

Working Practices

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What artistic practices does one use to produce, when the question is of life and death, of existence, of morality? What cultural practices does one choose to follow? When there are restrictions on one's right to life and liberty, what aesthetics does one rely on? Life experiences, ethics, history, and human tradition are the only things that one can find the answers to these many questions in. The established system and art culture, which let artistic creation sprout and nurture, as a means to reach God, for attaining liberation, have always promoted the system that is based on inequality. By retaining control of specific mechanisms, these systems have only gotten stronger. This system is seen to ably thump even ordinary import, without judging the depth of the import. This kind of a system has never regarded Art as medium of transformation. It has always had hegemony of systemic / scientific complexity. It does not speak of liberation. All of this is extremely self-centered!

It loosens our awareness by creating an illusion of consciousness! This will have to be theorized; going beyond whether it is good or bad; by understanding the shortcomings and recognizing the high-handed provisions of this stand. Of course, there is nothing wrong in everyone having a position, or stand, that is convenient to them. But it should not have hypocrisy, ego, and improper one-sidedness. The situation today is much more muddy than self-satisfying attendance at meetings, and our artists today are still not taking a stand based on human values. Whenever they rebelled for the sake of equality, freedom and liberation; art and the artist reached the social conscience and became a part of the fight for transformation.

From primitive times, the myriad connections between life and art have been proven through a variety of representations. Looking at the fight against contemporary inequalities in India and the western world, one is able to understand the contribution of the artists (to the movement); whether it is the Dalit Panther's fight for legal rights in India, or the Black Panther's fight (for rights) in the USA. One can see the use being made of the arts culture as a tool in this fight for legal rights, even as recently as the Farmers' Long March. Participant farmers, farm labour, and tribals were all using and discovering new techniques through various media (Mediums). Group Songs, group dances, group musical performances etc, e

The Black arts movement was an ideological movement that emerged in the USA in the early 1960 when Black artist and intellectual came together to organize, study and think about what a new black art and black politics movement might be. The Dalit panther; the movement had influence and inspiration of Black Panther in America. The connection between black arts and Indian contemporary arts of oppressed class is they are working for the same path. Artists associated with the movements addressing issues of Dalit Adivasi identity, liberation and its politics. While there is not only distinctive aesthetics in visual expression but in the way of its thinking process and cultural ideology. Expression not only for beautification of things but its recognition, self-respect, liberation and beautify life too. Black arts movement in 1960 and Dalit panther founded in 1972; in Indian state of Maharashtra. In the manifesto of Dalit Panther they say, untouchability is the most violent form of exploitation on the surface of the earth, which survives the ever changing forms of power structure. Today it is necessary to seek its soil, its root causes. If we understand them, we can definitely strike at the heart of exploitation. The oppression of Dalits still exists despite the lives and work of our two great leaders--Jyotiba Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar. It is not only alive, it is stronger. Hence, unless we understand and give shape to the revolutionary content latent in the downtrodden lives of the Untouchables, not a single individual seeking a social revolution would be able to remain alive in India. ... The Dalit is no longer merely an untouchable outside the village walls and the scriptures. He is an untouchable, and he is a Dalit, but he is also a worker, a landless labourer, a proletarian. And unless we strengthen this growing revolutionary unity of the many with all our efforts, our existence has no future. (Dalit Panther manifesto).

Denial by the established Upper-castes / Upper-classes and the energy to fight for rights is the similarity in the two movements. In India, this system of inequality that dates back thousands of years, is still standing, strong, and deeply rooted. It is this very system that created divisions in people. It established the system of the uplifted and the downtrodden, and the most intelligent being on earth was made a slave of this divisive system. Parallely, a mind-controlling, unequal religious laboratory was also constructed, so that man would not be able to completely fathom this system created by man himself. If not for this, people would not be willing to kill in the name of caste and creed even today. To find the roots of this system, one has to go back thousands of years. While studying Indian Philosophy, or the social structures of India, just the concept of being Hindu does not imply "India" is an accepted fact. There are many schools of thought that we call 'vision'

or 'philosophy'; India has a variety of these visions, fights, and cultures.

Vedic and Non-Vedic is a long-drawn historic battle here. The human, scientific, philosophical and developmental philosophies that Buddha and Kabir preached and grew over thousands of years were given strong walls by Jyotiba Phule, and Dr. Balasaheb Ambedkar built the bell-tower over it. After the historic struggles and sacrifices by great men, man started understanding psychological and intellectual servitude and only then did the downtrodden here start his journey towards liberation. The Brahmanical society is limited by the bounds of inequality. These beliefs are based in faith in a deep-set, and well rooted patriarchy. Therefore, the Brahmanical system here rewards the caste system.

In the 19th Century, the father of the modern revolution, Jyotiba Phule, while describing untouchability, used the word Dalit. He gave a single, all encompassing term, Dalit, to the class that was exploited, victimized, and suffering injustice. Although times have changed, and contexts have changed, but there is still inequality and exploitation. Upper-Castes, and Brahmanical people want to keep the Dalit in slavery still. They permanently want to keep a class to serve the established. A lot of great leaders have blown these theories to bits from time to time. Dr. Ambedkar, a highly educated and recognized revolutionary person, completely changed all the prevalent references here. With intelligence and thought, without spilling a drop of blood, he created a revolution, and there, started a new journey. After Ambedkar, the Dalit movement (Struggle) took a progressive turn, becoming the Ambedkarite struggle. There is a thought-process in the name itself, Freedom, Equality, brotherhood. Dr. Ambedkar gave India Democracy and a Republic, by means of writing the constitution.

Now let's turn towards the art and cultural stand here. While understanding the Cultural System here, understanding the social and political background is necessary. Just like social inequality, cultural inequality (asymmetry) is also present here.

The Brahmanical system here created the caste system and as a result caste based occupations and craftsmanship also took root.

Spirituality here had never given the Dalits the independence to choose an independent business. Therefore, it was impossible to express interest in other arts, even with a want to do so. From here, over many years, cultural double-dealing took root. The disallowing of Dalits to read and write made it religiously impossible for Dalits to write the science of things.

Dr. Ambedkar has expressed his outspoken views about producing art. In his biography of Dr. Ambedkar's, Dhananjay Kir writes - "In India appreciation of art was confined to casteism. A man must be born into a caste which followed a certain art. Art suffered, he observed, because man couldn't follow his bent."

In India, a person's birth determines his / her profession and because of this there is no room, or freedom to nurture natural leanings of one's talent. Therefore, Art deteriorated. The caste system and how it affected the state of the arts is being investigated through a sociological lens; and how the Indian artistic tradition's history is being seen in a new light. Due to this immovable, and unchanging caste system, the Indian society became still, moulded, and non-revolutionary. Became the slave of a set pattern. And in this pattern-driven society, art also became a pattern. It got moulded. Slowly, the center of the art shifted from the person / individual to creed / caste. Art lost its individuality and became a characterisation of a caste / creed. It became monotonous and machine-like. It deteriorated, and because of the moulded nature of caste itself, it ceased to remain an art. It became a craft.

After such deterioration of art, where would there be the space for innovation? And then Indian art was obliterated and what was left was craft. In the Brahmanical era, these arts were referred to as the arts of the 'Shudras', as can be seen in the 'Shatapath Brahmana'. It clearly writes "Shilpavrutishcha Shudra". Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar has etched this very perspective of looking at the arts in his mind. We can see evidence of the absolute truth of what Dr. Ambedkar says in the rhythmic line and beautiful shapes in the Ajanta caves. The paintings in Ajanta were inspired by the Buddhists and most of that art was realized in the buddhist period. Thus, in the buddhist era, the restrictions on caste were loosened. The result of which is etched in the free-flowing lines in Ajanta. Which means that when the bonds of caste were loosened, Indian art thrived. And whenever they became rigid, artistic discoveries were lost. This is the deep and inextricable connect between castes and art. (The cast and art through the perception of Dr. Ambedkar, Raja Dhale-Maharashtracha Manas)

1972 was the year of the rise of the Dalit Panther. It's formal association with political and cultural 'blackness' began here. It was a very rebellious step for the Panther to celebrate the 1972 Independence Day as Black Independence Day. When Babasaheb was studying in Columbia University in 1913, he was in touch with movements resisting dynastic power through his professor John Dewey. Then, in 1943, there was correspondence between Babasaheb and WEB Du Bois about requesting a copy of the petition filed by the Negro National

Congress with the UN. In that, Babasaheb writes that the state of the Negroes in America and the untouchables in India is fairly similar, and Babasaheb was a student of the questions of Negroes at that time. In his reply to Babasaheb's letter, Du Bois writes that he is aware of Babasaheb's work with the Untouchables in India and that he has heard highly of Babasaheb with regard to the work. Ambedkar B.R., 1891-1956, letter to Dr.B.R.Ambedkar WEB Du Bois ,ca,July 1946. WEB Du Bois paper (ms 312), special collection and university archives , university of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries,

The Black Panther resistance later became the Black Panther party and the Black Arts Movement, and the Dalit Panther here also developed similarly. This movement invigorated new energy in the Arts and Literature. But this was not reflected anywhere in the Arts world of the time. It developed greatly through the mouthpieces, articles and conventions of the Dalit Movement of the time. Overall, the Sarvahara, Dalit, Bahujan, Shramik classes here are culturally prosperous. This class is very tolerant. Despite being subjected to, and suffering such an inhuman system, they never became cruel. Of course, to make the slave realize slavery, many a great man had to be born. Babasaheb took it all the way back till the Buddha and made available this great philosophy of life. That is why the art that developed through these struggles have a Yelgar against the inhuman tradition. The Ambedkarite here is direct, he directly challenges the vedic unequal, and Brahmanical system. In the post-ambedkar era, Literateurs, Writers, and Visual Artists who have a relationship with our bahujan workers, and believe in brotherhood and equality, should turn the high-handed, caste patriarchy based cultural system on its head; and in the words of Jyotiba Phule, "It is required that we think of ourselves and build our own alternate cultural systems and structures"

We are looking at Clark house as a mechanism. To make a presentation, there needs to be a mechanism in place. In the movements till today, the question was "What about Cultural Expression?". Therefore, the lack of a mechanism, and a system did not let it take form. But now the thought process, through the medium of a collective, is looking to become a mechanism by the means of thought and representation. It is the need of the hour for these forces to strengthen and take forward devoted cultural interactions with the public. This interaction should develop the strength to bear the challenge to develop alternate Theology and Aesthetics. Getting the voices of the oppressed across the planet tied together and working for their rights, finding an alternate to cultural terrorism, and taking this thought forward, collectively, is required. Today's youth is clearly aware of these situations. He has access to latest technology. Even if the tools here are in the hands of the upper-castes, there is global access

available today. They know of different technologies. The established became big by working on the problems of the Dalit and the Tribals here. But the primary question, and the Dalits and Tribals remained far from representation. His creations or questions were given no place in the established world.

Today, the situation is different. The new generation is finding strong alternatives in many fields of Art. It is calling for inclusiveness by challenging cultural cheats / touts. Films, Music, Visuals, and many other forms. From the Dnyaneshwari to Rock, there is a tone of equality rising here. Today, questions are being asked through films and visual arts. The exploited across the world are increasingly feeling the want to work together. Today's generation is taking the journey of the great men towards Humanity. The movement towards the undivided existence like in the first few lines of the Indian Constitution – I am first and Indian, and lastly also and Indian, has already begun. Now the fight is clear and straight. Stands that promote Democracy, Equality and Freedom, and stands that fight Fascism. Looking at the rise of Fascist forces in India, this fight has to be fought even stronger. We have to put forward cultural development, but we also have to remain conscious that we do not become fundamentalist in the process. Threads and contexts that bind people together have to be kept in mind in the process of creation.

There has long been a practice of killing intellectuals here. Baliraj was deceitfully killed by Vamana and even today, similar deceit is taking the lives of intellectuals and artists who talk of equality. Brahmanical and Hindutva forces are moving forward in mind-altering experiments and this is harmful. The rising number of riots being incited on the basis of the caste system is a symbol of this. This method of misleading people from real issues at hand and driving their mind towards fundamentalist ideas, sparking riots on caste lines, and the undemocratic and unconstitutional attempt at creating an inequality driven Hindu Nation will plunge the country into darkness. For that, we have to have our head on our shoulders.

Clarke House is courageously standing strong against these arrogant cultural attacks. Artists are working with great hope and democratic ideas, in the contemporary arts.

The expression of the communities outside the town limits is clear. Every community has their form of expression, and they are clear. Instead, the places of production of the established, are complicated. There is a science in them. I would not call those arts a conspiracy, but the brain behind those productions is a conspirator. That is science. It's Complicated. It is not all-inclusive. Because it stopped the Bahujans from education and reading. Therefore this science could not be understood. The commoners were made to fear

science and the Vedas. This is how all of this is complicated. This is the difference in these two systems. One clear, the other complicated. The point is that the degree of inclusiveness that exists in the bahujans is conversely lacking in the upper-castes. Now, one has to carefully lay out the thought of art as a tool to fight, and for liberation. On one side, there has been tremendous technical development. There are greatly developed media in front of us. We will go back into society, to villages, to slums. There are enough intelligent people around. I do not say educated because Babasaheb says, there is a difference between intelligent class and educated class, educated class are the ones who are self-centred, they are more concerned about themselves, and the intellectual class are the ones who are open to ideas and willing to make changes. Therefore, let's go to these intelligent people, to those who are committed. Go to the masses and learn from the masses. There is a lot of content in the masses. And that is why we have to go to the masses. We have to get whatever is good. We will have to understand, for theoretical understanding.

As many holes can be made in the Brahmanical influence over the arts, literature, history, and linguistics, and deep, sincere efforts made to re-evaluate and reform these, it will be that much better to ably to make aesthetics inclusive and strong. The recently developed branches of cultural studies have given credence to these types of theories. And that is why Clark House Initiative is awarding the reforms as Institutional contribution and Strong broader alternative.