

Culture is one among the key components involved in nation building. It has the unique ability to foster national unity and cohesiveness. Art as part of the whole culture has also a major role in crafting social development frameworks, additionally fosters the creation of national identity. Art has always been an important instrument in class struggle. The role of revolutionary Arts (especially song) Poetry, and painting) in enhancing the struggle and not be underestimated; it has indeed been stated in different occasions that there is no revolutionary movement without revolutionary arts especially without revolutionary songs. Even piece of music or poetry, similar to other forms of art, reflect class content, a class ideology, and is dictated not only by its economic basis (the mode of productions) but also by the production relations. Revolutionary arts have served on the struggle not only of the oppressed sections of society but also of whole people and minorities living under oppression. So we have the historical revolutionary song of the Black Americans fighting for their liberation from slavery and for equality, and we have the songs, poetry and paintings of the African struggle against European colonial domination and racism. In Eritrea work songs and songs of struggle previously existed, (although not yet well studied), among the peasantry and other sections of the working class. Recent studies have also shown the existence of songs of resistance of oppressed nationalities of Eritrea. As they fought against their feudo bourgeoisie leaders on the side of their heroic leaders. There were also some poems narrating about harsh Tigrian rulers who excessively raided the highland part of Eritrea and social poems also existed, which express the daily activities of the society. Besides there are also ancient and contemporary paintings scattered throughout the country that are vivid examples of the history of the country, mode of living of its people before the coming of colonization.

With the coming of colonization a number of artists had been produced, which expressed the coming of Italians on both sides, which means that positively as well as negatively. Some see the Italians as modernizers and others as colonizers, so that it is natural to see two different ways. During the British and the Ethiopian period the Eritrean Artists strongly opposed the division of Eritrea between the highlands and lowlands besides to the concept of Moslem and Christian division. Since the outbreak of the struggle for independence one of the artistic works we were able to see was, the song of Atewebrhan Segid known as “Moslem and Christian of highland and lowland ...” which clearly opposed the Ethiopian claim over Eritrea through the tactic of divide and rule and strongly legitimate the Eritrean unity. The songs follow the development of the struggle and hence their content was topical and depicts an event in the revolutionary process. Such topics include the policy of “We and our goal” (1977) and the end of the feudo bourgeoisie era; the new Democratic Revolutionary program, the proclamation of equality of nationalities, languages, and religions. The war against the Dergue regime and the progress of the struggle, etc., the artistic works depict all these, one after another, in order of the events taking place.

Serving as an important agitation and educating instrument revolutionary artistic works have almost completely replaced love songs as well as songs from western style by the local songs that were produced by the local artists. On the same line the work of poetry and painting faced the same fate like that of the songs; they were mainly focused on the life in the field and events of the struggle.

The biggest success in revolutionary art working both in form and content has been achieved by the cultural troupes attached to the popular organizations, these were: peasant association in the liberated rural Eritrea and town associations including those in Diaspora. There is good reason to say that these popular cultural centers flourish the Eritrean art to some extent by providing an uneasy work in the formation of a bridge between the old and this generation.

The word art comes from Latin word, meaning 'skill' and it still retains this original meaning. But it has come to have a wider significance. On the broader sense, art embraces all the creative disciplines: literature, poetry, drama, music, dance and the visual arts (painting, sculpture, and architecture.) Traditionally, art is divided into fine and liberal arts. The later is concerned with skill of expression in language, speech, and reasoning. The fine art is more concerned with pure aesthetic ends or in short with the beauty. Many forms of expression combine aesthetic concerns with utilitarian purpose: pottery, architecture, metal works and advertising design may be cited as examples.

When we come to the origin of art, Dudley stated that it is as old as mankind. It is present in all stages of civilization throughout the world. It constitutes one of the oldest and most important means of expression developed by human beings, even if we go back to those eras called 'pre-history' because they are oldest than any period we have written documents, we find works to which we give an important place in the roster of humanities. For example, in 1879 a cave painting was found in northern Spain in a place known as Aphaslia and the experts have given their judgment that this belongs to the upper Paleolithic age 10,000 to 20,000 years before Christ. In almost every country the earliest art goes back to the prehistory. The Greek Homeric epics, Iliad and the Odyssey probably date back to the time before the beginning of written history; the poems may have been put together between the twelfth and the ninth centuries BC. Art is not only found in all ages but also in all countries of the world. As Louise Dudley indicated no matter what age or country we consider, there is always art, and this art is not good because it is universal but universal because it is good. Old songs and stories, old pictures and statues have been preserved because they are alive, because they meet the need of people, because they are liked.

Artists occupy a unique role in society. Through a diversity of approaches, they explore new terrains that words alone are incapable of describing. Art can address issues, help solve problems and even serve as a "public psychiatrist" that surfaces social anxieties. Art speaks to places that other languages can't and affects consciousness on a level that we don't understand and can't map. Some but not all, artists work for societal environmental justice. Notably artists can explore ideas of personal or societal importance. People ultimately also need to be reminded of two things – that they are not important and disconnected spectators but active and engaged participants in the ongoing vibrant fabric of life. Art therefore, can tell the story of the ongoing struggle while suggesting ways for people to take part. It can also sketch out, in possibly indistinct and uncertain terms, a future that may exist, after successful struggles, where children, and their children, and their children's children do not experience the daily injury of living in an unjust and unhealthy world.

Art can convey beauty, love and joy. It can also convey justice, dignity and resistance. The aim of art is to express emotions, experiences and ideas that are beyond the reach of language.

There would probably be no painter or sculptors if everything they wish to say could be conveyed in a few well chosen words. The purpose of history of art is to reflect the conflict of social rulers, the competition among public and private works. The human urge to create order and build, decorate and depict, impress and express are the constant of all history. As a conclusion of this part, the work of art is always the reflection of both the personality of the artist and the age in which it was produced. Painting for instance, often speaks more eloquently than do historical treaties and other documentary evidence. True understanding of human life and history can come only by relating one event to another and eventually to the entire stream of universal life from which each derives its significance, in achieving such a reaction art laid the vital role.