

Westernization in india essay



Britain realized it when they took India from the East India Company and today the United States and European powers are taking advantage of a large and cheap labor force and emerging middle class. Indian artists are benefiting especially from this economic boom as the middle class and wealthy in India are their main supporters.

The strife of the lower class seems to be one of the main themes used by artists and it plays well to Westerners, concerned with the struggles of the Third World.

Throughout modern art history, Indian artists have responded to the changes to their country and attempted to find their identities in a struggle with modernism and prejudices of the West after independence. The purpose of this essay is to highlight the impact the West has had on the cultural and artistic legacy that continues today with Indian and Pakistani artists. I will start with the colonial period under the British Raj and the major cultural changes it caused through the example of the forming of 'Hinduism'.

I will then discuss the modernist period and move on to Indian's current situation, discussing the status of being a contemporary artist of South Asian origins. In 1858 the British Raj was established in India and their goal was to form India in their own image.

All scholarship was Western based, which included archeology, anthropology, linguistics and other areas which came to be known as Indology, the study of Indian's history, people, and culture; much of which was lost in time to the Indian people.

The findings of this scholarship were formed to coincide with Christian-Jude Western history, resulting in a skewed, partially imagined Indian history. These conclusions were then taught to the Indian students in universities, so educated Indians who would have some influence in governance during and after the colonial period, were informed of their own country and history by Western scholars.

With the influx of British realism in painting, not only did the British think of Indian art as primitive, but Indian people came to think of it that way as well. All forms of patronage for 2 traditional Indian painting stopped and schools, founded by the British, were now teaching oil painting and European techniques. Traditional Indian painters, who lost their patronage, changed their style to the tastes of the British, in what is known as breaking of hundreds, even thousands of years of art history and culture.

To more fully understand the cultural impact of British colonialism in India, one can look to the forming of 'Hinduism' as a world religion, written about by Richard King in *Orientation and the Modern Myth of "Hinduism"*. Richard King is a critic and supporter of the ideas put forth by Edward Said in his book *Orientation*, which is a critical look into the way Orientations formed their image of Eastern cultures. The term Hindu in fact was originally derived from a Persian word and simply referred to the people of Indian subcontinent, not to a religion, until the nineteenth century.

As the European Orientalists began to compose Indian history and religion, since "the natives are unreliable interpreters of their own laws and culture," they began to try and create a homogeneity concept of Indian religion from

the multitude of practices and beliefs, which had no single name or doctrine, spread throughout the country. 2 How else could “ such religious liberality as would give members of the same society the freedom by individual choice, to practice the religion they liked” exist without a hierarchal structure and similar theology? The British and Orientations had to find an explanation that Europeans themselves could relate to and, as Richard King explains, they sought this in two ways, “ firstly by locating the core of Indian religiosity in certain Sanskrit texts (the decentralization of Indian religion) and secondly by an implicit (and sometimes explicit) tendency to define Indian religion in terms of normative definition of religion based upon contemporary Western understanding of lulled-Christian traditions. “ 4 A clear example of this is seen in the translations of Hindu scripture to English that use similar wording and sentence structure used in the Christian bible.

There is even a trinity in Hinduism, supposedly acknowledged by al Hindus, and includes a god most Hindus do not pray 1 There are many definitions of an Orientals; simply put it was a scholar responding to interactions with the East and the West’s fascination and repulsion with the Orient’. It was an attempt to define the unknown, what many felt was backward and opposite to their own culture in the West. 2 Richard King, “ Orientation and the Modern Myth of Hinduism,” *Menu* 46, no. 2 (1999): 155. 3 *Ibid*, 169 4 *Ibid*, 166 to.

But a trinity does not exist for a villager in a remote area of India whose ideas of religion are largely based on oral tradition and the belief of gods and goddesses mound in natural objects, such as trees and stones.

However during this Orientals reformation of Hinduism “ the oral and ‘ popular’ aspects of Indian religious tradition Nerve ignored or decried as evidence of the degradation of contemporary Hindu religion into superstitious practice on the grounds that they bear little or no resemblance to “ their own” texts. 5 This prejudice normalized the villages and small towns in India and allowed further control by a central power, imposing their idea of what India should be and what religious practices were lawful to suit their Nesters tastes. In this way “ the Orientals scholar was an accessory, an accomplice, partner-in-crime, of the politician, merchant, soldier, missionary and colonial t allowed them to control the Indian people and ban certain practices simply because it was against the Indian people’s own religious text and traditions.

One Mould think the Indian people would have opposed the idea of a singular religion and culture common to them all, however they had “ no reason to contradict this; to them the religious and cultural unity discovered by Western scholars was highly Unwelcome in their search for national identity in the period of struggle for national onion. “ 7 The Brahmins, the highest class in India (largely priests), worked with the arthritis in many cases simply because the Orientations, “ convinced of the degradation of contemporary Indian civilization in the present era of gallingly..

. Nearly found a receptive and willing religious elite, who, for that very reason remained amenable to the rhetoric of reform. “ 9 This endorsement by Indian Brahmins and certain classes of society, namely the new scholarly Indians taught in British schools, is an example of the Indian people forming their selfsame from Orientals discourse. King quotes Armorial Taper, a

professor of Indian history, suggesting 56 Ibid, 167 Harry Allowed, Journeys East: 20th Century Encounters with Eastern Religious Traditions (World Wisdom Inc, 2004), <http://www>.

Worldwide. Com : accessed February 1, 2012), 8. King, "Orientation and the Modern Myth of Hinduism," 169 8 There are believed to be four stages of the universe in Hinduism, Caligula is the fourth and final; the age of destruction. 9 Ibid, 170 "this new Hinduism, furnished with a Britannica base, was merged with elements of "upper caste belief and ritual with one eye on the Christian and Islamic models," his was thoroughly infused with a political and nationalistic emphasis.

Taper describes the contemporary development as "Syndicated Hinduism," and notes that it is "being pushed forward as the sole claimant of the inheritance of indigenous Indian religion. 10 This newly constructed 'Syndicated Hinduism' allowed the British and upper class Indians to structure and control Indian society. It politicized and amalgamated what was once a large number of separate but related beliefs, evolving over time regionally, into a single scripture's national religion. Plasticization rather popularized the caste system to the highly prejudiced form we see today in India.

In effect, the British were able to pit Indian against Indian and keep them from doing what the members of their former colonies in the Americas achieved; a great fear of the British.

The formation of Hinduism as it is known today is an example of the extreme changes that British rule had on the culture, recorded history, and self-image of India. The Orientals revision of what the Indian people were, <https://assignbuster.com/westernization-in-india-essay/>

whether it was correct or not, was absorbed into the Indian psyche and in the twentieth century Indians were seeking a unifying national image in order to gain independence. The 'ere constructed ideas of a homogeneous Indian history and a national religion of peace, which was becoming respected by the West, would be taken by the Indian Orientation.

Artists during the colonial period had to contend with these Orientals, Resurrection, and nationalist ideas.

In his book, *Triumph of Modernism: Indian's Artists and the Avian-garden, 1922-1947*, art historian Partha Chatterjee describes how the West has seen Indian art and that of other colonized cultures: " Stylistic influence, as we are all aware, has been the cornerstone of art historical discourse since the Renaissance. Nineteenth-century art history, in the age of Western domination, extended it to Enroll art, ranking it according to the notion of progress, with Western art at its apex.

Influence acquired an added resonance in colonial art history. For 10 Ibid, 172 Archer [a British art historian], the use of the syntax of Cubism, a product of the West, by an Indian artist, immediately locked him into a dependent relationship, the colonized mimicking the superior art of the colonizer.

Indeed influence has been the eye epistemic tool in studying the reception of Western art in the non-western world: if the product is too close to its original source it reflects slavish mentality; if on the other hand, the imitation is imperfect, it represents a failure.

In terms of power relations, borrowing by artists from the peripheries becomes a badge of inferiority. In contrast, the borrowings of European artists are described approvingly either as 'affinities' or dismissed as inconsequential, as evident in the primitivism exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1985. The very subtitle of the exhibition, 'affinity of the tribal and the modern', characterizes Picasso's emulation of African sculpture as no more than a mere formal 'affinity with the primitive.

In short, Picasso's integrity was in no way compromised by the borrowing, in contrast to the colonial artist Generational [an Indian artist who experimented with cubism]. "11 Neat was seen as the superior realist art of Europe became the benchmark for art in the early days of colonialism.

In an attempt to prove their worth, artists such as Raja Ravi Varma took to creating Victorian realist-styled oil paintings of Indian figures and hydrological scenes.

Varma's appropriation of Western painting helped to show the skill that Indian artists could acquire and also allowed him to sell work in a market that no longer had traditional Indian patronage. It also marked a compromise between the West and East. But with the newly forming national image of India, this foreign-born style was no longer representative of the Indian people and they began a search for their own.

Part Emitter, *Triumph of Indian Modernism: Indian's Artists and the Avenue-garden, 1922-1947* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 7-8. To create a new modern Indian style artists looked to the past: Hindu and McHugh

miniatures, the? at the time? recently discovered Junta Caves, and Japanese ink techniques learned from visiting Japanese artists. Guided by the idea of Koura Kazoo, that all of Asia was one in terms of philosophy and certain traditions, they created a Panamanian style called orientation, created by Behindhand Étagère 11871-1951).

He is credited as being the father of modern Indian art, and was supported by the sympathetic Orientals, E.

B. Have, and his Bengal School. Have allowed indigenous Indian styles to be taught and explored there for the first time in British school. Through the use of multiple layers of watercolors washes Behindhand created a hazy look where the background and delicate figures emerge subtly.

This technique can be seen in his image which became a symbol of the nationalist movement entitled Brat Mat, Brat Mat by Behindhand Étagère. Watercolors on paper, 1905. Meaning Mother India.

His earlier painting, Shah Johan, in which he depicts a dying Shah Johan looking out to the monument for his dead wife, the Tag Mall, as his daughter sits at his feet, captured the attention of the British art critics and helped him on his way to becoming one of the most influential modern artists in India, becoming leader of the Bengal School of Art and having many successful students such as Mandalay Bose, one of Banishment's first and most successful students.

Another artist Jamming Roy 11887-1972) found his inspiration from the normalized people of tribal villages and their folk art.

With this and the abstraction found in his work, it fit in well with the appropriation of the 7 Crucifixion by Jamming Roy. Tempera on canvas, xx in “ primitive” by Western artists. It also brought attention to the village people of India, despite becoming a Romanization of them at times. Appropriation of folk art was therefore not simply a trait of the West but of Indians to other Indian styles as well.

‘ In the post-Independence scenario, the focus shifted from the nation to the individual.

Rather than develop an indigenous modernism, they believed the right thing for the Indian artist was to assimilate the language of modern art and become part of international modernism. “ 12 One such artist was Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002) who in the late sass’s and sass’s attempted to display his progressive Nor with modern artists in England. He achieved some degree of success, more so than any of his colleagues, but as Part Emitter has put forth, their Indian-ones would mark their work anywhere they went and be seen as simply imitations of a Western style.

As a result very few Indian artists found Birth by Francis Newton Souza.

Oil on board, 48 x 96 in, 1955. Success in Europe. This rejection caused artists to turn inward (a cycle that continued throughout the modern period) and they sought to validate and manned popular as it lent itself nicely to the esoteric ideas of Indian religion at once concerned with the tangible and intangible; and they also revived the use of narration and literary sources. Eclecticism would still be a major tool to Indian artists, but each artist

decided how much Western and how much Eastern elements they would incorporate, which continued through the 19th century's.

One can see the immense pressure artists felt to depict themselves and their country in a certain way, struggling with nationalism or internationalism, preserving their culture while advancing it with the rest of the world.

The British in certain ways helped India, such as bringing industry and technology and setting up the framework for a modern government. But with these changes they brought social strife, prejudice and inequality, created famines, and took the wealth out of the country, which left India in a weakened state after independence. The partitioning of 1947.

Siva Kumar, "Modern Indian Art: A Brief Overview", *Art Journal* 58, no. 3 (Autumn, 1999): 18 Pakistan in 1947 was meant to ease tensions between Muslims and Hindus, instead it generated bloodshed as Hindu and Muslim families attempted to move from one side of the border to the other, as well as starting several wars over territory, creating much of the animosity between Pakistan and India? Muslim and Hindu.

Pakistan's current political stances and alleged involvement with the Taliban and other terrorist groups have also put it at odds with Western powers, as violence plagues the country.

Many artists living and working in India today, have concerned themselves with the inequities and quality of life in the sub-continent due to globalization, and as some have instead labeled it imperialism. Rapid industrialization of India has led to many problems. One of the most pressing is the

migration of people from small towns to large cities hoping to make a better living, but ending up living in slums. In a country with over 1.

2 billion people overcrowding is an obvious problem. Social inequity and the rising gap in income are occurring despite an increase in the middle class population.

The middle class is now the target (as in China) of American companies selling goods such as cars, consumer electronics, furniture, and clothing. Fast food restaurants, which are usually seen as a restaurant for the poor in the West, have become selective in the clientele they allow to come in and dine; only allowing middle/upper class customers. The government itself seems to ignore these problems and focus on economic growth and foreign investment, with the American slogan of trickled economics, an issue of controversy in the States.

For these reasons Indian art is once again being directly influenced by the West, as artists come to terms with a new technology and manufacturing driven India, focused on Increasing economic growth. India had a disappointing 2011 fiscal year, but still had respectable increase, as growth slowed or stopped in most countries. As a result of this slowdown, less foreign art buyers are in the market causing the high prices previously seen before the 2008 economic crash for Indian art to be lowered. New minimum representation in the United States.

Asia based galleries that specialize in Indian and East Asian art have had to close their worldwide galleries and focus on Asia. The largest buyers of Indian art are currently the upwardly mobile middle class and rich Indians, as <https://assignbuster.com/westernization-in-india-essay/>

well as the Indian Diaspora, looking to learn more about and supporting the arts in India. This interest, including the aspect of collecting for future refit, has helped to give the art market in India a boost while global art sales have fallen. That said the Indian art market only accounts for one percent of global art sales, with high hopes that it will increase in the coming years. 3 Contemporary Indian society continues traditional legacies, co-existing with and influencing its modern practices. A.

K. Commissary, an Indian historian during colonial times, wrote that “ East and West” imports a cultural rather than a geographical antithesis: an opposition of the traditional or ordinary way of life that survives in the East to the modern and irregular way of life that now prevails in the West. It is because such an opposition could not have been felt before the Renaissance that we say that the problem is one that presents itself only accidentally in terms of geography; it is one of times much more than places. 4 Here interaction of technology and progress with Indian’s continuing dedication to its traditions and religions, in a constitutionally secular country, creates a situation unknown in the West. This unique mix of the old and new is perhaps one of the reasons the West has such a fascination with India. Traditional clothing is still worn by a large portion of the population, even in urban areas.

Hindu religious imagery can be seen everywhere, especially that of the god Ganesha, who is usually present in the entrance of businesses, which could be a small corner shop, telecoms services, or a large industrial factory to remove obstacles to success.

The traditional/modern aspect is a major theme of many contemporary artists in South Asia, most notably the neo-miniaturists'. These artists mostly hail from Pakistan and learned traditional miniature painting from art schools such as the National College of Arts (NCAA) in Lahore, Pakistan. One of the school's most outstanding alumni is Aisha Sneaker (b. 1969) who now lives and works in the United States.

She is often credited with bringing attention to contemporary miniature painting in the West. Her work breaks down what is traditionally thought of as a miniature painting and incorporates elements of the modern society she is a part of.

Both Hindu and Muslim imagery can be seen in her work, which is curious because of the religious conflicts between the two groups. 13 ere National, "Wealth Brings Art to Delhi's New Gallery District," January 4, 2012.

[Http://www. Tensional.](http://www.tensional.com)

[E/arts-culture/art/wealth-brings-art-to-Delhi-new-gallery- district.](http://www.tensional.com/arts-culture/art/wealth-brings-art-to-Delhi-new-gallery-district) 14 A. K. Commissary, *The Bugbear of Literacy*, 80, quoted in Harry Alford, *Journeys East*, 18 10 One of the images that earned her critical attention is *Fleshy Weapons*.

The painting *Neap*, but her head is covered in a veil.

Seen as a symbol of oppression in Muslim cultures by the West, the veil to Aisha creates the power of anonymity, it does not take away the power of the woman beneath it, which the feminine power, or Shasta, of the Hindu goddess represents. In her time at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)

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where she earned her MFC in 1995, people were shocked at her use of the veil in her paintings, and as she explains in a interview with Homo Bah for The Fleshy Neaps by Aisha Sneakier. Acrylic, dry pigment, watercolors and tea wash on linen, 96 x 66 in.

Renaissance Society, the reason why to her “ is not a question of what kind of meaning the image is transmitting but what kind of meaning the viewer is projecting. “ 1 5 The stereotype of an oppressed Middle Eastern woman forced to wear a veil and susceptible to violence by men, is often conjured up in the mind of a Westerner.

Sneakier found these stereotypes frustrating. She explains that in many of the group critiques at IRIS everyone kept asking, “ What is your work about? ” They found it too culturally specific and reflective of what art was [in Pakistan], forgetting the fact that I did that because that is where I am from.

Yes, I brought my practice with me, but I Nas always dismayed at how everything that one did was bound to their place of origin. The feedback never went beyond who I am. That is understandable but very frustrating.

“ 16 15 Homo Bah, “ The Renaissance Society,” <http://www. Kindergärtners. Com/ essay. HTML> (accessed February 1, 2012).

16 Ibid. To this point, in Fleshy Weapons where the figure’s feet are instead roots, she explains, “ I was obsessed [with] interconnections and the idea of being solidification, not rooted in any one context. 17 Yet her cultural background and country of origin created expected roles for both herself and her work, and from a Western viewpoint created a barrier that they could not

get through. Even when her paintings contain Nesters imagery or themes, the ' Other' elements overshadow the fact that the work contains multiple, non-culturally specific elements; they are more about formal segments, experimenting with abstracted and defined elements and less about a Pakistani artist dealing with Pakistani issues.

This label attached to the front of artist, Neither it be Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, African or any non-western ' exotic' culture, seems to be a blessing and a curse. The country of origin tagged on seems to offer context for the artwork, but this is reliant on the information known by the viewer.

If they rely on the stereotypes? correct, or more often than not, incorrect? held of these cultures then the work will be unfairly categorized or dismissed as something they do not fall into simple stereotypical roles, in the same way someone from a certain country would not share the same characteristics with everyone else of that country.

Even with a label of neo-miniaturist, these artists can create work in vastly different ways. Blessings Upon the Land of My Love by Miriam Squishier. Emulsion and acrylic on brick.

2011 ere artist Miriam Squishier (b. 1972), now a teacher at the miniature painting program at NCAA in Lahore, is also a neo-miniaturist. His work ranges from small paintings on paper to large 17 Ibid. 12 murals and installations. In a prize winning piece he designed for the Share

Biennial in the United Arab Emirates, called Blessings Upon the Land of My Love, 2011, he painted what looks like blood splatter in the courtyard off building.

It may seem like an odd name for such a seemingly macabre piece, but upon closer inspection white flowers can be seen emerging from the red splatter marks. It is an Installation about hope, not death, and surely it can be seen as more than just a Pakistani work, as the whole world has been affected by violence and natural disasters.

Iraqi Shaw (b. 1974) is another artist from the sub-continent, born in Calcutta and brought up in Kashmir. In 2001 he started at the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, earning his BAA and MA. He, just as Aisha Sneaker, had to deal with his cultural background in a Western country, as discussed in his profile on the Tate Britain website, Some writing on Shaw work neatly positions it in terms of his Kashmir upbringing as part of ' a family of carpet makers'.

Yet this is to reduce the work to a neo-colonial notion of ' Otherness', echoing Shaw impression of being treated upon arrival at a London art school in 1998 as a ' noble savage'. As he points out: ' My work has nothing to do with what Kashmir stands for cause as a child I had so many influences. My parents are Muslim, my teachers were Hindu scholars, I went to a Christian school and historically Kashmir was Buddhist. And then I was living in India and it's very secular...

And I didn't believe in organized religion.

But there is a great tendency in the West to say that you come from here so you must be doing this and that. ' The work is not representative of or affiliated to any particular religious, geographical or ethnic influence..

. Instead, Shaw work is a Joyful conglomeration of styles and cultures colliding within a hedonistic mix. 8 Old colonial mentalities still affect artists today in a Western country, not by having any obvious Eastern elements in their work, but Just by who they are.

The Indian tradition of eclecticism is active in Shaw work, but it breaks stereotypes of what an Indian painting should look like and be made of, east and Nest holds no importance and anything goes in terms of subject matter (often of homosexuality and sadomasochism).

Shaw “ uses the veneer, or even the actual materials, of wealth and extravagance to question the values of an expensive rate Britain, “ About Garden of Earthly Delights X,” [http://www. Ate. Org. UK/Britain/exhibitions/Arturo/rickshaw/about. SHTML](http://www.Ate.Org.UK/Britain/exhibitions/Arturo/rickshaw/about.SHTML) (accessed February 1 , 2012). 3 surfaces are lurid masses of gold and enamel and metallic paints.

19 It combines cloisonné©, stained glass, medieval influences, such as Hieronymus Busch and bestiaries; Renaissance painting, especially Holstein; Japanese art and crafts, textiles, and miniature paintings into an eye-straining, Jewel-like composition, hiding the idiolect and deviant behavior depicted by Shaw. Artists can also have the label of Indian artist', even if they were not born in India. The artist Chitchat Ganges was born ND lives in Brooklyn, New York but frequently referred Garden of Earthly Delights X : detail) by Iraqi Shaw.

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Synthetic polymer paint, glitter, stones, crystals, rhinestones, and gems on board, three panels, 2005.

To as an Indian artist due to her ethnic origins and Indian elements in her work. Although she is proud to be called an Indian artist, it does automatically categorize her work as Indian, thereby creating that cultural barrier to the American viewer even though they are the intended audience. In an interview with Art & Deal Magazine she explains, “ A frequent mistake that people make in the reading of the work is, in part, influenced by how South Asia is represented in the mass media...