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# **Cubist History and It's Approach in India from Modern to Liquid Modernism**

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## **Abstract**

With the continuation of Post-Impressionism and Fauvism, Cubism shows the path of abstraction, geometrization, and all the modern art movements in the twentieth century in Europe. The movement was led by Georges Barque and Pablo Picasso. It influenced Indian artists like Gagnendranath Tagore, whose style and unique application of colour on forms deal with chiaroscuro, space handling, and indigenous depiction of subject matter. Avoiding the philosophy of the Bengal School of Art, and choosing subject matter in the first quarter of twentieth-century art practices played an important role in fabricating the imminence of Indian cubist art. After rejecting the Western thoughts of the Bengal School of Art, Gagnendranath Tagore adopts the execution of cubism. In the age of computerization, drastic change in art practices with materialistic approaches breaks all the conventional philosophy by their appetite. Need to revisit and trace more than a hundred years of journey of the cubist philosophy along with the perspective and approaches of Indian artists. This study shows the cubist art practices from the 1920s to liquid modernism in the context of Indian art. This paper deals with western cubist aesthetics which influenced Indian artists from the 1920s to the post-modern artists and till date and how the artist adopted an indigenous way. This uniqueness deals with the conceptualization and its analysis.

**Keywords:** Cubism, Gagnendranath Tagore, Indian Art and artist, Modern and Post-Modern Indian Art, Pablo Picasso.

## **Introduction**

One of the innovative and diverse modern art movements in the Western world is 'cubism' with three stages of evolution. Starting with the formative stage of cubism Pablo Picasso explored primitivism with minimum uses of colour and diving figures with shapes and forms accomplished to analytical and synthetic cubism. The seeds of the cubist movement were hidden around 1905, which was explored around 1908 with the concept of analyse and the word 'analyse' was used first time in 1908 defined by the cubist artist. Indian artists adopted it around 1918-1920. Gagnendranath Tagore sightseen the cubism parallel to the Bengal School of Art movement which was run by Abanindranath Tagore and EV Havel. The behavioural characteristics of the artist are shown in the cubist movement in India. The adoption of planes and bold lines to segregate the overlapped forms brought the individuality of the group of artists like the Mumbai Progressive group around the 1950s. Indian art after post-independence mostly strikes on the subject matter with its execution and emphasis on the philosophical and representational art practices of Bengal School and Indian Oriental society. Art historian Stella Cambridge, Partha Mitter, R Siva Kumar, Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, E. H. Gombrich, W. G. Archer and their views on cubist practices in Bengal, India focused to rethink on the concept of 1920s art practices and its relevance to the contemporary. From Bengal School of Art, Oriental Art society, Calcutta group (1943), Association of Madras (1944), Bombay Progressive group (1947), Delhi Shilpi chakra (1949), Triveni kala Sangam (1951), carries the Indian modern art movement. Artists of the 90s were infected by the notions of pluralism and multiculturalism. (Dalmia, 2008) Because of the technological evolution, of materialistic approaches use of mediums, languages, and aesthetics of contemporary has changed. (Chaudhuri, 2010) Apart from gallery space, space took the spaces, time being bound by biennales, art fairs, land art, installation art, public art, digital art, book art, etc. But the persistence of modern art in liquid modern practices is still present in the form of art, culture, literature, painting, sculpture, design, etc.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this paper is to understand the ethics and aesthetic approaches of Western cubist aesthetics which influenced Bengal and as well Indian artists around the early twentieth century and the continuation of the same modern and contemporary art practices. And to trace the aesthetic approaches while dealing with Western concepts parallel to the 'Bengal School of Art' and 'Oriental Society of Art' during the cubist movement in Europe and the 1920s to post-modern art practices in India. To fetch the picture-perfect understanding of radical change from academic to personal practices, salon and people's reactions, comments, and reviews on cubist art and aesthetics in

India. And objectives are to trace the cubist movement and aesthetics in Europe, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, indigenous artistic applications, Indian cubist painter Gagnendranath Tagore, Progressive group of artists along with 'Indian Picasso'- M F Hussain and other artists, Mumbai Progressive group, K G Subramaniam, Rabin Mondal, N S Bendre, HA Gade, Paritosh Sen, etc.

### **Cultural Background During Early 1920s-1950s Art Practices in India**

Tracking the Indian art, culture and aesthetics value of human beings and thoughts of the Indians from the perspective of Indian independence movements like 'The Partition of Bengal (1905)' to 'The First & Second World War (1914-1918 & 1939-1945)' have dominated the history of Indian art, which cross the barrier of an Indigenous thought by some artists. Abnindranath Tagore's Painting 'Barat Mata'1905- shows its ethical representation of Swadeshi ideals which denied western naturalism. The characterization of the 1920s was all about nonviolence and the interpretation of women. British colonization around the 1940s also changed the direction of art practices which was followed by the company painting. But Indian artists came up with exotic art and cultural identities parallel to French aesthetics and thoughts. The contribution of the Indian artist in nationalism breaks by the Avant grade movement in the 1930s by the Euro-American subjective canons. (Banerji, 2009). And again, took over the Mumbai Progressive Group around the 1950s.

### **Cubist Philosophy and Approaches to Art**

From 1905 onwards Pablo Picasso experimented with primitivism art practices with the flat layer on women's bodies (Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, Paris, June-July 1907) with the minimum use of color. And Cezanne's work in Post Impressionism (late 19th century) had hints of layers where nature, objects, human beings are shown with bold and flat color on the surface plan instead of a three-dimensional effect. In 1908 Picasso and Braque formulated one of the radicals' turning points of art history with the formation of the formative stage of cubism.(Gardner & Kleiner, 2004) Cubism was invented by French art critic Louis Vauxcelles after seeing the abstract landscape of cubes by Braque. Rejecting naturalistic approaches and emphasis on form and shape brings the illusionist approaches to a central point by challenging the concept of conveying the messages instead of giving life to new inventions through analytical and synthetic cubism. Henry Matisse analyses Baroque's works and art critic Louis Vauxcelles describes them as 'Cubic Oddities' in his 'with little Cube'. (Archer et al., 1987). And also added 'As an audacious young man Braque constructs deformed along with despite form to geometric diagram with simplifying execution, to cubes. Cubists left the concept of renaissance compositional frame, cubist composition adopted mural aesthetics where

forms/shapes are coming out of the frame which means continuity of the work, breathing space reduced to create conceptual space. The reality of forms comes through the application of the layer's method with direct approaches. Experiment and analyze the form and shape of both the artist Picasso and Braque in analytical cubism. Art historian Roger Fry mentioned creating a form is equal to creating a life. (Gardner & Kleiner, 2004) 'The Portuguese' by Braque is one of the best examples of analytical cubism. Minimal use of color makes the difference between German expressionism and fauvism. The concept of chiaroscuro was considerably changed by Braque around 1908-1911, and around 1912 new age of cubism explored in view of social changes through synthetic cubism with collage and materialistic approaches (Picasso's Still Life with Chair-Caning, 1912, oil on canvas). The cane chair shows a photolithographed pattern, an oilcloth piece pasted on canvas, and rope used as a frame brings the illusion which challenges reality. Picasso's work a sculptural quality, and painting quality Braque's work, and surficial value bring the measurement of cubism and unprecedented in its use of technology. (Umland & Hartzell, 2016). Cubism was the lattice as the organizational value of modern art, Rosalind Krauss mentioned, which avoids narrations, critical exegesis and anti-mimetic form. (Goddard, 2015).

In the case of searching for identity, social crisis in communities around the 1900s because of the Industrial Revolution, the modern artists found their way into the chaos. Apart from a social perspective, avoiding conventional aesthetics, brought a new way to visualize the plastic arts. Cubism is not the art of imitation, it's a collaboration of subject, materials, and prospect. Subject matters deal with daily life objects, figurative composition, and details of ordinary views which brings harmony, and balance to the view of understanding. Chair, tables, iconic buildings, glasses, ashtrays, pipes, alphabets, single numerical, bottles, guitars, violins, and rope-all the industrial and readymade products being used along with saucepan-lid, scrap metal, linoleum, bolt, and screw by the cubist artist. Apart from executing the materials mediums also played vital roles where oil cloth, charcoal, and fastened paper were used for painting with sfumato and impasto techniques. Roger Fry in his book 'Vision and Design' stated infinity sphere may perhaps be reduced to a partial dozen planes, and each plane relates to other planes on the surface. Along with handling complex forms, cubists threw the scaffolding and constructed palpably and completely unified designs with natural forms. (Fry, 1920).

European aesthetics destroyed the Western school of aesthetics approaches which were used for a long and countered the symmetric thought of erection, color harmony, and execution theory. According to the cubist aesthetics world, the order does not lie in visual advent, it depends on the artist's will which makes the difference from renaissances believed in the scientific perspective of world order.

Belief started with architectonic structural form, intellectuality, indigenous identity, and unsmiling from where design aesthetics and principles turn into a new path like the abstraction of space handling within the form, simplified, illusionism, the invention of the fourth dimension, hyperbole, fabrication, etc. (Robbins, 1988).

The application of the conceptualization of cubist aesthetics starts with abstraction followed by line, shape, materials, rhythm, harmony, and deconstruction against construction has given a thought of change to see the work in a different direction. (Dias, 2006). And the non-euclidian geometrical division of the pictures expresses the transformation to feel the art that embraced texture, scale and proportion still valid in today's art and design practices worldwide.

### **Adoption And Practices by Indian Artists in Pre to Liquid-Modern**

Cubist aesthetics not only influenced Dada, Boubois, Surrealist, Pop, Futurism, Expressionism, Vorticism, Suprematism, Orphism, and Constructivism and. but also Indian artists like Gagnendranath Tagore, MF Hussain, SH Raza, Ramkumar Bakre, Tayeb Mehta and many more modern and contemporary practicing artists. European modern art was influenced by magazines and during the time of World War I when the Bauhaus exhibition took place in Calcutta. The effect of German expressionism is quite mixed with Indian cubist art practices in terms of composition, architectural space, form division, color application, and the spectre's eye movement. From 1905 to 1914 cubism in Europe didn't appear in India in the same way practiced by Gagnendranath Tagore, Rabin Mondal, Narayan Shridhar Bendre, Jehangir Sabavala Ram Kumar, K. G. Subramanyan, Francis Newton Souza. Because of the geographical location, the access point differs and the hegemonic significance of Cubism disintegrates, where a plurality of dynamic interlocking modernism, and visions of aesthetics have appeared. Art curator Ahmad Mashadi quoted. (Cubism in Asia: Unbounded Dialogues, 2005). And he argued that cubism should be considered as a world art movement, as a unique negotiation with individual artwork making a unique intercession between the syntax of Cubism and artisans' intellectual contexts individual social, and political approaches unfastens a more censorious interpretation of history in a different direction with discontinuous, fractional, unequal, allowing for paradox and biases that may still be exiting in present in contemporary art practices. Picasso's veracity was in no way conceded by the plagiarizing, in disparity to the avant-garde and colonial artist Gagnendranath Tagore, and one of the most successful artists who analysed the space used by European artisans-Asok Mitra added. (Beattie, n.d.). And the cubist art practice by the artist started before the Bauhaus exhibition happened in Calcutta around 1920. Art critic Partha Mitter stated in his book 'Triumph of Modernism' that Gagnendranath

Tagore was the only Indian cubist painter who fabricated the linguistic approach of the syntax of cubism in painting before the 1940s. (Mitter, 2007). 'City in Night in 1925, 9" x 6 1/2" Type: Watercolor, Cubist study a crowded street scene collected by Victoria Memorial Hall. Referred paintings were experiments with fragmented forms and bright color palettes around 1921. Balancing cubism in the circumstances of Bengal school thoughts and aesthetics, Gagnendranath Tagore emphasizes the straightforwardness of arrangement and erection and the emphasis on the local and empirical subject matter. The third phase called the 'Vichitra Phase' (1915-1921) out of the other four phases involved cubist try-outs and the post cubist around 1925-1930s, like Bed of Arrows'-gouache and watercolor on paper, cardboard, which goes against Oriental Society of Art practices. From Stella Cambridge to Abanindranath Tagore's acknowledgement of Gagnendranath Tagore's art practices called it Indian cubism. Musical painting is a sterile arrangement of abstraction by the intermingling of allegorical forms. The asymmetric construction of the composition brings the inner feelings and experiences which took the analytical cubism to an expressive way. (Mitter. P, in his book The Triumph of Modernism, India's artists and the avant-garde 1922-1947, 2007, p. 20) And also author added consuming energy through broken surfaces making the Indian cubist a painterly and fairy elegance world. (Mitter, 2007). Art historian R Siva Kumar argues that Gagnendranath Tagore's artistic impacts and practices cannot be denied, and the impulse of rethinking conceptualization and the expressive means of traditional art practices came from its encounter with western art under colonialism-he added. Rabindranath Tagore stated in Gagnendranath Tagore's work that, an incredible 'imaginative value' makes the spectators feel about the artist's experiments and the mysterious depth.

And in the context of Post-Independence Indian artists were part of the cubist movement, which came through exhibitions in galleries with idiosyncratic styles. "The statistic of Cubism has not been understood and that even today there are people who cannot see anything in it means nothing, at the same time Pablo Picasso quoted not reading and understanding English does not mean that the English language does not exist. (Kumar, 2022). With the extension of the cited quotation, Indian artists came up with a new manifest with a unique order, like SK Bakre's work called 'Untitled'-1963. And in Ram Kumar's work with the same-titled direct influence from a cubist artist with a monochromatic scheme, with a bold and dark outline on the landscape, strikes the psychology to make people think. (Kumar, 2022). And on the other hand, MF Hussain, called an Indian Picasso by Forbes Magazine, with the same title of his work in 1950 took advantage in a classic way. MF Hussain applied cubist thought to animals and humans through overlapped colors and bold lines comparatively related to the formative stage of cubism.(Kumar, 2022). With the continuation of mapping cubist practices by Indian

artist S H Raza, different approaches (Presence Inconnue-1966) were absent of geometrical shapes and dealt with imprecise abstraction on the surface. Overlapped forms, nonexistence outlines, and comparatively regular forms added the charm of semblance. (Kumar, 2022). The painting titled 'Untitled' (Houses) by Badri Narayan speaks about multiple perspectives. F N Souza's work is modern enough according to the Western context but not in an Indian manner. The lack of true feel and the commercial perspectives are unable to with his contemporary artist, as W G Archer found. H A Gade was the post-independence first abstract artist, known for his remarkable approaches to the landscape. (Artisera Editorial, 2017). And in the late 1970s, Paritosh Sen's work touched on the formative stages of cubist practices called primitivism, such as 'The Accident'-1972, 'Holi'-1990. His individual practices catch the culturalist approaches. (Saffron, n.d.). The same is visible in Tayeb Mehta's works likewise. According to Geeta Kapoor, renowned artist, K G Subramaniam was fascinated with synthetic cubist phases and fauvists, such as 'Reverie of an army man's wife', 1981, carrying deep ideas which erupt the Indian ingenuity. (Ramakrishnan, 2017). The influences of post-cubist collage around the 1960s work 'Portrait Gallery'. Anguish, forfeiture wrath foamed in the late 1950s, when Satish Gujral was unable to track European modernism like post-Impressionism, Expressionism, and Cubism. But somewhere the effect of formative stages in cubism is visible in his works viz, overlapped forms, colors on outlines. For paintings and murals, ('Untitled' 1998, mixed media on canvas, 44 x 33 in,) he executes the form, scale, and order in an expressionist way. (Hoskote, 2020). 'Towards a Transcendental Future' by Biren de, and 'Features Without Form' by G R Santosh works are about the overlapped forms and their color. The journey of cubism came across more than a hundred years in Europe and India in's centenary. The French movement on abstraction got over by 1914s and the effects of this came to an end around the 1970s. Postmodernism started which starts in India after the 1980s. In the time the 1960s and 70s artists moved from cultural aspects to urbanization like Gulam Mohammad Sheikh, Arpita Sing, Bhupen Kakkar, Nalini Malini, Vivan Sundaram, Sudhir Patwardhan, Baiju Parthan, where the subject matter is important rather than the geometrical presentation of the composition. (Gayatri Sinha, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

In the interpretation of representation of painting in the 1940s, it was the movement of independences and the identifications of the particular artist where roughness, juxtaposition and the taste of Indian flavour being seen in the composition which slowly moved forward to a cultural context, landscapes and genre practices. K G Subramaniam stated aesthetics of cubism were taken in a wide-ranging way by the first-generation modern artist, and academic practices avoided realism, spatial

compression, and form transformation. And this handy cubist practice became an execution of cumulative images. (K G Subrmaniyam, n.d.). Indian indigenous art practices were threatened by western colonial art practices around the first half of the twentieth century and changes in the taste and aesthetics in current art practices still continue in liquid modernism. ‘The Cubist Epoch’-by Douglas Cooper in 1971, Krauss reviewed — understanding the ecstasy of existence ‘directionless in the actual encounter.’ Cubists refused to propose a concept of cubism amalgams, but also accompaniments and artists’ own lack of readability. Practicing cubist thoughts in India had advantages, threads, and opportunities in the initial stages, but didn’t contribute as an aid to the national movement, which was done by the Bengal School of Art. Some of the contemporary art practices have the touch of cubist approaches, whether it is a gallery base or at a professional level.

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