



**THE INTERSECTION EXPLORING OF AESTHETICS AND FEMINISM
THROUGH THE ARTISTIC WORKS OF ARPANA CAUR**

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Abstract

Transcending age, race, and caste, females have consistently been subjected to power dynamics within society. The crux of discrimination, subjugation, and vulnerability lies in the dominion wielded by patriarchy. Present-day instances of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and women's victimization, despite numerous efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations, invoke contemplation on the importance of diverse platforms for voicing opposition to the female plight. Feminism has notably advanced women's empowerment through artistic mediums, portraying various aspects of women's lives under patriarchal hegemony. This research paper, based on a qualitative approach and interpretative methodology, focuses on analysing the selected works of the renowned Delhi based woman artist, Arpana Caur, for the pronouncement of aesthetic and feminist perspectives. The findings of the research state that Caur's artistic works are an exploration of the hidden quality of courage, the urge for destiny, and the strength of women to survive in the midst of the violent atmosphere around them. Through the significance and essence of duality in the paintings, women are presented as a major subject and a tool to criticise the immoralities of the world.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Arpana Caur, feminism, fine arts, gender.

Introduction

The global panorama of discrimination, exploitation, and violence against disenfranchised, silenced, and oppressed groups spans centuries. The repercussions of individuals persecuted for their race, caste, and creed persistently haunt the victims' traumatic conditions. In various ways, privileged and dominant societal factions attempt to assert their power, authority, and control over others, feigning the right to manipulate cultural, religious, and societal norms. Despite numerous initiatives from governments, non-government agencies, and ideological movements, many countries' human rights, freedom, and equality statuses remain lamentable. United Nations Article number two guarantees equal rights and freedom to everyone, regardless of diverse conditions; however, violations escalate due to political, economic, cultural, and religious conflicts. Regarding the human rights violations around the world, countries such as Burma, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, North Korea, and Sudan are listed on the top, thus becoming the worst abusers of human rights (Wright, 2015). This scenario has

affected the various sectors of life and also the reputation of the respective country from the perspective of tourism and development.

In discussions about human rights and issues relating to freedom, equality, and opportunities, women's situations warrant attention and consideration. Although the female gender's overall status has improved compared to prior decades and centuries, patriarchal dominance in multiple life sectors generates conflicts and tension, resulting in underrepresentation and devaluation. The Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey revealed that women have fewer societal opportunities than men. A mere 3-6% believe that women have greater opportunities in high-paying jobs, community leadership, political expression, and education access (Horowitz, 2020). Regarding violence against women, cultural and religious affiliations propagating false ideological beliefs consider women subjugated by men or obligate women to endure domestic violence inflicted by society's patriarchal structure. Marriage has perpetuated gender discrimination, transforming into a social construct that confines women within domestic boundaries while men explore the world. The World Economic Forum's annual Global Gender Gap Index ranks India as the most unequal country globally, occupying the 17th position from the bottom (Narayan, 2021).

This situation of discrimination and exploitation of women shows the importance of the feminist movement and ideology. Unlike in the past, developments in technological, ideological, and ethical perspectives have brought previously unconsidered parts of the female gender into the mainstream. Feminism as a result of the contributions of the known and the unknown The process of gradual development of ideology helped overcome some of the challenges and tensions created by the country's political, cultural, religious and social systems. Considering the step-by-step and conscious inclusion of life's different needs in her four waves of feminism, the latest feminism combines the immense potential of social media and other online her platforms. , disseminating and promoting the improvement of women's lives in the country. Women empowerment has been a keyword for the many schemes and programmes initiated by governmental agencies to ensure the protection, safety, and equality of women in society. This inclusion and use of different methods to explore and express the different states of women in society has opened space for artistic works to become a major influence in the representation of women and women's bodies as subjects of protest, expression of anger, and criticism towards the patriarchal dominance in society that directly and indirectly affect the peaceful existence of women.

This research paper would analyse the selected artworks of the Delhi based woman artist, Arpana Caur, in the light of its aesthetic and feminist aspects. The qualitative approach interprets the aesthetic tone of the works that are immensely connected with the ideological backgrounds of feminism. The relevance of the study points to how art and artists contribute to enhancing, propagating, and advocating their beliefs on feminism by utilising the tools of art, its vibrant colours, and interpretative quality.

Literature Review

However, Arpana Caur does not consider herself a feminist-oriented artist as she focuses on many issues including feminism. Nonetheless, she affirms that her own work represents women's experiences in society (Ratti, 2013, p. 396). It cannot be concluded that she is a feminist artist because of the variety of artistic works her cowl has contributed. Her artistic expression is a reaction to people's surroundings, situations and beings. Caur's subject-centered

approach balances content and form by reorienting aesthetic engagement (Grewal, 2013, p. 1038). The aesthetic aspect of Kaul's work thus emphasizes her concern with social issues. These concerns lead to responses to various situations that affect people's ability to live safely. Kaur (2017) explores how various forms of representation were influenced and organized by India's "Nirbhaya effect" against the backdrop of the brutal murder of a young woman in New Delhi in 2012. summarizes the views of Among her many artistic contributions, Arpana Caur's portraiture highlighted her feminist perspective on the subject. Shagufta Khanam (2006) critically examines the portrayal of Indian women in Arpana Caur's paintings. Researchers focus on the progression of her career as an artist, describing the materials and techniques used in her paintings that challenge women, feminine forms, modernism and innovation in her talent. She admires her vision and uniqueness in her art depicting the daily lives of people in the real world. According to the paper (196), "Your drawing can represent a girl, a young woman in danger of life, a window, a post-menopausal woman, a mother figure, or Mother Earth". Arpana Caur depicts the female figures in great detail, but less attention is paid to the male figures in her paintings than to the female figures. Her images portray women in an authentic way and evoke intense feelings about the unknown aspects of women's lives. Arpana Caur is described in her research as a socially sensitive individual who absorbs social emotions through her artwork.

Caur: The Art of Aesthetics & Feminism

Aesthetics is a term that refers to the perception, evaluation, and production of art, and that emotional response encompasses more than just that (Vessel et al., 2013). The essence of aesthetics in art runs high, as the content is connected and expressed through the way the viewer appreciates the aesthetic production of the work. Feminism identifies women's diverse needs in society, but can be successfully expressed and communicated to mass groups through art sources. Arpana Caur's work identifies the need to identify the essence of society through female characters. I'm telling you. Because female characters are most affected by emotional, social, familial and other ways they connect with their environment. The ability of painting and sculpture to express emotions through her gestures and facial expressions makes Arpana Caur's work less visible to the public as mere figures. Arpana Caur places more emphasis on the universality of her work. This is also due to the selection of everyday examples from people's social lives. Discussing selected works from an aesthetic and feminist perspective, *Where Are All the Flowers Gone* (1995), *The Embroiderer* (1996), *Body is Just a Garment* (1993), *Yogini* (1993), and *Soldier's Mother* (1995)) and other contributions. She promotes multiple concerns of social issues.

Where Are All the Flowers Gone (1995) has images of lotuses, gorgeous skies, and deep blue water, as well as rifles, soldiers, and a despondent woman wearing a black veil. Each image represented notions such as life, death, and violence, with the depictions focusing on the themes of violence and peace. Despite the fact that many of her paintings depicted symbolic meanings, the work she created in response to the Hiroshima bombing remained her favourite. Beyond the outline that is presented to it, the symbolic representation in her paintings is extremely important in the analysis. The painting has been installed at the Hiroshima Museum along with other painters whose works on the same theme had been selected. While women are repressed under the continuous intolerance of patriarchy, several situations in society also affect the well-being of the female gender. The portrayal of a woman in the painting and the

colour representations of calm, violent, and dark tones



interconnect the existence of peace, society, and its reflection in the female gender. She once stated unequivocally that women dominate her art while discussing the women-oriented paintings. She also stated that the women depicted in her paintings are women who are seen in homes and neighbourhoods without any type of needless sexuality. She believed in the potential of women to replenish and regenerate, just as nature does, in order to meet the world's challenges, such as severe industrialization and urbanisation (Nair, 2015)

The Embroider (1996) captures Caur's artistic flair for integrating diverse ideas expressed through color and pattern into his paintings. It is entirely based on her mother, who inspired her work. She shows a woman sitting and working on a sewing project. Kaur uses the narrative's ruined city walls as a backdrop for images of terracotta-colored sharks and numerous automobiles to depict the present, engulfed in pollution. Folk depictions of birds and mythological imagery compositions, including a sacred circle with her pincers marching, mix themes of tranquility and terror. The dual expression of tone in the image featuring the tailor is that while the female character continues her work with great enthusiasm and concentration, she experiences tranquility while being surrounded by traps and threats from society. This suggests that there is a possibility that



The expansion of violence into calm situations is represented here, as it threatens a woman's right to freely express herself. This picture depicts the difficulties that women have in

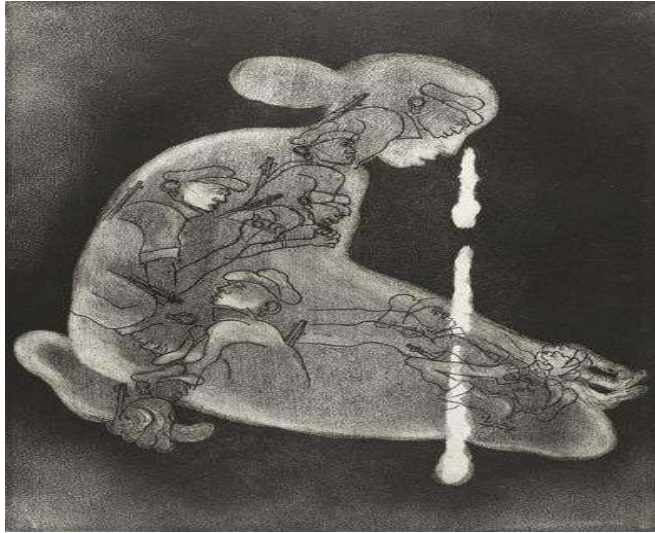
expressing themselves in the ways that they need to live. This duality extends to *Embroiders* (1999) where the unending cycle of the thread of life is shown as stitched by two women.

This artwork, *Yogini* (1993), unlike the others, depicts a seated woman cutting her long hair with a sword. She appears to be surrounded by holy guys, who emit a spiritual aura surrounding her. The dress that is shown worn is a white transparent fabric denoting the insignificance of the need for clothes in the world. The significance of the body's materialistic nature is diminished in this picture, which links to the same idea as the artwork *Body is Just a Garment* (1993). The woman in the painting separates herself from earthly concerns in order to be equated with spiritual and enlightened existence.



This is shown in her seated position, where she leans back on her toes, revealing her astral body. A woman's material possessions are represented by her snake-shaped hair, which bleeds when cut with a white sword. The female figure in the image is depicted in this position and pose, depicting her body and gender prejudices. indicates staying away (Kalsi, 2012). It also represents the severance of bodily limitations that have nothing to do with female enlightened beings. Women's desire to be seen beyond the prevailing ideologies that limit and deny women's freedom and rights in the world is interpreted as a process of separation from worldly problems, physical restraints and restricted existence. can. Enlightenment and transformation from the limitations of material existence allow the women in the artwork to experience and enjoy limitless expressions of joy and freedom, as the soul knows no gender limitations.

The characteristics and quality of Arpana Caur's painting blend with her selection of the content to represent in the portrait and the aesthetic brilliance that is imparted into it. Certainly, the aesthetics attributed to the works explains how the core idea of the painting gets highlighted. This is clearly visible in the work that explores the emotional instability experienced by the mother figure on the loss of her son who was a soldier.



Soldier's Mother (1995), which represents several small figures of soldiers interwoven in the flesh of the mother figure points to the solitude and alienation that the mother has felt. The woman character in the painting is depicted in this way to represent the grief and sorrow felt by the mother in her. It provides the impression that she is preoccupied with her son and the battlefield where he is fighting alongside his comrades. This painting stands out among Arpana Caur's other works because it has the essence of motherhood within the female figure's body. Though the image can be misunderstood from an erotic standpoint, it also depicts the secret calamity that exists within her, even when she appears to be serene. The primary figure's black shade represents the negativity that boils within her as a result of her thoughts. The anxiety that develops within a woman as a result of tensions around insecurity, violence, riots, and conflicts is obvious in the painting of the lady subject, which includes multiple miniature soldier figures.

Conclusion

Arpana Caur's artistic works extend beyond the traditional view of art for art's sake, as she places emphasis on the simplicity, originality, and reliability of everyday life for common people within society. According to Caur's perspective, it is up to the artist to decide on the form of art they wish to represent. In her works, the aesthetic beauty of her portraits is balanced with the significance of the content she incorporates. The research findings indicate that the selected works of Arpana Caur exhibit both aesthetics and feminism, demonstrating a connection through the portrayal of women, society, and the viewer. While Caur does not identify herself as a feminist artist, her incorporation of feminist viewpoints reflects the need for equality, freedom, and individuality.

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