

Globalization and Westernization in Contemporary Indian Art

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Abstract

Indian artistic practices have been influenced and transformed by Western art throughout history. It's not a direct imitation of the Western style but the fusion and impact of these trends on Indian art till now. The influence of Western trends has increased due to digital media and Globalization. This research paper focuses on contemporary Indian art and its Globalization. Globalization has led to the introduction of Indian art to a broader global audience, increasing its connection to the world and gaining recognition globally. Contemporary Indian art is reinterpreted rather than imitating Western art. It was the process of hybridization, blending Western style with Indian subject matter, themes, and history narratives. Contemporary Indian artists stay on their roots while adopting global trends, creating in their language through the amalgamation of traditional Indian art and Western art techniques. Artists follow what is happening around them, which is relevant to their everyday life in their work; using the material in the presentation of the work which is more experimental and easily accessible. These changes have also affected the audience and the art trends. Contemporary Indian art emerged in the late 90s, and it went through Western trends such as conceptual art and installation. Video Installation and performance art, using their technique and indigenous material. Artists like Subodh Gupta, Bharti Kher, Anish Kapoor, Jitish Kallat, and Shilpa Gupta gained recognition in the global art market through their contemporary works; these artists create a visual bridge between East and West. This research focuses on contemporary Indian artworks, the Globalization of Postmodernism, and conceptual art.

Keywords: Indian Art, Globalization, Contemporary Art, Indian Artist, Western Trends, Amalgamation, Postmodernism



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Introduction

Contemporary Indian art has significantly transformed because globalization and Westernization have shaped artistic expression, technique, and the art market. Historically, Indian art was influenced by the external art style, from Persian miniatures to Mughal painting to Westernization since colonial times had impacted. In contemporary times, globalization in art enhances further steps in cultural exchange through the amalgamation of indigenous and Western artistic practices.

Globalization has impacted Indian contemporary art, increasing both global recognition and challenges in the traditional practice of Indian art. Contemporary Indian art practices took place through partial Westernization from the boom period in the 2000s to now. Modern Indian art reached its peak when artists such as Subodh Gupta, Shilpa Gupta, and Jitish Kallat represented the process of globalization through their works and showed the changes in visual culture. Artists have gained individual growth and recognition through the globalization of the art world since the late 1990s. Globalization has expanded Indian art in diverse trends, from modernism to postmodernism to conceptual and digital art. It has also impacted the subject matter of artworks artists engage in, such as identity, postcolonial, migration, and hybridity. It reflects a globalized art world, often influenced by Western art movements like abstract Expression, Minimalism, and postmodernism (Anand, 2023). In the Postcolonial period, Indian artists wanted to reinterpret these influences, amalgamating Western techniques with a blend of Indigenous themes. The 2000s have led to the growth of the international art market in India, making Indian art to Global art markets contributions such as the Kochi-Muziris

Biennale, the India Art Fair, the Serendipity Art Festival, the Delhi Photo Festival, and the Chennai Photo Biennale. However, the intersection point of globalization and Westernization in Indian art increases the complexity of cultural identity. This research paper focused on how Westernization and globalization have shaped the contemporary art of India, reviewing the historical aspects, important key artists, and the challenges faced for the reconciliation of traditional art with modernity in the art world.

Background of Western Influence on Indian Art

Westernization in Indian art was directly influenced by colonial rule when East Indian companies came to India, from the company school to now. The European artistic style evolved through various historical phases of Indian art.

Phase I: Britisher ruled in India from (1757 to 1947); they focused on the Western academic styles, realism, and portraiture introduced to the Indian art school of the colonial period. Examples are the Government School of Art in Calcutta (1854) and the Sir J. J School of Art in Bombay (1857). following oil painting and realism through the art. Company school painting (18th-19th century), which is known as Patna Kalam and Baazar style of art with the influence of Western art style and Indigenous subject matter. British introduced academic realism in Indian art through art colleges like the Government College of Art in Kolkata.

Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906) learned oil painting through the British artist Theodore Jensen. A pioneer who blended Indian mythological themes in the Western realism oil color style influenced modern Indian art.

Phase II: Western influence on Indian art is directly and indirectly through the artist's work. The Bengal school and Nationalist movement of the early 20th century transformed the colonial style into an Indian indigenous style. Bengal schools tried to revive Indigenous Indian art and Indian style in their artworks. The establishment of art schools through the British government, madras, Kolkata, Lahore, and Bombay school art schools was influenced by Western art styles and trends. But in Bengal school, Abanindranath Tagore and E.V. Havell tried to revive the art of the Indian Mughal school and Ajanta Cave paintings with Japanese wash techniques. This movement focused on the nationalist struggle, promoting Indian art against Western art.

Phase III: Independence Modernism (1947-1980s), Indian artists represent the modernist movement and identify their Indian cultural identity through artistic representation. The artists F.N. Souza, M.F Husain, S.H. Raza, and other Progressive Artists Group (PAG) founded the first post-independent artistic group. Influenced by global modernism, influenced by Cubism, Abstract Expressionism, and surrealism. F.N. Souza's work combined European expressionism with Indian Iconography. Picasso inspires M.F. Husain's abstract work, but the theme is rooted in India. S.H. Raza uses *Bindu* in his work on Indian spirituality using geometric abstraction.

Phase IV: Contemporary Indian art (1990-present) and Globalization; after the 1947 partition, the British left India but left their impact behind them. Contemporary artists gained Western galleries and digital media. In 1990, artists explored and experimented with new forms and engaged with digital art, conceptual art, installation, video art, and performance art, including the subject matter of the postcolonial period, like migration, identity, and division.

Indian Artists in the Age of Globalization

Anish Kapoor: British- Indian sculptor specialized in installation and conceptual art, born in Mumbai in 1954. Internationally renowned sculptor blending Western Minimalism with Indian philosophy. Artist exhibit his work throughout the world and addressing site specific architectural art piece.

- *Cloud Gate*, 2006: a monumental stainless-steel sculpture. Now, the location is Millennium Park, Chicago. It reflects the skyline and the city, representing Indian philosophy with Western Minimalism.
- *Sky Mirror*, 2001: A concave stainless-steel mirror of 35 feet in diameter was installed in New York and London. It reflected and transformed the perspective of surroundings engaged with the modern urban environment and focused on material, form, and space.



Cloud Gate, stainless-steel sculpture, 2006
Millennium Park, Chicago

Image Courtesy:

<https://www.doublestonesteel.com>

Subodh Gupta: Subodh Gupta was born and raised in Bihar in 1964. Artists made large-scale sculptures and installations. Using everyday Indian objects (steel, kitchen utensils, tiffins, bicycles) to comment on Globalization. Globalization, materiality, and everyday Indian objects. He represents his roots through his

work and the materials he has used to create an installation.

- *Very Hungry God*, 2006: It is a massive sculpture of hundreds of stainless steel kitchen utensils, using these utensils to create a giant skull. This sculpture reflects the transformation of culture and the after effects of Globalization. This large scale sculpture is in the collection of Pinault.
- *Doot*, 2003: An Ambassador car sculpture made up of aluminium. Now parked in the courtyard of Madhavendra Palace. This is a symbolic work represent by th artist, one can't travel in this Ambassador, but as an icon it travel too far.



Very Hungry God, 2006, Installation

Image: Courtesy:

<https://publicdelivery.org/subodh-gupta-very-hungry-god/>

Bharti Kher: Bharti Kher is a British- Indian contemporary artist born in 1969 in London, UK. Done work in mixed media in painting, sculpture, and installation. Her sculptural installation art represents the issues of identity and culture, Incorporating Western postmodernist techniques while exploring Indian mythology and gender identity. Postmodern engagement with hybridity and identity.

- *The Skin Speaks a Language Not Its Own*, 2006: **Fibreglass** covered with a bindi pattern, a life-size elephant, Bindi used symbolically to represent Indian culture with the amalgamation of Western contemporary art style (Tong, K. 2014). This Sculpture exhibit in Berlin, Vienna, and London.



The Skin Speaks a Language Not Its Own, 2006

Fiberglass, bindis

Image Courtesy: <https://www.perrotin.com>

Jitish Kallat: Kallat has done painting, photography, sculpture, installations, and multimedia works. Political narratives and cross-cultural aesthetics. Subject Matters, which he has used to create artwork, Migration, Urbanization, and Global Capitalism.

- *Public Note- 3* (2009,2010, 2011), contextual-based installations which reinterpret historical speeches by Gandhi ji, Nehru, and Swami Vivekananda's speech. In Public Note 3, he used installation with the time in light of post 9/11 paranoia in the United States, text in the museum's stairs in bright color, using typography and LED screen. The digital projection shows how historical narratives evolve in the Global world.
- *Covering Letter*, 2012: Kallat depicted Gandhi's letter to Hitler requesting him not

to go through the war and maintain a peaceful world, a projection of a fog-like screen installation with the text of the same letter given to Hitler. In this letter Gandhi ji addressed him with *Dear Friend*. This video projection was part of the Indian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019: themes addressing war and the interconnections of global histories.



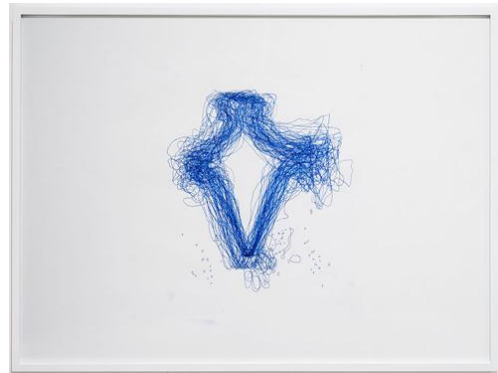
Covering Letter, 2012

fogsreen, Projection

Image Courtesy: <https://jitishkallat.com>

Shilpa Gupta: Shilpa Gupta is a contemporary Indian Artist based in Mumbai, born in 1976. She has done work on a wide range of mediums, including mixed media, a variety of found objects, and new media artists.

- *There is No Border Here, 2006:* It is a yellow stripe multimedia installation depicting the concept of national borders shaped by Migration and Globalization. This yellow-striped flag is nobody's body's flag; it contains text that sounds like the letter front war front.
- *100 Hand Drawn Maps Here, 2008-12:* A hundred people were invited to draw their country maps in Mumbai, Cuenca, Delme, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Montreal, and different parts of Italy. These maps represent the imaginary boundaries of a country.



100 Hand Drawn maps of my country

Carbon Tracings on Paper, 2008,

Image Courtesy: <https://shilpagupta.com/100-hand-drawn-maps-carbon-tracings/>

Key Western Influences on Contemporary Indian Art

Techniques: Oil Painting, Perspective and Realism

Themes: Focused on changing social and political issues, Urbanization, and modern life while adopting Western techniques, artists focused on Indian subject matter. Postcolonial, they focused on the theme of identity and migration.

Postmodern Impact: Adopt Western art techniques and media adaptation, like video, installation, and performance art. Indian art also worked through the inspiration of Cubism, Abstract expressionism, Pop art, and Minimalism.

The Western influence on Indian art is not only limited to the colonial period but also made Indian art more open in the global world. Postcolonial artists started experimenting with new forms and styles influenced by Western trends. The impact of Western culture stayed for a long on Indian artists, depicting their subject matter with the implementation of both Eastern and Western styles (Anand, 2023).

Role of Globalization in Shaping Indian Art

- Due to Globalization, Indian art has gained global recognition and increased global visibility. It also provides a common platform to all artists, which helps to create a worldwide network of the artistic world.
- It blended traditional and contemporary art to make it more accessible to the international market.
- It gives opportunities for Indian artists to enhance their livelihood through socio-economic development and provides a broader audience through art fairs and international exhibitions.
- Globalization exchanges culture, which leads to appreciating and understanding Indian culture.
- Globalization has made art a universal language by allowing artists to exhibit their work on wider platforms like Galleries, Art fairs, and Biennales.

Challenges of Globalization and Westernization

- Westernization and Globalization influenced the evolution of Indian culture, which led to culture homogenization and the end of Indigenous tradition.
- The exploitation of art and culture of Indian art with the domination of Western culture and values.
- Due to the enhancement of Western education, traditional Indian knowledge and skills are depleting.
- The exploitation of Indian artisans and local communities is because they don't get the same recognition for their work as contemporary Indian artists in the global market.

- Increasing competition between private art collectors and galleries to get work and booming artwork prices contribute to declining affordability among people.

Conclusion

Globalization and Westernization Impact was easily found in Indian Art, quickly enhancing both the Challenges and the Opportunities. Due to globalization, Indian art has become a subject of migration, displacement, urbanization, identity crisis, and the mixing of cultures. Few of the prominent artists of contemporary India have worked in the fusion of Indian themes with Western style and mythology, like Jitesh Kallat, Bharti Khar, Anish Kapoor, Shilpa Gupta, and Subodh Gupta. Their work always depicts the national border and global identity crisis; otherwise, this globalization also gives exposure and authenticity to the artistic work in the commercial art market with the unique lens of global narratives. This delineated and increased risk for the local and Indigenous art and culture and regional artists in creating their art identity in the worldwide market. Lastly, contemporary Indian artists represent the fusion of tradition and modernity; because of this, the traditional Indian artistic identity is overshadowed, and artists continuously work in response to globalization to create their own identity globally.

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