

Exploring the Cultural Milieu in the Artwork of Tutu Pattnaik

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Abstract

This research paper explores the relationship between art, artist, and culture. It interprets how an artist is the representative of his culture through his art. The prime objective of this research paper is to understand the development of culture and skill in artists and their artworks. Artist Tutu Pattnaik is from Odisha – ‘The city of the temple’ and has been working in Delhi for forty-five years. He works in several mediums but primarily works in stone. The data collected by the author includes qualitative interviews, observations, and analysis of personal experience during fieldwork and available literature. The present study examines Tutu Pattnaik’s artistic work through socio-cultural critique highlighting the significant impact of cultural dynamics. It demonstrates how highly skilled technical execution and deep artistic insight combine to create a powerful artistic creation.

Keywords

Art, Artist, Culture, Tutu Pattnaik, Sculpture,

Introduction

This research paper interprets the artworks of Tutu Pattnaik through socio-cultural criticism. It presents the concept that artwork is not like a showpiece in contemporary times but exists as a reflection of the artist's personality and lifestyle as well as capturing an experience of cultural knowledge and skill proficiency.

Methodology

- Qualitative analysis from the perspective of criticism in regards to Tutu Pattnaik's sculpture
- Primary data sources of this research are interaction with sculptors visiting studio galleries and museums, photography documentation of the works,
- Secondary sources of this research paper are research journals, books, online sources YouTube Podcast blogs. newspaper, magazine

1. Socio-cultural background of Tutu Pattnaik

Tutu Pattnaik, a professional contemporary modern Odisha Sculptor/artist, has been working in Delhi for 42 years. Born and grew up in Bhubaneswar, after schooling in Odisha, he moved to BHU for his bachelor's where he chose sculpture as his subject, there he secured a gold medal with distinction for his sculpture, after that he joined the College of Art, Delhi University (DU) for post-graduation in creative sculpture, During his academic he got the best guidance from internationally acclaimed sculptor like Balbir Singh Katt and Pro. S.S Vohara.

Tutu Pattnaik's fame is no longer limited to his homeland but also in the recent decade Pattnaik has been going to several countries as an Indian artist and exhibiting his work through art symposiums and conclaves. He represents our nation in foreign countries through his artwork. This journey impacted his thoughts and strong inclination toward the exchange of cultural values, history myths, ethics as well as the ancient sculptural heritage around the world (Kumar, 2023)



Figure 1: "Tulsi" International Sculpture Symposium, Guarda, Portugal- 2016, Stone- 2043x121x121cms



Figure 2: "Airavata" The Elephant of Clouds, 3rd international Sculpture Symposium, Meschers, France-2018, Stone – 170x170x80cms



Figure 3: “Yaksha (Right) and Sakshi (left)” Ministry of Commerce and Industry Vanijy Bhawan, New Delhi, India -2018, Black Marble- 152x121x121 cms.



Figure 4: “Gate of Wisdom” Civilization – xxii, International Sculpture Symposium ITM, Gwalior, INDIA- 2023, Sand Stone, 794x503x215 cms.



Figure 5: Civilization- v, International Monumental Sculpture Symposium, Cairo, Egypt- 2016, Marble and Metal, 300x180x80cms

2. Tutu Pattnaik Art Work

His most important sculpture which has been created over the past 10 years and displayed in various countries around the world.

1. Tulsi: Guarda Portugal

The artist presented a sculpture as a gift made from the most sacred plant “TULSI” from our compound to a foreign land. As we all know in Hindu tradition and belief we revere Tulsi- as a mother goddess and is prayed to for health and good fortune. People believe that Tulsi provides favors, so they keep the plants in their homes and temples.

2. “Airavata” The elephant of clouds

In this sculpture, we see an elephant with a group of clouds and with some scripts written on it. The elephant shown by the artist is a sign of great strength that remains peaceful and harmonious with nature. The theme of this sculpture is based on the artist’s childhood memories, the true values, lessons, and essence of life inculcated by his grandmother in the form of folklore, myths, and stories here this sculpture “AIRAVATA” the elephant of heaven carrying the clouds on his back.

3. Gate of Wisdom, Gwalior India, Gate Series

The Sculpture Gate of Wisdom is one of a series of “GATE” created by Tutu Pattnaik. Before many sculptures were created on this subject like the Gate of Peace, Gate Of Majesty, and Gate of Hope. In all these sculptures lord Buddha is depicted symbolically in the form of an elephant carrying a fragmented gate symbolizing hope of happiness, harmony, peace, and Prosperity for all around.

4. Yaksha and Yakshi

These two sculptures have been installed in the new premises building of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Vanijy Bhawan, New Delhi. This building is established by the Indian government which reflects India’s economic presence globally. Yaksha and Yakschi were installed on the two sides of the staircase at the main gate. According to Pattnaik, the idea of keeping sculpture yaksha and Sakshi came from our ancient trade practices through the beautiful silk route. The silk route played a significant role in the ancient world of trade as it opened economic, political as well as art and cultural relations between India, China, Korea, Japan, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Europe, Arabia, Africa, and some other parts of the world. Back in ancient times, people mostly traded by swapping one thing for another. Traders would exchange stuff like precious stones and cotton with people from faraway places.

The artist’s basic idea about sculptural form comes from the “Pheriwala” (फेरी वाला) posture. In his sculpture ‘Yaksha’ is holding precious stones, while the ‘Yakshi’ is carrying cotton balls on her back, which represent textiles. He argues that these winged sculptures are representations of celestial beings from heaven, frequently found perched atop pillars in traditional Indian temple architecture. His methodology indicates his inclination to utilize antiquated principles, morality, and folklore, shaped by India’s abundant legacy of temple construction. Black stone with rough textures and polished figures was used to create the “Yaksha” and “Yakshi.” (Chaudhuri, 2022).

5. Civilization V

This sculpture symbolically narrates the growth of ancient civilization along the riverside. Tutu Pattnaik’s Civilization series depicts the merging and progress of two

civilizations. In ancient times, civilizations flourished alongside rivers, exchanging ideas, religious beliefs, scientific discoveries, and education eagerly. (Sahu, 2012)

3. Style and medium of work

Tutu Pattnaik likes to create work using both conventional as well as contemporary materials and methods. He has experimented with various materials including sandstone, marble, granite, metal, fiberglass, and woods like teak and Sheesham. By temperament, Tutu has a carving approach, and working in a direct medium suits him, Tutu confirms “My work in recent times has been expressed in the mix- medium, but I always love to imitate nature and its material”.

His process of sculpting and working with materials involves several steps, starting with generating ideas, visualizing, sketching, conceptualizing, developing, creating a small model, and finally, chiseling out the final form. Analysing Pattnaik’s creative process is quite fascinating. Whether you’re looking at his final pieces or his early sketches, his skill and maturity are evident. The relationship between the two demonstrates how passionately and thoroughly he has committed himself to his artistic path (Mohan, 2201, MAR-APR).

His carving technique is associated with Odisha sculpture. Temple architecture, wood carving, palm leaf painting, silver filigree, and people’s applique work are some of the well-recognized art practices found in Odisha.

His favorite medium is stone, monumental sculpture is his signature style. He carves stone manually like his mentor eminent artist Pro. Balbir Singh Katt. Handling raw stone without a powerful cutter or any assistance is tough but the stone itself inspires him. He enjoys shaping them with basic hand tools, which yield energetic results. We can see the artist’s individuality in the work he produces During his academic journey, he received the best guidance from a famous sculptor, Pro. Balbir Singh Katt and Prof. S.S Vohara. He was a direct student of Katt Shahab who influenced him to select stone as his main medium of work. Sometimes we see a natural surface of the stone in Tutu Pattnaik’s sculpture which was used by him skilfully

Identification of Sociocultural Impressions in These Sculpture

When we see the artwork of Tutu Pattnaik and analyze it, we find a cultural background in the artworks of the artist in which he lived. The artwork contains a cultural story of the artist and reflects the art and culture of Odisha, his native land in eastern India. As an artist Tutu Pattnaik articulates experiences and insights from all the temples, from Buddhist stupas, Sculptures, motifs, Rock cut remains, Pillars and capitals, Tribal art forms, traditional art, mythological stories, and folk arts. Delivering the illustrated talk on the topic of “Culture and Heritage: the Soft Power of the State” at the 1st World

Odia Language Conference initiated by the government of Odisha Tutu said, “My work juxtaposes always with the inspiration from the ancient tradition and culture of Odisha” (Pattnaik, 2024).

An artist with a strong sense of cultural identity draws inspiration from the eternal gems of historic buildings, sculptures, and folk artifacts. His early years act as a creative fountain, infusing his artistic vision with elements of Odisha’s rich cultural legacy.

He has become a cultural ambassador, sharing his sculptures in 18 different nations across the globe, His work speaks volumes, evoking the spirit of Odia sculpture in every piece while mixing modern expression with heritage. Tutu Pattnaik Often says “When I was a child I used to watch local sculptors working on the way to my school In Bhubaneswar. I just loved the sound and smell of it”

Through his visual work, artist Tutu Pattnaik encourages harmony and peace. His artwork, which consists of metal clips on fragments of broken stone, represents his wish to bring harmony back for the benefit of all people. (Chaudhuri, 2022)

Pattnaik repairs the damaged portions of his sculptures with metal clips. To represent the depth of Indian culture, he skillfully blends stone with metal, such as copper and iron. His ability to skillfully combine two broken fragments with a single clip to convey strong feelings and emphasize the value of our cultural legacy for future generations.

Tutu Pattnaik bridges the gap between the past and the present by giving life to historical remnants through his work. His sculptures leave a lasting impression on the global art scene, serving as proud representations of Odisha’s rich cultural heritage and glorification of its roots.

Conclusion

“Socio-cultural criticism finds that great works of art play a vital role in society, as evidenced by history, which shows that they encompass much more than what is experienced by our senses alone. They are part of the culture informed by every aspect of society. By examining the work of Tutu Pattnaik, we have seen how the artist has pushed the boundaries of cultural tradition through his artistry and skill, as well as invited us to consider and engage in meaningful dialogue on the concept of a mature art form in contemporary times and what it means to be. The artist beautifully conveys the richness of our cultural legacy via his works. He advances our culture by using abstract and semi-abstract forms, which in turn serves to raise awareness of and respect for past practices. We are unintentionally but purposely leaving behind our traditions and cultures as we go forward, which is a major disadvantage for future generations. To participate and cherish our wonderful culture, the artist serves as a bridge by bringing it to us, educating us, and producing such monumental masterpieces.

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