the **Gupta Art**, the union of body and soil can be found in a very good way. So, in this way, the Indian Art is being inspired by three religions, i.e. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

- Same artists have done work for these three religions. That is why, in these religions, there may be found some symbols or motifs which are used for different religions. For example—The Sanchi Stupa's **Trident (Buddhism)** and a **Trident** in a **Pasupati Seal** of Indus valley civilization (**Hinduism**).

- Religion plays an important part in the progress of the society. Religion, not in the form of Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam etc., but religion in the sense as described by **Shri Krishna to Arjuna in 'Gita'** that **for preventing a house, we should sacrifice one member of the house, for the sake of a village, we should sacrifice a house, for the sake of a country, a village should be sacrificed, for a territory, a country should be sacrificed and finally, for the sake of the soul, a territory should be sacrificed.**

- The history of Art is as old as the beginning of the cave art. The cave paintings found from different caves of the world reveal the emotional life of the people of those times. Paintings were made not only for man's entertainment, but for the sake of religion also.

- These were also not made for the decoration of the caves as a great darkness was evident wherever these paintings have been found. It is clear from this that man had a faith in some kind of power present in the Nature.

- The social experts dealing with the science of civilization and cultures and the historians of art and religion of the early human societies generally estimate from the drawings and paintings on vases, walls of the caves, etchings on tools and weapons, terracotta fertility figurines and toys etc. of India and the world that art originated from magic and religion of some sort, or we can say that magic and religion played an important part in the field of art.

- We will have to confess that the proofs, studies and interpretations presented by various experts possess a very convincing argument in favour of such a situation. All primitive and early art is not always symbolical and abstract. Magic and religion made the use of the drawings and paintings made on pots and etchings on the tools and weapons, patterns and designs

- They appeal to the viewers in a natural way and to the natural impulses of not only men, but even of animals also. This is due to the fact that they have beautiful patterns of colours on pre and protohistoric potteries of those of Harappa and Mohenjodaro.

- Historically speaking, Art is not found very closely related with Religion in the history of all earlier societies because Art is born out of necessity and not out of religion. Art is everywhere. It has some kind of companionship with religion.

- It is evident when we find in temples, the decoration of the temples is nothing but an art-work created by an artist's hand. For example, the icons and the paintings for 'Pooja', the buildings designed by architects, the shape of 'divas' is pottery work, etc. So, the temples are related to religion.

- Here, the temples and art-works show the relationship between art and religion. Art was at its peak during the Gandhara, the Mathura and the Gupta periods.

- All these periods were related to Buddhism and they all show the association between art and religion. **The meditation of a yogi is also Art.** This is another example of the association between art and religion.

- We can express our views and feelings through art. Art has many important functions. Art relates us with the historical events. Art provides us a pleasant experience and it acts as a communicative element also for the society.

- Till now, religion was considered as the most significant process of motivation in the society, but later, art was also motivated by religion. Art provided honour to the authority of the kings in the ancient times by being decorated on the walls of their palaces.

- In the traditional Indian society, there were no museums and art galleries for displaying the art-work. So, art was displayed in the religious places like the temples, the mathas, the manuscript libraries etc. All these were the only places where the high arts found space for displaying themselves. As the art was related in some way with religion, there were also royal places and residential houses of the richer people which were built mainly of wood and there, the art-works were also displayed.

- There is another reason also which is responsible for the association of art with religion. It is believed that very early in civilization, man discovered that art gave him pleasure by providing him a special kind of purely sensory experience.

- Such pleasant experience was an attraction indeed. The social man in order to save himself, tried to associate closely with Religion which was considered to help in achieving his spiritual objectives of life.

- But, Indian thinkers have other reasons to cite for the close association of art and religion. It is nowhere mentioned to consider art as a means in the service of religion, nor is it satisfactory that art is deeply related to religion, directly or indirectly.

- What is mentioned instead is about that of art or Aesthetic Experience and worshipping of God. Religious and spiritual experiences are just like twin brothers, i.e., both are born through the common source. In both, the discipline of **dhyana** or deep concentration (meditation) is there.

- The earliest thinker to point out the similarity between the **Aesthetic Experience** and the **Religious Experience** was **Bhatta Nayaka**. He compared the artist with the **Yogi** and said that both attain finally a separate type of existence which is far away from pain and desire of any kind and which is pure and intense.

- He also noticed that the experience that both gained was that of calm, quiet and thoughtful in nature. This view was further applied by **Vishvanatha** in his **Sahitya-darpana**. According to him, **“Rasa is tasted by qualified persons. It is tasted by virtue of the emergence of Sattva. It is made up of all intelligence, beauty and self-luminosity.**

- **It is void of contact with any other knowledge thing. Twin brother to the tasting of the Bratunan, it is animated by ashamatkara of non-ordinary nature. It is tasted as if it were our very being in Indivisibility.”** So, an aesthetic experience and a religious experience both are considered to be the same.

- But, being similar is not being the same. Art is not Religion, nor Religion Art. There are basic differences between them. The religious experience is a **‘Permanent’** experience. But, the rasa or aesthetic experience is a momentary one, and there is no idea about how long the experience would sustain when the object will be removed.

- There is one more important difference between aesthetic experience and religious experience. **Abhinavagupta** says that the religious experience takes us away from life in his anxiety to relate himself with the extreme excellence and he keeps himself fixed to this world of name and form and to the world of daily practical needs.

- An aesthetic experience deals with total freedom (moksha or nirvana) from the knots of the world of name and form. So, art and religion are poles apart.