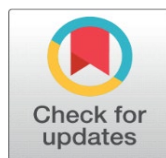
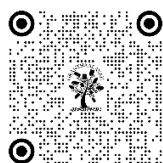


# APPLICATION OF HYBRID FIGURE IN THE WORKS OF QUEEN ALEXANDRA OF VICTORIAN ERA AND THE PAINTINGS FROM INDIAN CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

Throughout history, art has been used to explore and communicate the intricacies of human existence. One way this has been achieved is through the representation of hybrid beings. These figures, which combine attributes from various sources, have been a common theme across cultures. The use of hybrid figures has allowed artists to delve into themes such as identity, transformation, and the relationship between humans and nature. This study aims to analyze the symbolism and meanings behind hybrid creatures in Victorian-era photocollages and modern Indian artwork from vastly different periods in art history.

### Objectives of the Research Study

To investigate the reoccurring topic of hybrid creatures in Victorian photocollages and contemporary Indian art.

Examining the symbolism and significance of hybrid beings, with a focus on identity, metamorphosis, and human-nature interaction.

Examining how hybridization is used by both art genres to portray complicated notions about identity, social institutions, and cultural interchange.

Examining how artists use historical inspiration to produce unique works and engage in cross-cultural discussion.

Using commonalities in various art forms to demonstrate the universal nature of artistic expression, transcending time, location, and culture.

### Significance of the Research Study

This study has significance because it investigates the representation of hybrid beings in Victorian-era photocollages and modern Indian artwork, providing insights into the symbolism and meanings associated with hybrid creatures, specifically in the context of identity, transformation, and the human-nature relationship. This study highlights the continuing capacity of art to transcend chronological and geographical barriers by examining how both Victorian photocollages and contemporary Indian art use hybridity to express complicated notions about identity, social institutions, and cultural exchange. It also highlights the artists' ability to draw inspiration from the past, resulting in innovative works that engage in cross-cultural dialogue, ultimately demonstrating the universal nature of artistic expression and its profound impact on understanding the complexities of human existence across diverse cultural and historical contexts.

### Review of Literature

To begin, researchers like Linda Nochlin and Griselda Pollock have investigated the topic of hybridity in art, emphasising its importance in subverting conventional concepts of representation. In her important essay "The Imaginary Orient," Nochlin discusses how Victorian-era art frequently included hybrid characters to address concerns of cultural identity and colonialism. This point of view lays a solid foundation for understanding the circumstances in which Victorian-era photocollages evolved as a medium for creative expression.

Scholars like Geeta Kapur and Partha Mitter have explored the evolution of Indian art in the post-colonial era, highlighting the use of hybridity as a tool for artists to negotiate cultural identity. Homi Bhabha's "The Location of Culture" provides a theoretical framework for understanding hybridity in Victorian-era and contemporary Indian art. James Elkins' "Is Art History Global?" and "Globalizing Art History" provide a contemporary lens for understanding cross-cultural dialogues in art.

**Keywords:** Hybrid Figure, Queen Alexandra, Victorian Photocollage, Indian Contemporary Art.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. VICTORIAN PHOTOCOLLAGES

During the Victorian era, photo collages featuring hybrid characters were a popular art form. These characters were a mix of human figures and elements from the animal or plant world. The collages were made by combining several photographic prints onto one larger image. This resulted in a strange and creative composite image.

Artists from that time were fascinated by the idea of hybridization, as it allowed them to explore the connection between humans and the natural world, such as forests and gardens. Many of these photocollages featured women with butterfly wings or men with animal heads, like lions or eagles. These hybrid characters were often placed in surreal settings like gardens or woodlands. [Darwin \(1951\)](#)

During this period, Charles Darwin introduced his theory of evolution, which had a profound impact on society and the arts. The idea that species could adapt and evolve to new environments inspired painters and writers to create fantastical creatures that combined traits from different animals. These hybrid beings often symbolized the merging of different cultures, the potential of scientific progress, and the power of human imagination.

The debate surrounding Darwin's theories also sparked discussions about the boundaries between species and the ethical implications of altering the natural world. These themes were commonly explored in Victorian literature and art.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1** Marie-Blanche-Hennelle Fournier (French, 1831–1906).

**Source** <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2010/victorian-photocollage/photo-gallery>

Julia Margaret Cameron, famed for her portraits of ladies in extravagant costumes and headdresses made of feathers or flowers. Victorian artists to deal with hybrid figures. Lady Clementina Hawarden, another prominent artist, frequently portrayed her daughters in fantastical positions, dressed in lavish costumes and accessories.

**Figure 2**



**Figure 2** Clementina, Lady Hawarden.

**Source** <https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5165>

The use of hybrid figures in Victorian photocollages not only allowed for an exploration of the relationship between humans and nature but also pushed the boundaries of artistic expression. These works were considered radical and unconventional, as they challenged traditional notions of portraiture and realism.

**Figure 3**



**Figure 3** Kate Edith Gough (English, 1856–1948).

**Source** <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2010/victorian-photocollage/photo-gallery>

## 1.2. INDIAN CONTEMPORARY PAINTINGS

Contemporary Indian paintings often feature hybrid figures, which embody the country's rich cultural heritage and diverse present. These figures combine



elements from various mythological, religious, and cultural traditions, resulting in a unique visual language that reflects the complexities of modern Indian society. Notable Indian artists such as Jaysri Burman, Sakti Burman, Ganesh Pyne, and K G Subramaniam have all explored this theme in their paintings. [Dawkins \(1995\)](#)

Jaysri Burman is renowned for her paintings which showcase hybrid figures inspired by Indian mythology, tribal art, and nature. These figures usually possess multiple heads, arms, and legs, and are adorned with intricate patterns and symbols. Through her art, Burman delves into the concept of the divine feminine, portraying it through the goddess figure and the natural world. [Falvo \(2015\)](#)

**Figure 4**



**Figure 4** Untitled by Jayasri Burman.

Source <https://www.artzolo.com/painting/untitled-272>

**Figure 5**



**Figure 5** Jaysri Burman, the 'Resilient' Ganga.

Source <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/plumage/jayasri-burmans-sculptures-revere-river-ganga/>

Sakti Burman incorporates a range of cultural and artistic influences, such as European modernism, Indian miniature painting, and ancient Egyptian and Greek art. His artwork frequently showcases hybrid figures that blend human, animal, and mythical characteristics. Burman uses these figures to delve into topics related to identity, spirituality, and transcending limitations.

**Figure 6**



**Figure 6** Sakti Burman "Legends of Hope".

Source <https://thecurators.art/products/sabusr08-sakti-burman-legends-of-hope>

**Figure 7**



**Figure 7** Sakti Burman "Durga".

Source <https://thecurators.art/products/sabusr01-sakti-burman-durga>



**Figure 8**



**Figure 8** Ganesh Pyne "Untitled".

Source <https://abirpothi.com/painter-of-eloquent-silence-the-dark-surrealism-of-ganesh-pyne/>

Ganesh Pyne's paintings also feature hybrid figures, but his approach is more surreal and dreamlike. His figures are often depicted in a state of transformation, melting into their surroundings or morphing into other creatures. Pyne's paintings are characterized by a dark, moody atmosphere, and a sense of mystery and intrigue.

**Figure 9**



**Figure 9** K G Subramanyan, Ethiopian Nativity.

Source <https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13564/k-g-subramanyan>

The paintings of Ganesh Pyne showcase hybrid figures, but his style leans towards surreal and dreamlike. The figures he depicts are often in a state of transformation, either blending into their surrounding or transforming into other creatures. Pyne's paintings are known for their dark, moody atmosphere that exudes a sense of mystery and intrigue. [Goswamy \(2014\)](#)

K G Subramaniam's paintings blend aspects of Indian and Western art to produce a unique visual language that is both captivating and thought-provoking. His figures are frequently abstracted and stylized, with exaggerated features and vivid hues. Subramaniam employs his works to delve into topics such as identity, culture, and the interconnections between humans and the natural world.

### 1.2.1. SIMILARITIES

- **Compositional Settings**

When depicting hybrid figures, Victorian photocollages and Indian contemporary paintings share many similarities in their composition. Both often mix together human, animal, and mythological elements to create harmonious and balanced hybrid figures. These figures are usually located in dreamlike landscapes or mystical settings that encourage viewers to explore an otherworldly realm.

Victorian photocollages produce hybrid figures by merging multiple images of humans, animals, and objects in a visually appealing and psychologically compelling manner. The figures seem to be suspended in mid-air, creating a sense of movement and fluidity. Similarly, Indian contemporary painters such as Sakti Burman, Jayasri Burman, Ganesh Pyne, and K G Subramaniam also use hybrid figures to create surreal and mystical settings by combining different images and forms. These figures are arranged in a way that creates a sense of movement and fluidity, drawing the viewer's attention to different elements of the composition. Both Victorian photocollages and Indian contemporary paintings use symbols and metaphors to convey deeper meanings and emotions to the viewer. These symbols may be personal or cultural, such as flowers, animals, and religious icons for Victorian photocollages, or drawn from Hindu mythology for Indian contemporary paintings. The composition of both art forms creates a dreamlike realm that invites the viewer to explore. The use of light and shadow adds to the depth and immersion in the scene. [Melodysheep \(2009\)](#)

- **Placing the Human Figures**

Two art forms incorporate a mix of human, animal, and mythological components to generate surreal and fantastical worlds that blur the line between reality and imagination. The placement of human figures in these compositions is crucial to creating a sense of balance and harmony while conveying emotions and ideas.

Regarding the depiction of hybrid figures, Victorian photocollages and Indian contemporary paintings both utilize a blend of different images and forms to create a single, unified figure. These figures are often a combination of human, animal, and mythological elements, arranged in a way that produces a sense of beauty. Photocollages create these hybrid figures by merging multiple images of humans, animals, and objects, while Indian contemporary paintings draw inspiration from Hindu mythology, incorporating elements of gods and goddesses, animals, and other symbols.

Both Victorian photocollages and Indian contemporary paintings use symbolism and metaphor to convey deeper meanings and evoke emotional responses in their audiences. Victorian photocollages often incorporate symbols and objects that hold personal or cultural significance, such as flowers, animals, and religious icons, while Indian contemporary paintings frequently use symbols and metaphors derived from Hindu mythology to communicate ideas about spirituality, identity, and the human condition. [National Geographic. \(n.d.\)](#)

In both art forms, the placement of human figures follows classical composition techniques to create balance and harmony. The figures are often positioned to create a focal point, with other elements arranged around them. Human figures are frequently depicted in motion, with dynamic poses and flowing lines that draw the viewer's eye across the composition.

Lastly, both art forms create a sense of otherworldliness, inviting viewers to explore a dreamlike realm. In Victorian photocollages, hybrid figures often appear to be floating or suspended in mid-air, giving the impression of movement and fluidity. Similarly, Indian contemporary paintings often place hybrid figures in mystical or dreamlike settings, surrounded by other hybrid figures, animals, or objects. In general, Victorian photocollages and contemporary Indian paintings share a common interest in creating surreal and imaginative worlds that blur the lines between reality and fantasy. Artists from different cultures and time periods seem to share this fascination. The use of hybrid figures and the positioning of human figures within these compositions are important factors in achieving balance and harmony, as well as conveying emotions and ideas.

### **1.2.1.1. SIGNIFICANCE**

Paintings featuring hybrid figures can help humans reconnect with the natural world, bridging the gap that has formed between us and nature. As Richard Dawkins once stated, humans are like survival machines that are programmed to preserve our genes. However, we are still capable of forming connections with the world around us. We share a common ancestry with all living things, and the survival of our species is interconnected with that of other species.

Charles Darwin, the creator of the theory of evolution, also emphasized the interconnectedness of all living things. He believed that life has a grandeur to it, with various powers that were originally breathed into a few forms or one by the Creator. While this planet continues to cycle according to the fixed law of gravity, from a simple beginning, endless forms of beauty and wonder have evolved, and are still evolving. [Subramanyan \(2007\)](#)

Renowned American astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson once said that we are all connected biologically to each other, chemically to the earth, and atomically to the rest of the universe. Hybrid figure paintings, which depict blended human, animal, and mythological forms, visually represent this interconnectedness and serve as a reminder of our place in the world. In today's modern society, there is often a disconnect between humans and nature. Hybrid figure paintings provide a means for individuals to explore their relationship with the natural world and combat this disconnection. As Richard Dawkins notes, "There is no supernatural intervention or purpose, only blind and pitiless indifference. However, we can still find meaning in our lives by forging a connection with the world around us. Hybrid



figure paintings encourage individuals to consider their relationship with nature and live more harmoniously and sustainably as a result." [Wikipedia. \(2023\)](#)

## 2. CONCLUSION

Even though they were created in different times and cultural contexts, both Victorian photo collages and contemporary Indian art utilize the concept of hybridity to convey complex ideas about identity, social structures, and cultural exchange. By integrating components from many sources, these creative forms critique traditional representation concepts and show the flux of identity and culture. Additionally, they demonstrate how artists draw inspiration from the past to create something new and innovative, and how cultures continue to engage in dialogue with each other. In the end, the commonalities found in these two art styles prove that the desire to create art is universal, and that art has the power to go beyond the boundaries of time, location, and culture.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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