

## EROTICISM IN ART

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Eroticism, derived from the Greek word *eros* which means desire, defining the philosophical contemplation of sexual desires, sensuality and the tenderness of love. This word 'Eroticism' has been used in art too where it found its place in the form of paintings, sculptures, photography, film, books and now in advertisements too. According to Honoré de Balzac, a famous playwright and a novelist of the *Renaissance* period, said that eroticism depends not just on the person's sexual morality but also on the surrounding and culture and the time period he is in. And why not, if a person is in a conservative society then even this blog that I am writing will prove to be an adult blue material rather than seeing it as a person's research. Here my research is done on paintings and written materials that I have read and seen.

My research began when I had visited *Khajuraho* for the second time. The first time I had visited that place I was a young bud, early teens at that time, full of hormone imbalances and mind full of weeds. At that time it never left a mark on my mind, except for off-course the sexual positions thronging the walls decorating it explicitly with men, women and animals, all doing same thing 'sex'. I felt pretty embarrassed as I was there with people much older than me and my parents too were there in the crowd. I could not keep my eyes fixed on the explicit sculptures for long as the only thing that crossed my mind 'my parents won't like it'. As and how I grew up that hindrance of watching something so wonderfully created showing the most balanced eroticism, went away. I should definitely give credit to my mother who helped me, to her maximum, to learn many things related to sexual pleasures and realities that I need to follow and the ways to safeguard myself from the unwanted. By the time I was in my early 20's I felt I was more accomplished until I went to *Khajuraho* again and it changed my viewpoint completely. I realized the real meaning of ecstasy in erotic. This time I didn't feel shy to look at the voluptuous women touched by their counterparts who were equally well built.



**Khajuraho Temple (M.P.)**

During the first few weeks of my research I visited the place again and again and read books on it. *Khajuraho*, though a temple in Madhya Pradesh, is famous worldwide for having the finest sculptures that speaks about the co-existence of spirituality and erotica together. The sculptures not only draw your second glance but also reflects immense sensitivity, warmth and love and also shows an age which was free from false apprehensions about one's own sexuality and inhibitions. *Khajuraho* which is spread over 9 acres of land with 85 temples together, is the largest Hindu and Jain temple in the world. Built by the Chandella dynasty's Maharaja Rao Vidyadhara during their golden period between 900 AD to 1130 AD, mainly depicts the lives of women during that period celebrating their womanhood. The sculptures of Gods and Goddesses that decorates its walls mainly define the Shiva Partvati Shakti and the man and woman power in one, the harmony of the positive and negative. Women with heavy ornaments, broad hips and heavy bust, quite voluptuous yet proportionate is portrayed on the walls depicting the true desire of a man. These women are shown in various acts of self pleasure which includes bathing, make-up, washing their hair and even playing games. It was a common belief that having the erotic sculptures on walls would waver of the evils. The sculpture with their pouted faces and sensuous poses gives the sign of love in life. *Kamasutra* has been sculpted on the walls explicitly to show the pleasures of life which takes us to a very different level of understanding the self and our own attributes.

*Kamasutra* which is undoubtedly the world's first book on human sexuality and pleasures of making love, was written in Sanskrit by *Vatsayana*. It tells us the ways to entice a man and a woman with the various fore plays and then it talks about the

sexual intercourse and the positions one can take for the maximum pleasure for the woman and maximum penetration for the man. *Kama* means desire and mainly the sexual desire in both the genders have and *Sutra* means the thread that binds the things together. But as it is popularly believed by the Indian and Western world that it is an exquisite book on human sexual relations, it proves to be a very different thing in-fact. It speaks about the gracious living which includes love and family too. It is true that since ages there have been many contradictions and controversies related to the sex. Though, India plays a major role in the history of sex by giving the first literature on human sexual intercourse as a science to live with well-being, in the modern times that philosophy and psychology has completely changed as more focus is given on the way to hide ones sexual desire.

Since ages sexual practices are depicted through literature and art. Many poets in India have written about the desires of man and woman amalgamation as one with verses which was beautifully crafted with words. The true sense of power and divinity of intercourse and the pleasure of touching the supreme are well versed in them. The first evidence of attitude towards sex was first found in the *Vedas* where they reveal the morals of sexuality, marriage and fertility in people. These texts always supported the view that in ancient India sex was considered as a moral duty of the married couples to give pleasure to both. Though mostly followed the monogamous relationship yet many followed polyandry and polygamy which means a person with many others, specially the ruler class used to have more than one relationships and it was considered as normal as it was mainly done to save the dynasty.



During my research on Eroticism in Art I came across a scholar, C.K. Vishwanath who soon became a very close friend with whom I could share my views and even could open up with my own desires. He gave me valuable texts which proved to be true to back my research and my belief too about my sexual desires. He provided me with poems from Gita Govindam and Pablo Neruda and many good reads by well known writers which all said explicitly the physical desires a man and a woman has either from each other or from self. One of his first poems that he sent me was,

***Love Songs to Krishna by Vidyapati (1352-1448)***

*For heaven's sake, listen, listen, O my darling:  
Do not dart your cruel, angry glances at me,  
For I swear by the lovely pitchers of your breasts,  
And by your golden, glittering, snake-like necklace:  
If ever on earth I dare touch anyone except you,  
Let your necklace turn into a real snake, and bite me;  
And if ever my promise and words prove false,  
Chastise me, O darling, in the way you want to.  
But, now, don't hesitate to take me in your arms,  
Bind, bind my thirsty body with yours; bruise me  
With your thighs, and bite, bite me with your teeth.  
Let your fingernails dig deep, deep into my skin!  
Strangle me, for heaven's sake, with your breasts,  
And lock me in the prison of your body forever!*

After reading this poem I could realize clearly that the desire to have the sexual intercourse was not just an act which is done out of duty but a way to release your desires on your counterpart. This poem talk about the passion and devotion *Krishna* has towards *Radha* is his foremost requirement. He asks her to give in to her desires and be at her best. He asks her to bite him and bruise him and leave imprints of their divine lovemaking on his body. In *Kamasutra* there are chapters that specially talks about the various kinds of embracing and even the ways to bite and dig you nails to entice your partner for the full pleasure. Rather it is quite true that sexual submissions equals to submission in worship, here you worship the body of your partner and yours too. Then the way *Radha* responds to his ways is equally beautiful,

*All my inhibition left me in a flash,  
When he robbed me of my clothes,  
But his body became my new dress.  
Like a bee hovering on a lotus leaf*

*He was there in my night, on me!  
True, the god of love never hesitates!  
He is free and determined like a bird  
Winging toward the clouds it loves.  
Yet I remember the mad tricks he played,  
My heart restlessly burning with desire  
Was yet filled with fear!*

Just because *Krishna* was a playful god and he was the desire of all the women *Radha* used to remain quite jealous of this and she used to feel quite sad for she could not call him her own though she loved him dearly. The translations of the poems were done by Afzar Hussain.

This was just one and then he shared with me international authors like Pablo Neruda who have written about love beautifully to define their thinking towards it.

*The Queen by Pablo Neruda  
I have named you queen.  
There are taller ones than you, taller.  
There are purer ones than you, purer.  
There are lovelier than you, lovelier.  
But you are the queen.  
When you go through the streets  
no one recognizes you.  
No one sees your crystal crown, no one looks  
at the carpet of red gold  
that you tread as you pass,  
the nonexistent carpet.  
And when you appear  
all the rivers sound  
in my body, bells  
shake the sky,  
and a hymn fills the world.  
Only you and I,  
only you and I, my love,  
listen to it.*

Some poems which he had shared were written by completely unknown writers yet they were all balanced with desires that are spontaneous. One of them is

*Love Dance*  
*It began with a touch, a smile, a moment shared*  
*Untamed emotions for which we were unprepared.*  
*You lead with your hand in the small of my back*  
*Lost, looking into eyes of ivory black.*  
*Aesthetically, you command style,*  
*I become the muse of the dance for a while.*  
*Rhythmically we step, movements pulsating*  
*The warmth of your hand I am embracing.*  
*Fingers entwined, bodies moving in time*  
*Hearts pounding to their internal rhyme.*  
*In every breath, every step, every beat,*  
*With each twist and turn we feel complete,*  
*We succumb to the hypnotic trance*  
*Lovers gone astray in life's love dance.*

Another poem was by KYB whose name I could not decipher till now wrote

*Devine Kiss, Black Sensual Love Poems by KYB*  
*Lips so full, soft and wet,*  
*pressed against mine,*  
*as we set, a sensuous pace,*  
*nice and slow.*  
*sparking naughty thoughts as we go.*  
*Deeper it gets,*  
*stroking my fire,*  
*lighting me up,*  
*with intense desire.*  
*You dip your tongue,*  
*reaching out to mine,*  
*kissing me so good,*  
*it's simply divine.*

Another poem by Michell on which I stumbled upon while searching for poem is

*DESIRE (EROTIC)*  
*lying in a pool of want*  
*I await your caresses*  
*twisted sex thrill fantasises*  
*running circles in my head*  
*fighting with each other*

*in the race to win first  
come to me now, my love  
I cannot wait  
come to me now  
and help cure my ache  
this flame licking  
white hot fire between my legs  
a low moan escapes  
under the weight of this desire  
nipples hardening  
remembering your tongue  
nipples hardening  
anticipating your thumb  
when you get me  
take me, make me yours  
this erotic dancing light  
belongs to no other  
come to me now, my love  
hurry, stake your claim  
come to me, make love to me  
again and again and again  
lying in a pool of want  
I await your caresses*

With these readings I could finally see clearly that what I desire from a man and from me was not at all harmful rather they all made sense and my ways to keep myself happy and giving myself the pleasures by any means are ways to keep my body and mind from straying. I was no more shy of my physical attributes, rather I felt more confident in showing my body and loving it too. Over the ages the society has become quite conservative to talk on something so developed and free as sex and sexual pleasures and desires. Rather they have gone behind the curtains and women are no more receptive about their own self. Rather now sex is taken more as a duty for family planning and not for giving pleasure to both.

Anyway coming back in my topic erotica has been followed by many painters in India and they have shown women in a very different line, they were shown as more powerful and sexually alive and there was nothing demeaning behind it. Since ages nudity in art is considered acceptable in India especially in south where the cream of the art fraternity thrived. It is true that the climate there played a major role as because of the tropical climate the clothes they wore showed maximum of their bodies. The women wore more revealing lower dresses and covered their upper parts with gold and precious stone ornaments. Traditional silk was used to cover the bodies.

Though most of the artists preferred to paint nudes as nudity was always considered as the most erotic thing in art and painters usually painted women with much fuller bodies as it was considered to be a figure a woman should have and a man desires for. Not only just in India this was followed it was followed in the western lands too where famous artists have painted and sculpted erotic figures. Though Nudity in Art and its erotic sides have been photographed recently it was there since ages to reflect the societies ways to aesthetics and modesty and morality. For most of the artists the human body played the most integral subject as it is the most misconducted topic that usually people follow. Ages have passed and still nudity is taken as a metaphor and multifaceted concept for beauty, sex, fertility, prosperity and even cult practices.



Jacopo Tintoretto - Susanna and the Elders



Francois Boucher Heracles and Omphale with young cupids at their feet



Erotica over the years have played a vital role in depicting the human behavior and their interests in this vast field of pleasure. Over the ages, though people have grown very conservative, the nudity and eroticism have etched a deep mark in the human minds taking it to a very different level. Though what it was earlier, the openness to accept the nude self and your sexual desires have changed, still it plays a vital role in shaping us as it is a part of our heritage since ages and will remain so in ages to come. This topic has many more view points to describe it elaborately. My argument on Eroticism in Art does not end here only but for the time being and until more research work I need to give it a semicolon.