



Research Paper

## Graffiti Art During The Covid-19 Pandemic Time In India

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**ABSTRACT:** The COVID-19 pandemic has been affected worldwide horribly and presents an unprecedented challenge to the public physically and mentally. The economic and social disruption devastatingly affected by this pandemic. Art always reacts to contemporary socio-political issues. Worldwide visual artists are reacting through their visual medium on the issue of COVID-19. They are creating awareness in general people about this pandemic by creating strong visuals. Public art one of the medium where artist relates common people easily. Graffiti art is an important medium of public art which connect people very fast. This kind of art produced in the locality or the most crowded place in our society not in a separate gallery space. So that maximum people can communicate with this art form. This study highlights the graffiti art and social responsibility of Indian artists on the issue of COVID-19.

**KEYWORDS:** Graffiti art, style, social responsibility.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Graffiti is writing or drawings made on a wall or other surface in a public space where major people can view this art form. This kind of art practice in public and communal spaces is nothing new in India. The mural painting tradition is the root of the graffiti art form. In Buddhist cave painting of Ajanta (1<sup>st</sup> C BC) is the oldest mural tradition of India. Folk art tradition one of the richest and diverse art traditions in India. This kind of art form executed on the interior and exterior walls space in rural village huts and communal areas. “The mode of expression and manifestations have been quite unique, for example, hand painted Bollywood posters, typographic signboards, truck art, slogans, images of gods painted along sidewalks or tiles affixed to walls to prevent people from urinating in public, painted advertisements by small businesses, and political graffiti.”[1]

COVID-19 virus is the biggest issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The present situation of the world is not pleasant right now. The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the toughest challenges humankind faces. Huge numbers of people have been directly or indirectly affected by the pandemic. We are fighting against an invisible enemy. We are maintaining social distance and going through a lockdown situation. So, the Global Economic structure totally breakdown. We are not fit physically as well as mentally.

In this devastating situation, visual artists are also reacting through their visual medium. Public art is a very effective medium of art and easy to communicate with people. This kind of art form situated in public places so that no need to visit any gallery or pay money. Graphite art is one important form of Public art. Graffiti artists are doing such impactful artwork across the world on the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through their artwork, people can be aware of the current situation of society.

### II. GRAFFITI ART IN INDIA DURING THE PANDEMIC

Any kind of art form at any time always represents contemporary happenings like social, political, or cultural issues. Graffiti art is very strongly associated with the present scenario. Graffiti artists are associated with Socio-cultural and political issues. In this pandemic time, Indian graffiti artists are active and express their idea through their artwork. Sometimes they use the direct approach of image-making like doctors, nurse, health worker or policeman those are fighting against this deadliest virus. That means the direct presentation of facts (fig.1, 4, 5). Sometimes artists using the indirect presentation of facts (fig.2&3) like they portray the relevant character from mythology or using an Iconic figure.



(fig.1)

In fig.1, 4, 5 artists paint graffiti on a wall to express gratitude to doctors, paramedics, police, and other personnel associated with essential services during the nationwide lockdown, in wake of a coronavirus pandemic, in Bikaner, India.



(fig.2) Mumbai, India. Artist: Tyler Street Art



(fig.3) Prayagraj, India

Fig.2&3 are the example of indirect presentation of facts. If we consider the fig.2 then we saw Buddha in meditation wearing a surgical mask. The Buddha is an iconic image there is no connection between Buddha and COVID-19 virus as time is a concern. But Buddha wearing a surgical mask is a striking image. Buddha is a god; he is not a common people and if Buddha can wear a mask in this present situation, then everyone can wear a mask and fill the depth of the coronavirus pandemic situation. Fig.3 graphite based on a Hindu mythological character Yama, the god of death. According to Hindu mythology if Yama comes down on earth that means a shadow of death surrounds society. This painting gives a very clear message about the coronavirus pandemic situation. This graphite painting is very relevant in the current situation. It's a symbolic presentation of the present situation.



(fig.4) Mumbai, India



(fig.5) New Delhi, India



These two graffiti (fig.4 & 5) paying tribute to the frontline workers of the pandemic time like doctors, nurses, health workers, police, etc. Currently, our doctors, nurse, health workers, police are the frontline shoulders against this deadly virus. This kind of image gives a positive impact on society and recognises the role which they play in the pandemic time without caring about life risks. Though the concept of these two works is the same but style-wise they are completely different. Some graffiti (fig.4) artists applying colours graphically. On the other hand, fir.5 artists applying colour with the reference of light and shade. This kind of artwork shows the social responsibility of an artist. Each graffiti (fig. 1-5) different from each other's in terms of style and image building process, but they all are saying about the pandemic situation. Sometimes they give respect to the Covid warrior like doctors, nurses, health workers, and policemen etc. (fig. 1, 4, 5) and sometimes they aware of the present situation through symbolic Images (fig. 2, 3)

### III. Graffiti Art in outside India during the pandemic



(fig.6) Brazilian muralist Kobra's most recent work "Coexistence" on the issue of Coronavirus

Brazilian Graffiti artists are very famous accrues the world. One of Brazilian graffiti artist Eduardo Kobra is known around the world for his brightly coloured, kaleidoscopic murals. According to him- "My work is in the streets. I'm a painter who depends on the street. I paint murals. So, this has all been a big change for me. I've had to think about how to transform my work... rethink my creative process," Kobra told AFP in an interview in Itu, the small southeastern city where he is riding out the pandemic. [2] Kobra painted a mini mural called "Coexistence" on canvas. This situation is not good for a street artist, but this mural brings hope during the crisis and raises money for the suffering people. Though it is a small size mural according to Kobra's standard, it is still big. He wishes to paint this mural somewhere when the pandemic is under control. This Graffiti mural depicts five children from five continents praying behind face masks printed with the symbols of five of the world's major religions: Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. [3] That means all the religions praying together for relief from the deadliest virus.



(fig.7) Gatchina Russia



(fig.8) Moscow, Russia

Russia is one of the countries which also very badly affected by Coronavirus. Graffiti artists are taking a positive role to create awareness in society about this virus. A Graffiti mural (fig.7) depicting viruses on a block of flats in Gatchina, Russia. It is a huge size mural and artist showing the deadliest virus in cartoonish language. The hugeness and the characterization of the mural create an impact on the viewers. A graffiti mural reading "Fight" (fig.8) by the construction site of a new building of the multipurpose medical Centre for patients suspected of coronavirus infection. This mural collaborates with cartoon and typography.



(fig.9.a) Inside of a historic chapel in the Hubei province of China (fig.9.b)

A young Chinese designer Duyi Han created a mural called “The Saints Wear White” to pay homage to the coronavirus medical workers. This mural set inside of a historic chapel in the Hubei province of China. From this area, the epidemic started out. This artwork was designed to pay homage to the coronavirus medical workers, who are wearing white decontamination suits and green face masks. [2] In this mural artist use a very less quantity of colour. Most of the part of the mural is white and no warm colour use. Only cool colour like blue and green shades are used. This kind of colour skim creates a peaceful environment which is enhancing the theme of the mural.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Artists are always sensitive; they react through their visual language in any kind of circumstances. When the deadly virus spoils the atmosphere and our society our artists react with their artwork. Graffiti art is one of the popular mediums of public art. These graphite murals are proved that artists are always reacting to any kind of social crisis. Though the visual languages of these murals are different from each other, they are reacting to the same issue. Moreover, this article highlights the social responsibility of artists across the world.

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#### Image Source

(fig.1) Outlook India Photo Gallery, Bikaner- PTI Photo, Internet: <https://www.outlookindia.com/photos/place/bikaner/968?photo-225174>

(fig.2) 40 Of The Best Coronavirus Related Pieces Of Street Art - Image source: [tylerstreetart](http://tylerstreetart.com), Internet: <http://votreart.com/40-of-the-best-coronavirus-related-pieces-of-street-art/>

(fig.3) Outlook India Photo Gallery, Graphite-Mural-Signage\_etc - AP Photo/Rajesh Kumar Singh\_ Internet: <https://www.outlookindia.com/photos/topic/graffiti-murals-signage-etc/102016?photo-226909>

(fig.4) Photograph: Niharika Kulkarni, Internet: <https://scroll.in/article/990649/from-patna-to-bengaluru-murals-have-become-a-record-of-the-cornonavirus-pandemic>

(fig.5) Photograph: Adnan Abidi, Internet: <https://scroll.in/article/990649/from-patna-to-bengaluru-murals-have-become-a-record-of-the-cornonavirus-pandemic>

(fig.6) Photograph: Nelson Almeida, Internet: <https://www.barrons.com/news/muralist-kobra-finds-inspiration-in-confinement-01588297205>

(fig.7) Coronavirus Street Art – in pictures : Covid-19 is the subject of topical, colourful and attention-grabbing street art, whether it is for artistic, educational or political ends: Mon 6 Apr 2020 Photograph: Peter Kovalev, Internet: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2020/apr/06/coronavirus-street-art-in-pictures#img-7>

(fig.8) Coronavirus Street Art – in pictures : Covid-19 is the subject of topical, colourful and attention-grabbing street art, whether it is for artistic, educational or political ends: Mon 6 Apr 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2020/apr/06/coronavirus-street-art-in-pictures#img-16> Photograph: Sergei Savostyanov/TASS

(fig.9.a & b) **Forbes: Here’s How Artists Art Responding To The Coronavirus** <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nadjasayej/2020/02/18/heres-how-artists-are-responding-to-the-coronavirus/#37788291691c>