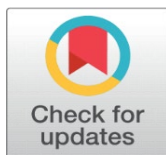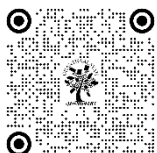# CULTURAL DIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ART AND DESIGN THROUGH NEW-AGE MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Culture is a broad-spectrum term commonly used to identify habits of a heterogeneous social groups which develop in a specific geographic location. It is evidently reflected through the various art practices, be it visual or performing arts, or artifacts created by the artisans. They have become an integral part of the cultural ethos. India is a country rich in such diverse treasure of cultural practices through art. Artisans have also migrated beyond their original geographical boundaries to diversify the reach of the art. It is an important cultural asset which helps to preserve the culture and heritage of a community or the skill-sets of the artisans. Our ancestors have been preserving this culture of storytelling through the art forms which show a perspective of life. They also contribute to the livelihood of the craftsmen, thus contributing to the economy of the country. There is beauty in promoting cultural diversity; people learn new skills from other cultural groups and encourage innovation through various art forms and designs. In the contemporary era of technology, modernization and globalization, the traditional art forms are fading away. Sustainability of these valuable these art forms is a concern today. Purposes and functionality of these art practices have also diversified. The study creates new objectives through cultural diversity and designing new products for sustainable development in art and design. The article discusses some aspects of technological intervention in these art practices that can help sustain these heritages. Thus diversification of media, purpose and an involvement of the young generation can help to preserve the social cultural ethos of our country.

Keywords: Art, Culture, Social Diversity, Sustainability, Technological Intervention, New-Age Media

1. INTRODUCTION

India is renowned for its rich and diverse cultural heritage, which is prominently reflected in its various art forms. The country has a history that spans thousands of years, and its cultural practices have evolved over time, influenced by different regions, religions, and traditions. Artisans have also migrated beyond their original geographical boundaries to diversify the reach of the art.

Like all art forms, art of storytelling also is an important cultural asset which helps to preserve the culture and heritage of a community or the skill-sets of the

artisans. Our ancestors have been preserving this culture of storytelling through the art forms which show a perspective of life. The art of storytelling is the craft of using words, images, or other mediums to convey a narrative or a series of events in a compelling and engaging manner. It goes beyond simply recounting facts; it involves the skillful arrangement of elements to evoke emotions, capture attention, and create a meaningful connection with the audience. They also contribute to the livelihood of the craftsmen, thus contributing to the economy of the country.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indian art as defined by the world-renowned theoretician, artist and educator K.G.Subramanyan, is an art practice and is an electric mixture of different traditional art forms and an amalgamation of different cultural forms as well Subramanian (1978). He also elaborates that the expansive electric mixture denotes the multicultural platform of modern times. It is also an effective tool that helps the rejuvenation of the heritage of India Subramanian (1987).

As stated by Jaine Durison in "Cultural Diversity", Cultural diversity enables and empowers different contributions that different people make from various ethnic backgrounds. There is beauty in promoting cultural diversity; people learn new skills from other cultural groups and encourage innovation through various art forms and designs.

In 'Diversity of Cultural Expressions' by Dr. Phillip Mar and Prof. Len Aug, Western Sydney University, Cultural Diversity is now seen as an essential requirement of sustainable development in any form of expression or communication. Beckerman (2003)

3. RESEARCH METHOD

To conduct the study a mixed-methods approach has been adopted, incorporating both secondary data analysis and primary data collection through interviews and study projects. This combination of methods can provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Information is obtained through secondary data like publications, journals etc. and through interviews with artists, craftsmen, students and so on, arranging study projects and examining data from them to explain occurrences.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the contemporary era of technology, modernization and globalization, the traditional art forms are fading away. Sustainability of these valuable art forms is a concern today. Purposes and functionality of these art practices have also diversified. The study creates new objectives through cultural diversity and designing new products for sustainable development in art and design.

5. FOLK ART AND MEDIA

Folk art in any form, visuals (paintings) audio (singing, narration) or audio-visual combined (singing and narrating showing paintings and drawings) is the mirror of Indian culture and tradition. To save this mirror from extinction, the Government of India and many non-profitable organizations like Raksh Folk Arts of India Foundation, International Organization of Folk Arts and many more, are coming forward with different plans and programmes like setting up exhibitions,

fairs, live demonstrations, projects and so on. Participating in such platforms, folk artists can sell their products which will help their art to survive, spread far and wide and give them sustenance.

Folk art extends beyond the confines of specific regional communities or rural contexts. Be it visual or performing arts, it is performed from their hearts with emotion and feelings. Credibility of the art forms with the masses is greater because it provides the audience a great experience by means of their art, music, dance, painting and so on. Atta-Alla (2012)

Way back in 1991, a TV show, "Surbhi", aired on National Doordarshan, hosted by Siddharth Kak and Renuka Sahane brought forth Indian culture to a commercially viable platform through the new television medium. 91% viewers liked this TV show, and it continued for a decade Chapke (2002).

Folk paintings can be used in animation films, a distinctive way of sequential narration. Indian folk art is rich in imagination, illusory exaggeration, colour, layout and design, and provides a broad creative space for the development of animation. Some of these art forms like the Chitrakathi, Kaavad, Pattachitra and Phad are sequential narratives themselves. Both animation and folk art can promote each other for the survival of indigenous art and Indian culture. So now is the time to inculcate the rich cultural assets into modern new-age media to meet the expectations of the new generation. With rapid economic change and technological development people are more interested in environmental art and designs. "Throughout the development of animation in China, those with strong national characteristics of the art, left eternal memories in the hearts of the people" Long (2019).

The image of animation is played continuously frame by frame to capture the illusion of movement through moving static pictures. Painting is its essence and it is the characteristics that make animation create unrealistic themes that mesmerize the viewers. "Heaven and earth" and "flying machine in clouds and fog", fanciful imagination can be created with elements from nature free from realistic constraints. Boje (1995)

This draws a seamless combination of indigenous art and sequential digital art. And when this art combination is used for advertising it reaches a larger mass with intense potential of communication for a commercial purpose.

6. ANIMATION IN INDIAN SCENARIO

India has been a land of storytellers and narrators. The rich culture down the ages is an outright example of the storytelling and narrating phenomenon. This is possible because of the exuberant visual appeal, definitive forms, and rich colour palette. Popular Indian sequential story narration media in Indian culture are the Kaavad of Rajasthan, Chitrakathi of Maharashtra, Pattachitra Scroll paintings of Bengal and Odisha, Phad of Rajasthan etc. reflect the modern techniques of animation. Though the medium of the art forms has changed and new mediums have replaced the old, through the ages and regions from time to time, like bark of trees to walls, to cloth to wood to leather, yet the narrations, purposes and styles remain the same. In the modern digital era, new ways of story narration in the forms of motion pictures, animations have taken over.

Even in this ever-adaptive scenario there is a lot of potential to show that sequential story narration already existed in the Indigenous art of India.

- Prehistoric Bhimbetika cave paintings show superimposed images or animals with multiple legs to depict transit. Probably this was the earliest

attempt on motion graphics. • The Warli stick figure characters depict walk-cycles to represent movements, activities, dance etc.

- Scroll paintings of Bengal and Odisha and Phad of Rajasthan depict the story or group of events in series and are to be accompanied with music and folklore. These paintings are like storyboards as done for animation. Being audio-visual makes it absolutely like animated films.

- Paintings on the Kawad shrines do the wooden panels narrating stories as the panels open up leading to the innermost shrine is another form of modern interactive story narration or Human Interactive Designs.

There are ample examples from Indian Indigenous art which connect to modern era technology driven digital storytelling. Unfortunately, these rich potentials of art and design have never been explored to maximum. The Post-Independence era introduced the Indian art scenario to technology based art. The Indian designers learnt digital animation techniques from the masters of Walt Disney, U.S. which influenced Indian art to a great extent and Indian indigenous styles were left unexplored and neglected. The youth grew up seeing the western animation styles and perceived it as a trend.

The Film Division of India started a special Cartoon Unit in 1956 where Disney Studio trained (16 years) in Technical Aid and animation Clair Week with the experience of films like 'Snow White' and 'Bambi' joined as pioneers. He trained other Indian animators like Ram Mohan, Bhimsain, and late Kantilal Rathod.

- ***The Banyan Deer***

With a fresh Indian animation team, Films Division launched the film 'The Banyan Deer', based on a Jataka Tale (tales from life of Buddha and Bodhisatva) where Buddha is represented in the form of deer. Here, the characters show tremendous reflection of Disney's Bambi as a strong influence brought in by Clair Week. Instead of thinking of Ajanta paintings which depict Jataka tales, which is Indian style or any other Indian art style, a complete reflection of western style is seen.

Figure 1

Figure 1 Story Board of 'The Banyan Deer'
Source https://www.animationresources.org/pics/banyan02-big.jpg

Figure 2

Figure 2 Bambi Character
Source https://www.animationresources.org/pics/banyan06-big.jpg

Figure 3

Figure 3 The Banyan Deer Character
Source https://www.animationresources.org/pics/banyan06-big.jpg

The film 'The Banyan Deer' when released gained great acceptance amongst Indian audience but it lost the flavour of Indianness. The Banyan Deer was supposed to be the representation of Bodhisattava, an Indian theme, but instead ended up being avatar of Bambi.

- ***Ek Aur Ek Anek***

Climb Films in association with Films Division of India, produced "Ek Anek Aur Ekta", under animation design by Bhimsen. The theme of the film was to teach unity in diversity to children. It is one of the most popular animated films on Indian Doordarshan and was acclaimed by children and adults equally. Although the story and message was old, the flavour, storytelling style with the background score, characterisation was distinct and unique. It was an example of exploring Indian design and painting styles, characterization of features like the wide eyes, simplified body shapes, flat images etc, were prominent. It not only won the National Film Award for Best Educational Film (1974), but also bagged the Best Children's Film Award in Japan.

Figure 4

Figure 4 Ek Aur Ek Anek

Source   https://www.firstpost.com/entertainment/ek-anek-aur-ekta-how-vijaya-mulays-1974-Animated-short-film-reflected-the-optimism-of-a-young-nation-6733521.html

- *Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama*

The programme "Ramayana" by BR Chopra based on the Hindu Epic was a very big hit on television in the 1990s. On the same epic an animation film was conceived by animator Ram Mohan in collaboration with the Japanese filmmaker Yugo Sako as an Indo-Japanese animation feature Film (1992). It won the Best Animation Film of the Year 2000 at Santa Clarita International Film Festival, US.

Though the story, plot, and characters are Indian, the visual treatment is completely Japanese as it was done by Japanese animators. Here we definitely see oriental-Japanese anime influence on Indian stories. The structure of the eye of the Japanese anime is distinct. Thus, we again have overlooked the adaptation potential in Indian indigenous art forms.

Figure 5

Figure 5 Yugo Sako with Ram Mohan
Source Reddit

Figure 6

Figure 6 Character of Rama and Sita
Source Reddit

Today many animators are working on stories from epics and other folk-tales but the visual flavor of India is missing. They need to respect and adopt visual designs which will be more indigenous to India to help spread awareness, promote, preserve, and sustain the cultural heritage and folk artists of India.

Sabnani (2014), an illustrator, and animator hailing from Mumbai, has orchestrated a fascinating convergence. When a portable wooden shrine from Rajasthan meets the realm of animation software design, it begets a fusion of modern storytelling techniques. Her animated documentary "Tanko Bole Che" (The Stitches Speak) pays homage to the artistry and dedication of Kutch Artisans. Sabnani ingeniously incorporates their narrative art, appliqué, and embroideries, enabling them to "express their reactions to life, ranging from events as profound as earthquakes to moments as jubilant as flying a kite," as Nina Sabnani elaborated in an interview with Times of India, February 3, 2013 Ram Sharmila (2013). Her collective work with Kaawad artists such as "Bemata" and "Baat Wahi Hai".

A joyously animated myth "Hum Chitra Banate Hain" (We make Images, 2016) using Bhil folk art form of mesmerizing dot patterns retells the importance of painting as prayer to Central Indian Bhil people. Sabnani teamed up with the Bhil artists to bring to life the myth behind the tradition of decorating homes with elaborate paintings. Apart from its evident charms, "Hum Chitra Banate Hai" is a proficient work of visual ethnology. By vividly portraying authentic Bhil culture and imagery, Sabnani and Singh simultaneously convey and express a tradition at the heart of Bhil culture. They depict a community for whom art, nature, and spirituality are inseparably intertwined. Arpino (2021)

Figure 7

Figure 7 'Hum Chitra Banate Hai'

Source https://www.tumblr.com/tctd-iitb/160328478919/nationalaward-for-hum-chitrabanate-hainPreservationofCulturalHeritageofIndigenousIndianArtthroughNew-ageMedia

In India, various artists and craftsmen practicing traditional art are a direct reflection of the rich culture and heritage of the country. Due to several factors, the seclusion of the art forms and the artists from the population of the country is observed. This is affecting socio-cultural sustainability to a great extent. In olden times, it was a common practice of many of these artists to be associated with all religious activities of the society they belonged to. As part of the ceremonial tradition, they captured the facades on scrolls through customary gestures Ranjan & Ranjan (2007).

Social behavior has changed enormously over the decades. There has been a lot of technological advancement in the day-to-day activities through-out the Indian

social fabric. With sensible technological intervention, there is great potential to revive the long forgotten cultural roots and connect the artisans of rural India to the modern life-style and the greater people. The term "virtual heritage conservation" originates from the amalgamation of technology and heritage, wherein new media technology serves as a vessel for traditional cultural heritage content Addison et al. (2006), Roussou (2002). The technical advancements associated with the new-media can be utilised to disseminate the culture amongst people. This will ensure uniform distribution and availability of the culture irrespective of the spatial location Benjamin (1970). The conversion of these art forms into virtual heritage documents and assets should ensure the preservation of cultural identity and essence. This transformation should align with the pedagogic goal of conservation, which encompasses knowledge dissemination and raising awareness Pujol & Champion (2011).

7. CRISIS OF INDIAN ARTISANS

In the fast-moving capitalized consumer-centric generation, the Indian tradition is losing its sheen. Due to the impact of globalization and industrialization, which are encapsulating society, especially the younger generation, traditional Indigenous arts are being deprived of their potential market. As stated by Bhatt, "As opposed to mass production, traditional craft practices create a sustainable model of material usage and environment friendliness." Bhatt (2007). The Indigenous art can be restored and conserved only if the economic condition of the artisans is restored. This will not only motivate the artisans to pursue their art without the worry to earn their livelihood but also the new generation of the artisan families will take this profession up with dignity and pride. It is a well- understood fact that Indian social culture, rituals, traditions, religion, religious practices and beliefs, values and art practices are woven together in an inseparable.

P. Padmanabha, the Registrar General of India, remarked on the 'Indian Census of Handicraft Survey,' stating that the survey highlighted the necessity of aligning traditional Indian art and craft with modern user requirements and incorporating modern technology. This shift towards social transformation was deemed crucial for the revival of these traditional practices Padmanabha (1978). The valuable intangible cultural assets are at death's door due to this extreme unawareness and economic pressure. Many designers have adopted many elements from these art forms into cultural merchandise and textile to add economic value. But doing this has not benefited the proper conversion and awareness among the masses. It is still restricted to a narrow segment of the society. Chatterjee et al. (1966)

8. PEDAGOGICAL QUALITIES OF NEW-MEDIA IN CULTURAL HERITAGE

In "New Media and Cultural Heritage" by Yehuda Kalay, the pedagogical aspects of new media in cultural heritage are categorized into three attributes. These include management or documentation, representation techniques, and the dissemination of knowledge for the purpose of raising awareness. Kalay (2008).

- ***Documentation and Management***

Digital documentation is cost efficient and space efficient as well. It assures the storage of a large quantity of data in a small concise manner in hard-drives, chips, cloud, and other digital devices. Such data is portable and less liable to damage. Perseverance and conservation are also an important advantage of digital

documentation. This documentation can play a key role in preserving cultural heritage. Accession of digitally preserved assets is also easy. While doing ethnographic survey it has been observed that a lot of art is done on mud walls, cotton or silk cloth, palm or other flat leaves, handmade paper, wood, shells, etc, using natural and mineral colours which are exposed to the weather conditions and wear and tear of time. The longevity of such material is quite questionable. In such cases, the cultural repository can be preserved by digital documentation.

- ### *Representation Techniques*

New-media backed with technologies has opened new possibilities and paradigms of visual portrayal to the cultural assets of art and craft. Thus the virtual presentation of the age-old heritage plays a fulcrum role in spreading knowledge to the common man and the masses to connect as everyone today is connected to the digital media. Gavan McCarthy discusses data security within the framework of an open information system. McCarthy (2007). "The aura of the original work is not reduced by making virtual replicas available to a large target audience. It will act as a catalyst and inspire people to know more thus bringing them closer to the heritage" Benjamin (1970). A virtual walk

The heritage artist village Raghurajpur or virtual storytelling of the Kaavad is not similar to a print picture of it, but it will create an experience and stir inquisitiveness in the mind to know more and visit the place or interact with a physical Kaavad and witness the performance. Product diversification to accommodate the desires and economy of the urban and international market is the outcome of several design interventions in the Indian folk-art sector. The traditional material is replaced with in-organic artificial materials and contemporary tools. The original art forms can move towards extinction if there is a complete transformation of materials, techniques, and themes. Sethi et al. (2005). A shift in paradigm in the visual representation can eventually proceed to new interpretations from the newly documented virtual culture and heritage assets.

- ### *Creation of Awareness and Spreading of knowledge*

Interactive approaches to storytelling with the use of co-evolutionary approaches of technology will provide a cognitive involvement and attract people. This will generate a learning effect and a strong bonding with the culture. New-media virtual heritage connects society with its past, bridging spacio-temporal gaps, particularly appealing to the youth. Animation and digital media are especially effective for this in India Kolay (2015).

The application of multimedia and animation develops an emotional connect in contrast to the static knowledge impartment, thus stimulating interest in the narrative heritage art of storytelling in India. As stated by Andrea Witcomb, by adopting the process of storytelling in an innovative perspective, the process of spreading of knowledge has been transformed by the new-media into an exciting and entertaining learning Witcomb (2007). The digital application will help in bridging the gap between generations and communities irrespective of spatial diversity and the visual communication design which is inspired by the indigenous art and culture will maintain the magnificence of the past Cameron (2007).

- ### *Survey of the youth*

A survey of some young students was carried out to understand the mindset of youth towards the indigenous art forms and implementation of the new media like television advertising and animation on these cultural assets. The results of the survey showed that the youth lack the interest to visit indigenous art museums. The only thing they know is mere adaptations on artifacts, utility items, and fabric. They

were interested in adopting the Indian art form in new-age media like animation and gifs.

How does visual storytelling apply to modern media?		
Response	Interviewee Response	Theme
A1	"Visual communication is present everywhere around us. From gestures, body language to symbols and directions. In modern media, information is needed to be conveyed quickly and effectively. Using the natural ability of humans to grasp the information easily through visual medium, **posters, advertises, pictures** etc are used to do the same."	1. Posters, advertises, pictures etc.
A2	During this age of modern media, the attention span of a human being has decreased a lot. So	2. Makes communication easy
A3	Visuals convey emotions, moods, narratives, and ideas essential for storytelling. This drives growth on platforms like Pinterest and Instagram.	3. Conveys emotions and feelings as well
		4. Used by animators and media

Transitioning from Traditional Art to New Media: Exploring the Realm of Possibilities

The new paradigm of adopting the traditional art forms of visual narration of stories of culture into the new technology-driven medium without changing the attributes of the visual identity of the original is a challenge. At this point, a collaborative effort of the designer and artisan will co-create an outcome that will reach successfully to a wide audience. Dalmia (1988)

There are certain aspects of potentiality for the traditional narrations to be absorbed into new- media. There are certain visual characteristics of the indigenous art that are considered while translating the traditional art to modern technology. In the book 'Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies', Kolay & Roy (2015), these visual parameters are analyzed which can be utilized to recognize the visual characteristics and help convert the original art suitable to adopt storytelling in digital technology. Basically, five variables are mentioned that helps adaptability into storytelling in digital media are:

- Identity of characters
- Possibility of movement of figures
- Usage of varied camera angles
- Possibility of depicting traditional elements in a contemporary style without losing the identity
- Determining perspective and feel of depth

Determining a depth and perspective in Indian indigenous art is an energizing task. Usually all elements are of the same proportion and elements far away are

drawn on top of the near objects as in 'Oriental Perspective'. In such places, the feel of depth can be obtained by superimposing the elements and contrasting the colours. Manjusmita & Mishra (2021)

9. CONCLUSION

The following aspects evolve from the above study:

- Creative designers work hand in hand with the artisans in a collaborative manner to sustain the cultural art form. By educating more people specially the young generation through a pedagogic orientation can help retain the authenticity of the original art.
- For evoking awareness in the society, digital media applications can research heritage arts. Through visual communication design using technology, documentation and spreading awareness can be achieved also overcoming the special barriers. This will spread widely among a larger mass of people.
- The dying traditional art forms, forgotten by time, can be rejuvenated, and presented in a contemporary paradigm.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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