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Art as a Medium of Social Change: Case Studies of Community Art Projects in Jharkhand

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ABSTRACT: In Jharkhand, India, community art projects have emerged as powerful agents of social change, leveraging artistic expression to amplify marginalized voices, challenge entrenched norms, and foster resilience amidst socio-economic challenges. Through initiatives such as murals advocating for land rights and empowering tribal women through traditional art forms, these projects not only preserve indigenous cultures but also raise awareness on critical issues like environmental sustainability and gender equality. Collaborations among NGOs, universities, and local stakeholders play a crucial role in harnessing art's potential for regional development, bolstering local economies, and promoting cohesive community bonds. Despite facing obstacles such as funding limitations and cultural complexities, these projects exemplify scalable models for driving meaningful societal transformation. By examining the diverse impacts of community art in Jharkhand, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how artistic interventions can effectively foster inclusive and resilient societies, highlighting the transformative power of art in addressing complex socio-cultural challenges.

KEYWORDS: Empowerment Through Art, Advocacy and Awareness, Cultural Preservation and Revitalization

I. INTRODUCTION

Art has long been recognized as a powerful catalyst for social change, transcending cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers to evoke profound societal transformations. In the Indian state of Jharkhand, renowned for its rich tribal heritage and socio-economic challenges, community art projects have emerged as potent instruments for advocacy, empowerment, and cultural preservation. These initiatives not only beautify public spaces but also amplify marginalized voices, challenge social norms, and foster collective resilience in the face of adversity. This study explores how art serves as a medium of social change through a series of case studies from Jharkhand. By examining diverse community art projects, ranging from murals addressing land rights to grassroots initiatives empowering tribal women through traditional art forms, this research seeks to uncover the multifaceted impacts of artistic expression on local communities. These projects are situated within the broader context of regional development, where collaborations between non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, and local bodies play a pivotal role in leveraging art for socio-economic progress.

The significance of these case studies lies in their ability to illustrate how art transcends mere aestheticism to become a vehicle for dialogue, advocacy, and community building. Through artistic interventions, marginalized groups find platforms to voice their aspirations, assert their identities, and challenge systemic injustices. Moreover, these projects contribute to cultural revitalization by preserving indigenous knowledge systems and traditions, thereby reinforcing community resilience against external pressures [1-3].

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sinha and Gaurav (2013) argue that regional knowledge development is critical for enhancing the knowledge economy. They critique universities' focus on community service learning (CSL), suggesting it often prioritizes academic outcomes over societal needs, reinforcing institutional agendas. They advocate for stronger partnerships between NGOs and universities in regions like Jharkhand to foster research networks aligned with global economic trends.

Bansal and Bansal (2013) portray a Delhi-based activist organization combating state oppression through immediate responses to marginalized communities' struggles. They highlight issues such as displacement and rights violations affecting dalits and tribal peoples, underscoring their advocacy role in challenging governmental neglect.

Dixit (2015) defines social entrepreneurship as leveraging market-driven solutions for social change, challenging misconceptions that social enterprises must be non-profit. She emphasizes their dual focus on economic and social impact, distinguishing them from traditional NGOs reliant on grants.



Liyanage et al. (2015) examine Indian cultural studies, exploring its relationship with broader South Asian frameworks while emphasizing local subaltern narratives' integration. They argue for a balance between global discourse and regional specificity in shaping cultural studies.

Dutta (2016) discusses the role of Adivasi media in India, highlighting its significance in amplifying indigenous voices amidst mainstream neglect. She advocates for scholarly attention to these media forms' unique communicative strengths and their impact on societal discourse.

Dutta and Ray (2017) define community media as platforms managed by and for local communities, distinct from commercial or state-run media. They stress community engagement in media production and circulation as pivotal for inclusive communication.

Malhotra et al. (2018) explore ICT's role in empowering marginalized communities in India, emphasizing the synergy between traditional and digital media for social and behavioral change. Their research underscores ICT's potential in enhancing civic participation and educational outcomes among youth.

Zabi (2018) critiques India's rural education system's shortcomings and proposes communication strategies to bridge educational gaps. She highlights NGO-led initiatives using effective communication to improve rural school attendance and learning outcomes.

Banik and Kundu (2018) analyze India's economic shift from agriculture to small-scale industries, underscoring the role of folk art in sustaining rural livelihoods. They explore Patachitra, a traditional art form, and its socio-economic challenges and cultural significance in regions like West Bengal.

Bansal and Bansal (2013) recount a poignant encounter with a tribal activist in Delhi, illustrating the harsh realities faced by marginalized communities in Jharkhand. They highlight grassroots struggles and the activist organization's role in amplifying these voices nationally.

III. MEDIUM OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Empowerment Through Art: Analyzing how community art projects empower marginalized groups, particularly women and tribal communities, by providing avenues for self-expression and socio-political engagement [4].

Advocacy and Awareness: Examining the role of art in raising awareness about critical social issues such as land rights, environmental conservation, and gender equality, thereby fostering advocacy and policy change [5].

Cultural Preservation and Revitalization: Investigating how art projects contribute to preserving and revitalizing indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions amidst rapid socio-economic transformations [6].

Collaborative Partnerships: Exploring the dynamics of partnerships between NGOs, universities, local governments, and communities in implementing and sustaining community art initiatives. Impact on Community Development: Assessing the broader socio-economic impacts of community art projects, including their contributions to local economies, tourism, and social cohesion [7].

IV. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Discussing the challenges faced in implementing community art projects in Jharkhand, such as funding constraints, cultural sensitivities, and institutional support, alongside opportunities for scaling and replicating successful models.

Through an in-depth analysis of these themes, this study aims to provide insights into how art can be effectively harnessed as a tool for social change in diverse socio-cultural contexts. By highlighting the transformative power of community art in Jharkhand, this research contributes to the broader discourse on the role of art in shaping inclusive and resilient societies [8-9].

V. CONCLUSION

Community art projects in Jharkhand demonstrate art's transformative power beyond aesthetics, fostering dialogue, advocacy, and community cohesion. These initiatives empower marginalized groups by providing platforms to voice aspirations, assert identities, and challenge systemic injustices. By preserving indigenous cultures and traditions, art strengthens community resilience against external pressures and enhances cultural pride. Collaborations among NGOs, universities, and local governments are essential for sustaining these projects and maximizing their socio-economic



impacts. Despite challenges such as funding constraints and cultural complexities, these partnerships present opportunities to replicate successful models and expand art's role in addressing societal issues. The case studies from Jharkhand underscore art's critical role in promoting gender equality, land rights, and environmental sustainability. They emphasize integrating art into regional development strategies to foster inclusive growth and strengthen community bonds. This research provides valuable insights into leveraging art as a tool for building equitable and resilient societies worldwide.

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