



# Frida Kahlo: Virtues and Legacy on Mexican Culture



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### Abstract

Frida Kahlo; artist, feminist and surrealist. Through her challenges of identity, illicit sexual relations and physical implications, she has illustrated her life using post revolutionary ideology and celebration of selfhood in the context of Aztec heritage. With her fixation of her Mexican identity, indigenous roots and refutation of colonialism; Frida has validated cultural displays through her pain and frustration that make sense to her pride of Mexican culture. With her duality of human nature and profusely illustrated compositions; she represents the value of Mexican culture and identity.



### Literature Review

Corrine Andersen has supported that not only in her self-representation, she expresses the undermining complications of nationalism, but also attempts to redefine modern *mestizo/a* subjectivity (Andersen, 2009). Andersen explains the historical background of the Mexican Revolution. With the election of Alvaro Obregon, Mexico began to withdraw from the philosophy from former dictator Porfirio Diaz. Andersen additionally explains specific paintings that support Kahlo's ideology. *My Dress Hangs There* (1933) depicts Kahlo's production of her work when she was living in New York City with her husband, Diego Rivera.

### Literature Review (Cont.)

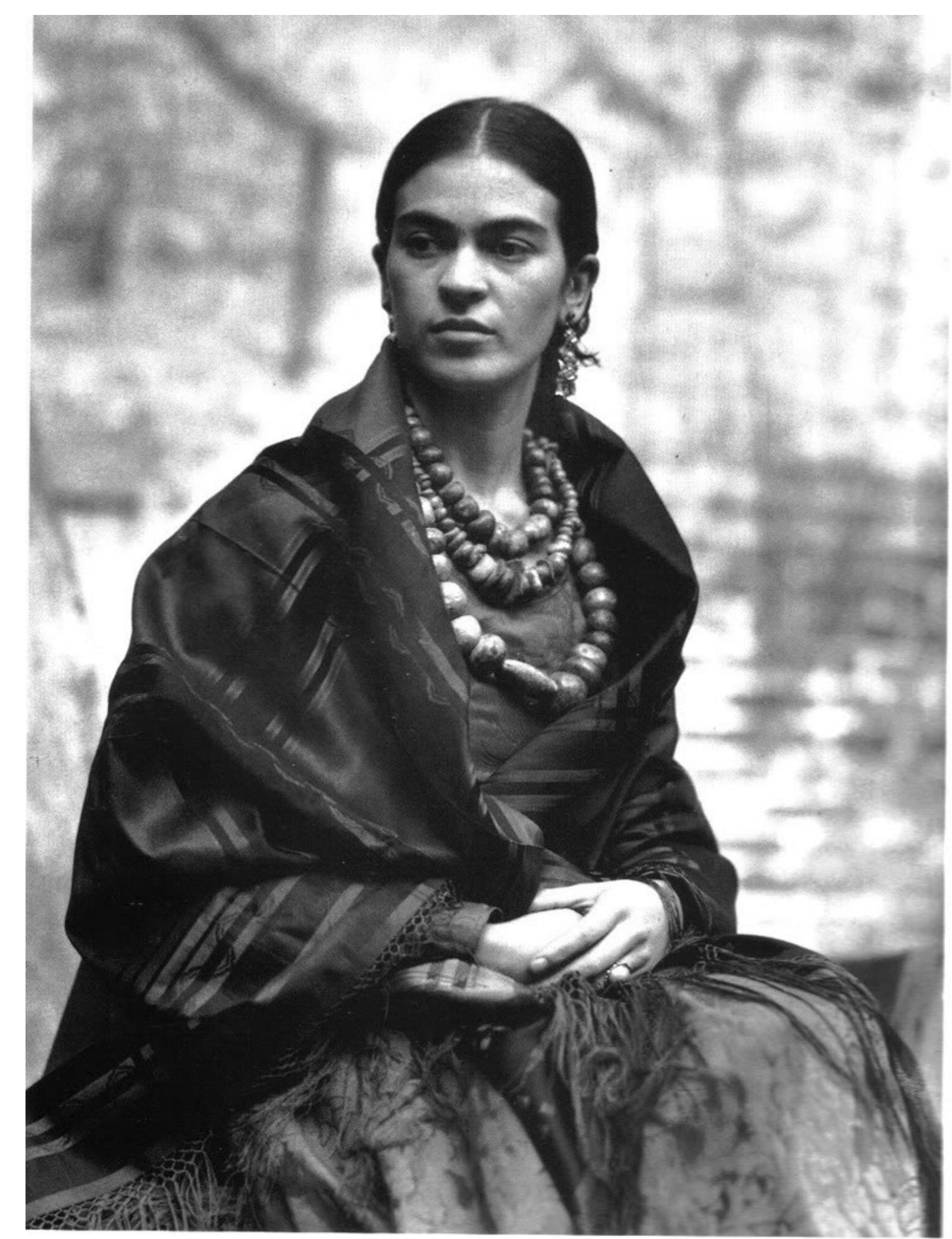
Not only does it express anti-imperialism but also anti-United States themes. *The Two Frida's* (1939), symbolic elements within this painting poses multiple meanings for Kahlo. For instance, the dripping blood illustrates Kahlo's recurring pain, both physically and emotionally towards her womanhood and fertility. Although both Frida's have their heart painted, only the Victorian dressed Frida has an intact heart where the artery is cut and bleeding. Another artery is connected to the *Tehuana* dressed Frida where it remains healthy and is connected to a photo of Diego Rivera. Holding hands, they are rather dispassionate; *The Two Frida's* ultimately expose the challenge of structure in society with a newly formed ideal and identity. (Havard, 2013).



Rebecca Block and Lynda Hoffman-Jeep analyze Kahlo's adoption of indigenous identity within clothing (Block, Hoffman-Jeep, 1998). Wearing native clothing has attributed to her desire of supporting her identity and endorsing post-revolutionary ideology (Block, Hoffman-Jeep, 1998). Kahlo had glorified a *mestiza* mindset and emphasized the unique nature of clothing; seeking to expose the authentic culture and promote the image of native Mexico. In Edward Weston photographs, Frida wears a loosely draped *rebozo* and heavy beads of jadeite, stones that were favored by the Aztec sculptures' (Block, Hoffman-Jeep, 1998). This clothing embodied the goals of post-revolutionary Mexico and manifestation of pre-Hispanic past. She is rich in the delivery of her culture and promotes her ethnic heritage.

### Literature Review (Cont.)

Lucy Ann Havard has taken the step to categorize Kahlo's identity as *Mexicanidad*. For example, Kahlo typically depicts herself in portraits with a hairy upper lip, conjoined eyebrows, disfigured body, which can often be far from the standards of beauty (Havard, 2013). However, her illustration of these characteristics personify an authentic and personal Mexican identity. In her portrait, *Fulang-Chang and I* (1937) Kahlo declares her own form of beauty by illustrating her distinctive characteristics. Kahlo rather celebrated her individual identity (Havard, 2013).



### Theoretical Application

Historical Accounts: Knowing and understanding history is important to have a clear and competent understanding of identity. Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama have analyzed that historical accounts reflect the disparities and testimonies of that time in history (Martin, Nakayama 2010). It influences the content of history and the way that it is delivered in modern day (Martin, Nakayama 2010). The way Kahlo has been transcended and taught throughout institutes has played a key role on her influence through various locations in the world. In Mexico, for example, she is a national hero. In the United States, she is an example of Latinx history, struggle and empowerment. Around the world, she is praised for her art.

### Application (Cont.)

Pioneer theorist Rita Hardmin describes majority development as a sense of belonging to a dominant group (Martin, Nakayama 2010).

**Stage One:** Unexamined identity

**Stage Two:** Acceptance of negative beliefs

**Stage Three:** Resistance, challenging hierarchies

**Stage Four:** Refocusing towards identity

**Stage Five:** Integrating into one identity (Martin, Nakayama 2010)

Kahlo is a prime example of this application. She took risks and empowered herself through her indigenous roots. Kahlo opposed colonization and pursued her idea of post-revolutionary ideology. She focused on promoting Mexican culture, wherever she went and internalized it into who she was.

### Conclusion

Despite of the pain that she endured in her life, she was able to transcend her pain and transform it into beauty. Indeed, Frida's unique approach to both life and art has become very influential, showing the reality of her colorful life, with several bumps in the way.

### References

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