



Amalgamation of East and West in Art of Amrita Sher-Gil

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Abstract

An avant garde aesthete, and one of the pioneers of modern art in India, Amrita Sher-gil (1913 – 1941) was a remarkable combination of sensitivity and sensuousness. Her artworks show an array of influences that were sourced from her Indo-Hungarian origin, her encounters with French and Italian discourses. An iconoclast at heart, she was a social rebel who lived life on her own terms. Some of her works include 'Village Scene', 'In the Ladies Enclosure', 'Self-portrait as a Tahitian', 'Red Brick house', 'Hill Scene' and the South Indian Trilogy, 'Bride's Toilet', 'Brahmacharis' and 'South Indian Villagers Going to Market'. Her works are a hybrid of multiple cultures that produce a perfect amalgamation of local, regional, national and international influences. Her art has been known to influence not only generations of Indian artists from Sayed Haider Raza to Arpita Singh; they are also depiction of the plight of Indian women both in India and abroad.

The paper examines how Sher-gil explores interiority to find her authentic voice and thus carve out feminine agency through her immortalized canvases. The paper will examine how Sher-gil's works manifest artistic acculturation as they draw impressions of the Ajanta frescoes and Pahari paintings alongside the motifs and techniques that are characteristic of post-Impressionist painters. The paper aims to locate the profound entanglements of modernism and cross-cultural currents of the early 20th century that may be witnessed in Sher-gil's artistic oeuvre.

Keywords: Amrita Sher-gil, east-west encounter, Indian art, Colonial art