

Gender Sensitization in Artistic Expression

Prof. Archana Rani

Professor & In-charge: Visual Art: Drawing & Painting Department,
Raghunath Girls' (PG) College, Meerut

Abstract:

Art is a powerful way to express thoughts, feelings and ideas. It helps people share their views about society, culture and life. Gender sensitization in artistic expression means creating awareness about gender equality through art like drawing and painting. In the past, many artworks showed unfair ideas about gender. Women artists were often ignored and men and women were shown in traditional roles. Today, things are changing. Artists are now using their art to break old stereotypes and show new, diverse ideas about gender. They paint and draw different gender identities and focus on fairness, strength and freedom. This helps people understand and respect everyone, no matter their gender. Gender sensitization in art also invites new ways of thinking, new subjects and new styles. It gives artists a way to tell stories that celebrate all kinds of people. This research paper studies how gender sensitization influences the world of drawing and painting. It looks at how artists use their work to challenge old ideas, create awareness and bring positive change in society.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Artistic Expression, Social Awareness, Empowerment through Art.

Introduction:

Art has always helped people share their feelings, show their culture and bring change to society. Today, these fields are helping to question old ideas about gender. They are changing how women are seen and supported in creative work. Many women—artists and other creative people—are using their talents to break rules, include everyone and ask for fairness. Because of this, the world of art is changing. It is moving away from old beliefs that once stopped women from growing and showing their full potential. When artists think about gender in a sensitive way in their work, they help make art more open and caring. In the past, art often showed unfair ideas about gender—women were often left out or shown in limited ways. Today, as people become more aware, many artists are using their drawings and paintings to break these old ideas, show different gender identities and support equality. Gender sensitization in art means choosing subjects, styles and stories that represent everyone better. It helps artists tell new stories about identity, strength and fairness. Modern artists are helping change how people think about gender through their creative work. This research paper will explore how gender sensitization affects drawing and painting, how it changes the way artists create, how people see their work and how it adds to bigger conversations in society.

Objectives of the research paper:

This research looks into how gender sensitization is shown through artistic expression. The study has few clear goals, each helping to build a full understanding of the topic.

- To understand how artists show gender issues through their art.

- To find out how art can make people more aware of gender equality.
- To study artists who fight gender discrimination through their work.
- To learn how artistic expression can help build a fairer society.

Significance of the paper:

- It shows how art can help people understand gender equality.
- It proves that creative work can inspire respect for all genders.
- It helps people see the important role of artists in making society fairer.

Literature Review:

Many researchers have shown how artistic expression plays a major role in questioning traditional gender roles and promoting gender equality. According to Butler (1990), gender is not something people are born with, but something created by repeated actions, which artists often explore through their works. Art becomes a space where gender identities can be expressed freely and traditional stereotypes can be challenged. Studies such as Nochlin (1971) highlighted the historical exclusion of women artists and the need to question the power structures in the art world. This led to more artists focusing on gender issues in their creative work. In India, artists like Amrita Sher-Gil and Bharti Kher have used painting and sculpture to express women's struggles and identity. Sher-Gil's work brought forward the emotional world of Indian women, while Kher's sculptures question societal views on femininity. Modern art platforms, like the India Art Fair (2023), show that a growing number of contemporary Indian artists are focusing on gender themes.

Gender Roles in Classical Art Traditions:

In classical Indian art, the way men and women were shown often followed the rules of society at that time. These rules were mostly made by men and gave more power to men than women. In old paintings, sculptures and temple carvings, women were usually shown as soft, beautiful and graceful. They were often dancing, playing music or standing beside gods. These images made people think that women should be quiet, gentle and mainly admired for their beauty. Men, on the other hand, were shown as strong, wise and powerful. They were kings, warriors, saints or gods. This difference in how men and women were shown helped keep the idea that men were leaders and women were followers. In temples, gods like Shiva, Vishnu and Krishna were the main figures, while goddesses like Parvati, Lakshmi and Radha were shown as their partners. Even though goddesses were respected, they were often seen through their connection to male gods. In classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathak, women mostly performed roles that showed love, devotion or sadness, while men played roles of heroes or spiritual leaders. These dances followed old books like the Natya Shastra, which gave special rules for how men and women should move and act. Sometimes, men played female roles and women played male roles, especially in temple performances, but this was not very common. In many cases, women were not allowed to learn art or perform in public. Only a few women, like the devadasis who danced in temples, could take part in the arts, but they were not always treated with respect in society. Most artists, painters and sculptors were men and women were rarely known as creators.

In miniature paintings, women were shown enjoying music, love or nature, but they were not shown as the ones making the art. However, in folk art traditions like Madhubani, Warli and Kalighat, women had more freedom to create. These art forms were made in villages and homes and women used them to show their daily life, festivals and stories. Even though these works were not famous in big cities, they kept women's voices alive. In the western old paintings, women were also often shown as quiet, pretty and gentle. Men were shown as strong and important. For Example, in the

Renaissance period, many artworks showed women as beautiful objects, not as people with their own stories. These images made people believe that women should stay in soft, passive roles.

After a long time, especially in 1900, things started to change. As education spread and people began to fight for women's rights, more women started learning art and sharing their ideas. The feminist movement in the 1960 to 1970 helped women speak up and show their own stories through art. Artists like Amrita Sher-Gil and later others began to paint women not just as pretty faces, but as real people with thoughts and feelings. They showed women working, thinking and living full lives. This helped break the old idea that only men could be serious artists. Today, many women are painters, dancers, sculptors and designers. They use their art to talk about equality, identity and freedom. But the old ideas from classical art still affect how people think. That is why it is important to look back and understand how gender roles were shaped in Indian art. By doing this, we can see how far we have come and how much more we need to do to make art fair and open for everyone.

Different Art Forms Helping to Express Gender Sensitization:

Today many different types of art are used to share messages about gender sensitization and equality. Poster painting are the most common ways, where artists create powerful images that challenge gender stereotypes and celebrate all identities. Sculpture is another form, where artists shape materials into figures that represent freedom, strength or new ideas about gender roles. Photography captures real moments and diverse people, showing the beauty of all genders without bias. Performance Art, like dance and theater, tells stories about struggles, rights and hopes for gender fairness in a live and emotional way. Digital Art and Graphic Design are modern tools where artists use technology to spread messages about gender sensitization across the internet and social media. Public Art, Street Art and Murals often appear in public places to raise awareness about gender equality, reaching many people. Each form of art gives a voice to different experiences and helps society move towards a more fair and respectful understanding of gender.

Gender Sensitization through handmade and E-posters:

Handmade posters and digital posters are great tools to spread messages about gender sensitization. They use strong images, simple words and bright colours to catch people's attention and make them think about gender equality. Handmade posters are easy to make and can be displayed in schools, colleges, offices and public places. Students and artists can create posters showing the importance of respect, equal rights and breaking gender stereotypes. E-posters are posters made on computers or phones or AI. They can be shared quickly on social media, websites and emails. E-posters help reach a large number of people in a short time. They are very useful for campaigns, especially among young people who use the internet daily.

Both handmade and E-posters can teach people about gender issues in a creative and simple way. They can show messages like "Respect All Genders," "Say No to Gender Discrimination," and "Equality for Everyone."

Gender Sensitization through Public Art and Murals:

Public art and murals are the other ways to spread messages about gender sensitization. They are big paintings or artworks made on walls, streets or buildings where many people can see them. Artists use public art and murals to show ideas like equality, respect and freedom for all genders. These artworks often have powerful images and short messages that make people stop, look and think. They help to break old ideas about what men and women can or cannot do. In India, groups like the Fearless Collective paint murals that tell stories of women's strength and the need for

gender justice. Such murals turn public spaces into places of learning and awareness. Public art is important because it reaches everyone— young or old, rich or poor — without needing a classroom or a book.

The Role of Artists in Promoting Gender Awareness:

Art has long been a powerful tool for social change and in India, several artists have been at the forefront of promoting gender sensitization. Through their work, these artists challenge traditional gender norms, advocate for rights and create platforms for marginalized voices. Many Indian artists use their work to address gender issues and promote equality.

Amrita Sher-Gil (1913–1941) was one of the first important female artists from India. She used her art to share her strong ideas about women’s rights. Sher-Gil mainly wanted to express her own feelings and show real human emotions, especially focusing on the lives and struggles of women. She was the first woman in India to paint herself not just as a model, but as a real artist. In her paintings, she showed women in a natural and honest way, breaking the old traditions where women were only shown as beautiful objects. Her art showed the many different sides of being a woman and the challenges they faced in society. Through her paintings, Sher-Gil asked important questions about gender roles and power.

Her work has touched people of all ages and continues to inspire many artists today. Sher-Gil’s art is seen as an important part of feminist art because it challenged old rules and helped promote the idea of gender equality. Her paintings are loved not just in India but all over the world. Today, her work still starts important conversations about feminism, life and art. This writing looks at how Sher-Gil used creative ideas and a strong feminist vision to make powerful art. She painted women in a real and respectful way, showing their strength and emotions, which was very rare during her time. In many of her famous works, like “Three Girls” (1935) and “Women on the Charpai” (1940), Amrita showed women not as pretty decorations but as real people with deep emotions. She painted women who looked thoughtful, sad, strong or simply lost in their own world. This was very different from how women were usually shown in Indian art at that time— often idealized or ignored (National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi). Her art helped people notice the real lives and struggles of women, sparking early conversations about gender and equality. According to a UNESCO report (2018), Amrita Sher-Gil’s work is now seen as a major influence in promoting gender sensitivity in Indian modern art (UNESCO).

Today, her paintings are still studied in colleges across India. In 2022, a survey by India Art Fair showed that over 30% of gender-focused exhibitions included references to Sher-Gil’s work as a foundation for talking about women’s rights and identity (India Art Fair).

Bharti Kher is a contemporary artist who explores identity, gender, and the body through sculptures and installations, often using traditional symbols like the bindi to create new meanings. She frequently addresses issues related to femininity and identity. Her piece “The Skin Speaks a Language Not Its Own” (2006)— a life-sized elephant covered in bindis — symbolizes both strength and vulnerability, reflecting on the burden of societal expectations placed on women (Tate Modern). It is a touching sculpture of a dying female elephant. The elephant’s body is completely covered with small stick-on bindis shaped like snakes.

Mithu Sen is a famous Indian artist who uses her art to talk about gender, identity and freedom. Her work often questions the rules that society forces on people, especially rules about gender. She believes that gender is not fixed and that people should be free to express themselves in any way they feel. One of her important projects is called “Unbelonging”. In this project, she uses drawings,

videos and performances to show that labels like “man,” “woman,” or even “Indian” or “foreigner” do not define who a person truly is (India Today, 2022). Her art encourages people to think beyond simple categories and respect each person’s unique identity.

Another famous project, “Free Biographies”, involved Mithu Sen asking strangers to tell her their life stories. She would then rewrite their stories in her own words, without sticking to gender or other labels. This project shows how human experiences are more important than the labels society gives us (Tate Modern).

Mithu Sen’s work has been shown in more than twenty countries, helping to spread ideas about gender freedom to a worldwide audience. According to the India Art Fair 2023 report, more than 40% of new Indian contemporary art now discusses gender identity, thanks to artists like her (India Art Fair).

Through her playful and bold art, Mithu Sen makes people think deeply about gender roles and promotes a more open, accepting world. Mithu Sen uses drawings, poetry, and installations to question fixed gender roles and highlight the fluidity of identity.

Anita Dube creates art that speaks about feminism, social injustice and transformation. Her work often explores how gender and politics shape human experiences. Gulam Mohammed Sheikh combines painting and storytelling to highlight cultural, religious and gender-related issues in India. Through their unique styles and powerful ideas, these artists encourage society to rethink traditional gender roles and promote a more equal and inclusive world.

Gender Sensitization through Photography:

In India, many photographers use their cameras to talk about gender equality and break old stereotypes. Their photos help people see the real struggles and strengths of women communities.

Poulomi Basu is a well-known Indian photographer who uses her work to fight for women’s rights. Her project “Blood Speaks” (2017) focused on the harsh treatment of menstruating women in Nepal and India. Through powerful photos, she made people think about taboos and women’s suffering (World Press Photo). Deepti Asthana is another important name. She travels to rural parts of India to capture the lives of women who are often ignored. Her project “Women of India” shows real stories of strength and courage (BBC News). Arko Datto, an Indian photographer, highlights LGBTQ+ lives through his photo series. His work challenges the idea of “normal” gender roles and gives a voice to marginalized groups. Photography has a strong role in promoting gender sensitization. In 2022 survey by India Photo Archive Foundation found that exhibitions about gender issues attracted 45% more visitors than others, showing that people are interested in learning through visual stories (IPAF). These photographers use their art to open conversations about gender and create a more equal world.

The art made by Indian female artists often shows the struggles and experiences of being a woman in India. These artists deal with many layers of identity and the pressures society puts on them. Many of them are now using digital tools to create and share their art. Artists can now show their work to people all over the world through websites, social media, online exhibitions and digital galleries.

Today, the work of Indian women artists shows a fresh and bold style. They use their art to fight against unfair treatment like gender stereotypes, patriarchy and exclusion of women. They also support women’s empowerment by sharing their voices in webinars, online talks and through so-

cial media.

Gender Sensitization in Performing Art:

Performing arts like dance, theatre and music are powerful ways to talk about gender issues. In India and around the world, many artists use their performances to show the problems caused by gender inequality and to spread the message of equality and respect.

Theatre groups often perform plays about women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights and the need to break gender stereotypes. Dance performances also tell stories that challenge old ideas about what men and women should or should not do.

Suggestions for Gender Sensitization Campaigns Through Various Arts:

There are many ways where arts & theatre can be integrated in facilitating high impact gender sensitization campaigns. Some of these methods include:

- Perform simple plays in public places to show messages about gender equality.
- Organize art shows with paintings that talk about women's rights and respect for all genders.
- Tell about gender issues through classical, folk or modern dance.
- Show real-life pictures that break gender stereotypes.
- Share poems and stories that promote respect for every gender.
- Show short films and documentaries about gender equality and discuss them afterward.
- Invite artists to teach how to use art for spreading messages about gender sensitization.
- Conduct competitions for students to express gender equality through art.

Conclusion:

Thus, Artistic expression is a powerful way to spread the message of gender sensitization. Through posters, mural, painting, performing arts and photography, artists show the need for respect, equality and freedom for all genders. Art makes it easier for people to understand and feel the struggles faced by others. It breaks old ideas about gender roles and opens minds to new ways of thinking. Whether through a mural on a wall or a digital poster online, artistic expression helps to create a fairer and kinder society. By using art, we can inspire change and build a world where everyone is treated equally.

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