

FROM NATIONAL TO INTERNATIONAL: NEW ASPECTS IN THE WORK OF SUBODH GUPTA

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***ABSTRACT**--Art is known as expressive tool of communication, has always responded to its immediate realities. The responses are always indirect, so artists use different tools to express their emotions. And In today's world every discipline is inter-linked with one another in some way. All facts of life and area of knowledge are influenced by science, innovation and technology. From the last quarter of 20th century, artists started to engage with non-traditional mediums to respond to our present crises because art is not bounded to paint and canvases, alternatively it has different aspects. They try to express in very unconventional way to present their works; making meaningful use of unconventional materials and having liberty of representation are the new trends in art today. With the involvement of science, technology and thoughtful material use, artists are engaging with new dialogues through their works. This paper is an effort to grasp the relation with other domains in the art practices of Indian contemporary artist Subodh Gupta. Thus, the paper is an attempt to trace the role of material and technique used in the art work of artist. Such as the utensils made of stainless steel that are much popular with the artists these days and are more in demand. In this context, some websites, other online database and observation method could be an area of study to map their role in the art work.*

Keywords: Material, Thoughtful, Tran cultural, Trends, Installation, Utensils.

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary art encloses the idea that art is not separated from life or from the world we live in. It has no universal definition but keeps on changing with the change in time, ability of medium and nor the less artist knowledge and culture too. However, art and artist get inspired by different people, culture, religion and atmosphere. The last quarter of 20th century, artists have freed themselves from the boundaries of criteria, and other restrictions. They are trying to show their work with their own chosen material and own subject matter. The western impact can be seen in their work pieces. Such as tradition style of painting changes into sculpture, videos, photography, so on. The words of P.N Mago, appear completely true as he has written in his book about Contemporary Indian Art "What happened in the art scene of Europe yesterday, seems to be happening in India" (Mago, 2001, p. 195). In era of science and technology artists express themselves with new media and always keep themselves true to their roots. Contemporary artist Subodh Gupta has become a motivation for this study. Subodh Gupta is the suitable example to describe today's art. His art work itself describes the meaning of trans-cultural and a beautiful in-built relation with other domains.

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Objectives

- To grasp the relation of art with other domains
- To trace the role of techniques and the meaning behind of Subodh Gupta's contemporary art pieces

II. METHODOLOGY

In this context, data is collected through primary as well as secondary sources. Primary material has been collected from NGMA, New Delhi. The secondary material has been collected from published and unpublished journals, websites, and newspapers.

Who is Gupta?

Subodh Gupta is well known Indian Contemporary artist of this ongoing era. He was born in Khagaul, Bihar, in 1964, in a middle-class family that works and lives in railway colony. He studied Bachelor of Fine Art: Painting at College of Art and Craft in Patna, India. He became globally renowned in the mid to-late 2000's. And became well known as 'Damien Hirst of India among the young generation. He currently lives in New Delhi with his wife Bharti Kher who is also a well-known artist. He built up his art studio in New Delhi, where he works. He is a trained painter, but his work is not bounded to paint and canvases. His work includes sculptures, paintings, installations, videos, performances, photography and installations. Up to 2017, he did 56 solo exhibitions and 242 group exhibitions. He even received several awards and scholarships. His signature works are installations and sculpture, which seem to be impacted by typical Indian everyday objects.



III. SUBJECT MATTER

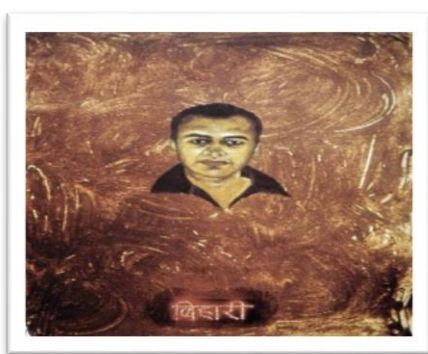
He aesthetically tries to transform everyday objects into a luxury status among the people. His art work is common among people. He tries to show common things prevalent among middle class families. His art work is

mostly based on his early childhood life in Bihar. His work tries to explore the effects of Indian Cultural transformation. His work shows how traditional subject matter is still alive in this contemporary art world. His work, be it installation, painting, sculpture or performance and video, is all based on every day activities that take place in families or objects used by them. The work shows very beautiful relationship between art and their cultural and social contexts. The transformation of everyday objects into an art piece especially into art installation has become the characteristic of his work.

As a professional artist, he is easy going with every kind of medium and he loves to do experiments with his work. Such as installation, painting, photography, sculpture, performance and video. He uses ready-made objects, organic material, mixed media, and different metal. Even he uses readymade objects in his work much like the great artist Marcel Duchamp, in this way he creates Indian version of Marcel Duchamp's 'ready-made'. His choice of material includes different metals, organic material, readymade objects too. But stainless steel became Gupta's signature medium.

IV. RELATION OF MATERIAL WITH ART

Art work always depends on its medium and medium is dependent on art as both are complementary in nature. Choosing the correct medium for making an art work is very important part of the process of creating an art work. Artist very carefully chooses his or her material or medium of an art work as medium will describe an art work itself post completion because every single medium has its own positive or negative points. So, with right media one can easily handle its work rather than puzzling with other medium. Subodh Gupta smartly chooses his medium for his art work. This is the only reason behind his every successful art work. With experiences and knowledge, the art of choosing correct material for an art work develops itself. Such as: Painting **Bihari** (1999), a beautiful self-portrait on handmade sheet with cow dung and acrylic. And in sequence light he writes Bihari in Hindi. Another work is **Black Skin White Mask** (2011), a wall piece made up of mixed media in which an artist uses ready-made stainless-steel utensils for representing white colour and black with black colour.



1.A Bihari (1999),



1.B Black Skin White Skin (2011)

Figure 1: 1.A Bihari (1999), 1.B Black Skin White Skin (2011)

Source: - Online

V. RELATION BETWEEN ART AND TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a collection of techniques, methods, skills and processes used in the production of goods. In today's time almost, every field is interlinked with technology in direct or indirect way. And art and technology are one in the same. Due to relation, if there is growth in one field and the other too grow itself. Both are trying to reshape the world. History too proves that both fields can't exist without each other because both are in constantly changing and evolving relationship. And this relationship can be clearly visible with several high-profile, boundary-pushing exhibitions and more tech-art collaborations being funded by government and private bodies.

With the use of science, technology and thoughtful material use, artist is engaging with new dialogues through their works. And Subodh Gupta is the best example of art and technology. His work has deep relation with technology, because he is experimental in nature. He loves to work with different medium, so he needs to follow number of techniques too for making art works. He is well known with traditional style as well as modern techniques, a master of both depending on the demand of work. Every single work shows shadow of different techniques used by him. And most of his work is on huge scale and without right technology it can't happen. The choice of right technology with medium is the result of well-known art works among all. For instance, **Sunset** (2010) is a wardrobe, in which blend of both traditional as well as modern techniques can be seen, made up of hand-carved marble, referencing the traditional skills and craftsmanship associated with Mughal Empire in India. Another example is **Dada** (2013) a banyan tree, composed of more than one technique. A tree made up of stainless steel with traditional style and ready-made utensils can be seen on its branches as leaves. Subodh Gupta's number of work shows blend of variety of techniques which leaves an awe-inspiring impact on viewers.



2.A Sunset (2010)



2.B Dada (2013)

Figure 2: 2.A Sunset (2010), 2.B Dada (2013)

Source: 2.A Online, 2.B Photo click from National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

VI. INTER-RELATION OF ART WITH OTHER DOMAINS

Today art has different aspects. And very beautifully artists trying to show the connection of art with other subjects. Subodh Gupta's work is pleasing of this inter-connection. For example, 'Line of Control' (2008), a colossal mushroom cloud constructed entirely of pots and pans. In this sculpture he welds one pots or pans to each other and even length breath height must be kept in mind before constructing such a huge sculpture. This sculpture is example of involvement of three different domains for one work and different domains are maths, mechanical engineering and arts. Painting series 'Still Steal Steel' consists of photorealistic paintings of kitchen utensils falling and moving in space, this only happen because of involvement of technology in art. In his performance 'Pure' (2000, 9 mins), Gupta takes the concept of purifying literally and has filmed himself taking a shower to free himself of the thick layer of dung that covers his body. Making or recording of performance is possible because of technology. Installation 'Across the Seven Seas' (2004) where he uses baggage trolleys of modern airports to allude to the grim historical reality of migration from India. Creating installation is not possible with limitations in boundaries of art, it requires other domains too. Technology plays a vital role in his work. Both art and technology can be seen in his work. His work always has some hidden stories behind them, which he aesthetically describes to public.



3.A Brass and copper utensils



3.B Oil and enamel on canvas



3.C Performance



3.D Installation

Figure 3: 3.A Line of Control (2008), 3. B Still Steal Steel (2007) ,3.C Pure (2000), 3.D Across the Seven Seas (2004)

Source: - Online

VII. AESTHETICS BEHIND GUPTA'S ART

Subodh Gupta's every single work either in traditional or in non-traditional material has deep meaning that proves that in contemporary world, Subodh Gupta never leaves his roots or his culture. Some of his works are: **29 Mornings** (1996), his first installation made up of mixed medium. As it very difficult to create such a huge idea in a limited space, he uses 29 stools made up of wood used to depict different memories from his early childhood. He very beautifully describes that how, in his early life, he used to have food on such stools (on pat alas) and on stools he puts things which he used in his early life. This work is the recalling of Gupta's nostalgia about his fond childhood memories. The work exhibited in Japan and is in their collections.

In yet another work, **The Way Home** (11) (2001), Gupta begins with his stainless-steel series of work, in which there is a life size cow made up of fibre glass in the centre and around it is stainless steel utensils set with aluminium casted desi revolvers (gun) placed. The artist tries to show meaning behind different objects which he carries in his work. Mainly eighty percent of the Indian population uses stainless steel utensils for its meals. Here utensils represent huge population and their life. Cow is symbolic animal in this country. In Bihar, people use Katta (gun) for safety and defence, and it is not available in the market, local people make it. These all objects associate with different stories. He puts these articles together and when people see his art, they compose their own stories from it. Another work is **Three Cows** (2003-2008), a series work by an artist in which he made three bicycles with milk pails in Bronze and chrome in variable dimensions. Here he describes three bicycles as mechanised cows which uses to deliver milk door to door in towns or cities of India. Through this he tries to define that the village or city needs and demands remain the same. In village, people have their domestic animals for their needs but in cities machines are taking place. So, he made bicycle as cows in contemporary art world. Another example of his art work is **Saat Samundur Par** (9) (2007), a painting in oil colours. Several series work done on this in different medium such as installations, paintings, so on. Artist explains very beautifully that how he ideates these. In early days he was travelling in flight and there is was a halt in an Arab country, there is a huge rush and the artist finds out that the swarm of people consists of his countrymen who go outing search of work. There he saw their luggage which was adorned with colourful ropes. And from their he gets inspiration for **Across Seven Seas** series. Like this he has stories or deep meaning for spectators. This meaning is rooted to its culture in aesthetic manner. Everyone loves his art work not because of its size but because of his creative power, which he knows how to get in relation with his art.



4.A Mixed Media



4.B Mixed Media



4.C Bronze and Chrome

4.D Oil on Canvas

Figure 4: 4. A 29 Morning (1996), 4. B The Way Home (11) (2001), 4. C Three Cows (2003- 08)
4. D Saat Samundur Par (9)

Source: 4.A and 4.B from book Everything Inside, Subodh Gupta and 4.C and 4.D online

VIII. CONCLUSION

Technology has found its way in every discipline and same has happened in the field of art. Contemporary Indian artists in quarterly 20th century try to express themselves in non-traditional medium, but their subject matters is always deeply rooted in their culture. In today's time Subodh Gupta is known as Steel maniac, because of his signature material. Subodh Gupta's work is the biggest example to define this relationship of art and technology. His work has dual meaning, one side is glossy, shiny and the other side is dark, empty which is like the reality of our country. One strata of the country are shining with its developments and the other area is in dark, which is the rural side where people starve for their basic needs. In contemporary world one can't work in silos, artists need to make themselves free of all boundaries and constraints, and Gupta did same to express his inner voice.

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