

RAJA RAVI VARMA: THE INDIAN MYTHOLOGICAL PAINTER

Dr. Om Prakash Mishra

Principal

Faculty of Fine Arts

MIMT, Dehradun

Email: mishraop200@gmail.com

Priya Surkali

MFA

Abstract

Raja Ravi Verma is said to be the great Indian painter of the 19th century also known as the father of modern India , famous for his indo European style of painting , he gave an identity to Indian art , he depicted Indian mythological life of Hindu deities and religious iconography of god and goddesses , this is how Raja Ravi Verma started a new genre or theme in Indian paintings .He also showed the everyday life of an Indian through his paintings. He took inspiration from Puranas, Vedic verses, Mahabharata etc. for his paintings, Raja Ravi Verma made his paintings available to the general public by printing them using lithography techniques, through which his image as a painter continued to grow . The whole paragraph given above brings up the significance of Raja Ravi Verma's painting and his contribution to Indian mythology.

Keywords

Iconography , mythological, religious.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Received: 13.05.2024

Approved: 22.06.2024

**Dr. Om Prakash Mishra,
Priya Surkali,**

RAJA RAVI VARMA: THE
INDIAN MYTHOLOGICAL
PAINTER

*RJPSSs 2024, Vol. L, No. 1,
pp.93-96
Article No.12*

Similarity Check: 24%

Online available at:

<https://anubooks.com/journal/research-journal-of-philosophy-amp-social-sciences>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31995/rjpss.2024v50i01.12>

Introduction

Raja Ravi Verma was born on 28 April, 1848 at Kilimanoor in Travancore (present-day Kerala) he belongs to the royal family of Travancore. His father Ezhumavil Neelakanthan Bhattatiripad was a scholar of Sanskrit and Ayurveda and his mother Uma Ambabayi Thampuratty belongs to baronial family, she was a well-known poet and writer she also composed music for Kathakali dramas, after her death Raja Ravi Verma published poetry *Parvati Swayamvaram* composed by her mother. In 1866, when he was 18, Varma married to 12-year-old Bhagreethi Bayi, she was the youngest in her family. This couple had five children, two sons and three daughters.



He was raised in a creative and artistic environment since childhood, he started painting when he was 7 years old. At such a young age Raja Ravi Verma's talent was first recognized by his uncle Raja Raja Verma who gave him his first fundamental lessons. The government of Kerala has established an award called Raja Ravi Varma Puraskaram, to be awarded every year, to people who excel in the field of art and culture, in due consideration of their memorable contribution to Indian art.

Art Career

When he was 14, he learned the basics of painting from Madurai. Later *Rama Swami Naidu* (court painter of Travancore) started teaching him to paint with watercolors, under the patronage of *Ayilyam Thirunal*, the next Raja of Travancore. Three years later Verma began to study oil painting under *Theodore Jensen* (British Portraitist). *Edgar Thurston* the British administrator plays an important role in promoting the artistic career of Verma and his brothers. In 1873 he was awarded three gold medals in World's Columbian Exposition which was held in Chicago and also received popularity after he won an award for exhibition for his painting at Vienna in 1873. Most of the paintings he has made are based on religious and Hindu mythological subjects. He traveled all over India in search of his subjects, and often modeled Indian women and goddesses in his paintings, this iconography of Hindu gods and goddesses has become a part of people's imagination of the epics.

It is believed that he set up a lithographic printing press in Ghatkopar, Mumbai on the advice of the Travancore prime minister T. Madhava Rao. The printing

press was later shifted to Malayali near Lonavala, Maharashtra. The oleographs produced by the press were based on themes of the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Puranas. These became popular and remained so for many years even after the death of Ravi Varma. The Ravi Varma press, even though was the largest and the most innovative press in India at its time, was a commercial failure under the management of the Varma brothers, it incurred many debts and had to be sold to the press' printing technician from Germany, Fritz Schleicher. Schleicher broadened the press production by including commercial and advertisement labels. The press continued successfully until a fire destroyed the whole factory in 1972, along with many of Ravi Verma's original lithographic prints.

Artwork of Raja Ravi Varma

Raja Ravi Varma's women's portraits are those of imaginary women of exquisite beauty. His nayikas give an impression of grace and sensibility, a trait associated with the transcendence of goddesses. He mostly painted Indian women as the central theme of his artwork. He wanted to spread the greatness and gracefulness of Indian women to all over the world .

1. Shakuntala looking for Dushyantha

The characters in this painting are from Mahabharata, In this painting Shakuntala is looking for Dushyantha pretending to remove the throne from her foot. The grace and the gesture of the body are perfectly painted by Verma.



**Oil on canvas
(43"x 71")**



Oil on canvas

2. Nair lady Adorning her hair

This painting represents a woman prettifying her hair with a flower in front of the mirror. This painting of Varma brought him global recognition and made him one of the most famous modern Indian painters.

3. Women Holding Fruit

In this painting Varma depicted a woman holding an orange in her hand with a beautiful grace. This painting is one of his beautiful creations. This painting was made when Varma was living and working in Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Conclusion

With this we can conclude that Raja Ravi Varma was one of the most influential artists of India not only that his calendar art is widely used as object of worship in India. Varma's art was convenient and loved by every household in India. On behalf of British India Varma was honored with the Kaiser - I - Hind Gold Medal. Acknowledging his contribution to Indian art, the government of India named an award called Raja Ravi Varma Puraskaram, awarded every year in the field of culture and art. Varma is often called as the first modern Indian artist due to his Indian Iconography with Western influences.



References

1. Wikipedia