

**Folk and Minor Art in India**  
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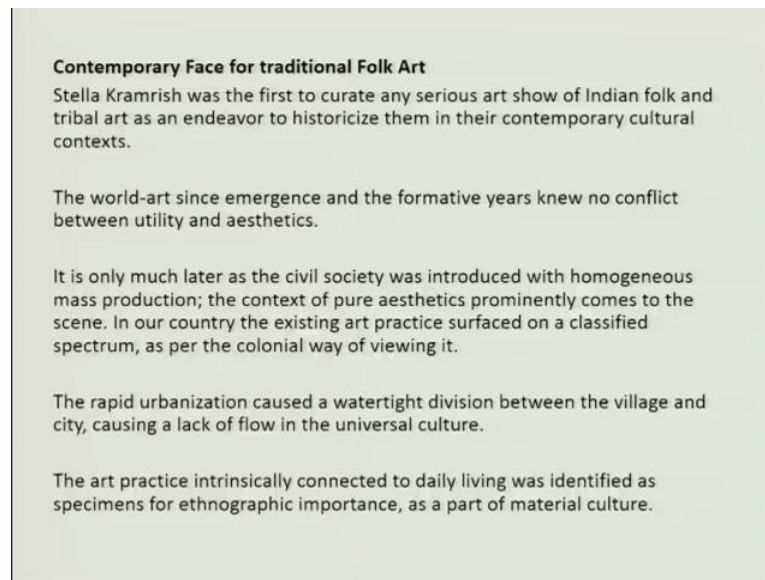
**Lecture - 40**  
**Contextualizing Folk idiom - Part III**

So, the topic of the last lecture of this module is focusing on the contemporary profile of Indian traditional folk art. It is very important to realize now how Indian folk art of today's time as we discussed that it has lost its traditional relevance in terms of its functionality and it has come up with a different perspective that was there, that was there inbuilt into its traditional form, but right now we are emphasizing on a very different thing that is the basic language the idioms of folk art that can be taken out and understood and interpreted in the modern term.

So, in that way we also need to see how we place Indian contemporary folk art to the contemporary cultural margin can we include that into the main stream art practice can an academically trained contemporary artist of today's time who has studied in his or her own country and abroad who is exposed to a wide range of art practice who is well ranged academic and full of other virtues. Can the person be matched with the virtues of the contemporary folk artist who is also exposed to many cultures and who knows the traditional skill and the contemporary expression?

So, these two people are learning the same skills parallelly, but can we place them together, is it possible to merge the two sensibilities together apparently and from within. So, from there lies the significance of understanding the time, understanding the people who initiated all these things, understanding the operating factors that is changed the favor of this practice to this extent. So, let us see like you know we go back and try to understand the contemporary profile the first thing that we see as example that there had been initiatives from the part of Stella Kramrish from the part of J Swaminathan and many other people who wanted to put all these painters under the same roof, on a same platform and they had been initiatives like that.

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Stella Kramrish was a first to curate any serious art show of Indian folk art and tribal art as an endeavor to historicize them in their contemporary cultural contexts. The world-art since emergence and the formative years knew no conflict between utility and aesthetics. It is only much later as the civil society was introduced with homogeneous mass production; the context of pure aesthetics prominently comes to the scene. In our country the existing art practice surfaced on a classified spectrum as per the colonial way of viewing it. The rapid urbanization caused a watertight division between the village and the city, causing a lack of flow in the universal culture. The art practice intrinsically connected to daily living was identified as specimens of ethnographic importance as a part of material culture.

In the idioms and languages of folk art that we see the principle of using the repetitive imageries, we see that one motive is created by a naturalistic reference perhaps or it is like the simplification of nature or some kind of an artistic distortion by exaggerating the form a little bit or by simplifying it to it is basic making it just recognizable, converting a naturalistic form into a symbol over picking up some symbols like swastika and other geometric forms and then incorporating them by repeating them and establishing the inner rhythm to give it the kind of expression that is needed and required for it.

So, in folk art the principle of repetition is connected to rhythm that enhances perfection where as a colonial academic term it is counted as a principle to be avoided to elite

monotony. Beginning of post colonial era till today's time what we see that there been valued primarily for the economic potential because did some kind of a revenue generation in the post colonial in (Refer Time: 05:56) and even before the independence. Because you know it generates foreign revenue, it promotes tourism and self employment in the time of crisis. They were categorically identified as industrial art handwork by the underprivileged pagan's communities who were coincidentally untouched by the academic training and thus create from their basic instinct. So, the art has no rule there are beautiful as the weeds as they grow and they can survive in tough conditions.

So, there was one part which is this sophistication that is needed for any kind of an art practice that was almost denied and that was something, this is also true there it was not there, so much into the folk art practice. So, folk art practice was viewed from a very different perspective. So, it is perhaps the level of sophistication that distinguished the two different practices and that made it grow and continue parallelly without you know any convergence or emergence anywhere. So, the free nation exploited the potential to titillate sentimentality and carefully in certain the traditional practice under the preview of the ministry of industry and commerce the first 5 years plan whereas, the other art and archeological forms were pleased under ministry of culture.

Until very recently folk art did not have any contemporary or modern phase the superficial association of tradition with the folk art has forced it is viewers to judge it in a antique parameter the authenticity of folk art was judged in a conventional term where a mildest indication of individuality or innovativeness creativity introduction of new imageries or any reflection of a contemporary event unseen imageries or unexpected thematics what is there that is turn to a time bound dichotomy leading to any departure from the age old way of expression and execution where counted as a demerit. So, when we saw a speech bubble in one of the traditional Kalamkari Ramayan practice it came as a shock for many people and they often wonder that is like if somebody is a buyer who is going to buy a traditional piece and it is something like that is known as authentic they may feel that the this particular piece is authentic because the artistic using speech bubble in that.

In fact, when we see the train, bus, the motor cycles, the modern cars and other vehicles in Madhubani painting in the painting traditions of Pattachitra in Bengal and other places we often wonder whether they can be called as traditional folk art or they can be called

as folk art at all or not and we specifically identify there the new elements in folk art without even giving it a thought that as we say the art work is done by the people and for the people. So, if it is done by the people and for the people, who are those people? They belong to today's time and there has to be today's sensibilities and today's imageries included into the art work and we should not be shocked about it.

So, the social status of the practitioners places them away from the elites to look down upon them, the intellectual scholar category determines the destiny of academic art with the classical measure to control its course and there are class differences for obvious reasons and it is as similar as like you know it is not a communist perspective that is there everywhere. So, when we look at the art work of this people who are under privileged for a very long time we hesitate and to bring them in to the main stream category also the artists they were initially hesitant to pick up the folk imageries in to their art work.

So, we will also talk about artists who made a mark and did something very different. So, one of them is Jamini Roy and there are many other names that I took like Sunandini Devi and another people, but right now let us focus on Jamini Roy and I am not going into the detail of his work again not to divert you from our current topic, but we must know all these people and make for the study in to their work. So, I will quote certain things from a very recent with respective exhibition that held in 2013 in Delhi and I will talk about Jamini Roy and that particular context.

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**Folk idiom in the paintings of Jamini Roy: A need of time**

It is the same context of a possible symbiotic coexistence of folk and academic practice that has rarely been effective in the modern art scenario. Behind the simplified line and colour formations, Jamini Roy made a conscious effort to bring in the nuances of modernity in his artistic expressions that was obligatory rather than instinctive.

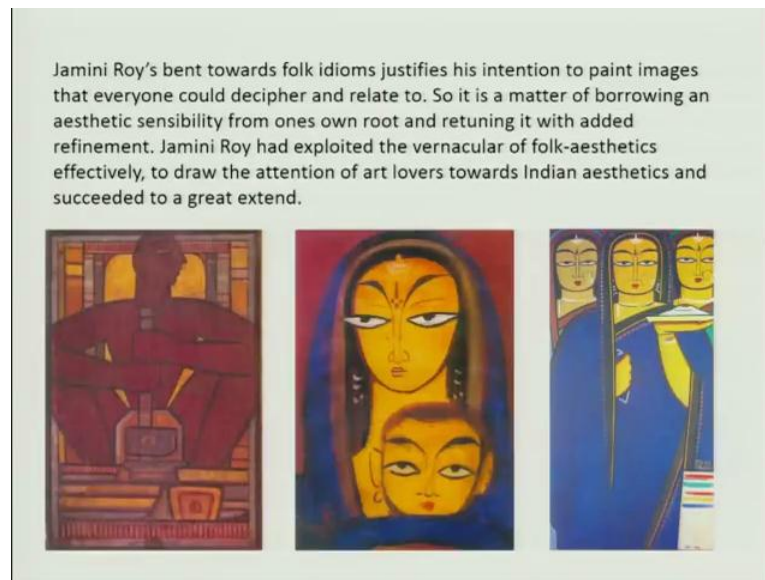
*"The goal is to re-examine Jamini Roy. We wanted to contextualise him. The exhibition shows the way he projected the rural and indigenous community. I wanted to show he was experimental. When he moved to the folk idiom, the figuration, lyrical lines and idyllic pastoral scenes evoke a certain kind of feeling and mood, which is very close to the atmosphere of Krishna and Vrindavan. On the other hand, his figuration in his Christ series is so different. There, the figures are erect, straight with hieratic poses. He was narrating a story that belonged to an alien culture but there was certain intimacy. But still it manages to create a sort of timeline like in 1919-1920 when he rejected European academism. He painted a series of sensuous Santhal women though he was still using oil. There is 'Santhal Dance' which is horizontal panel depicting Santhal women... Towards the end of 1920s, he had moved to pure folk idiom."*

(Shailaja Tripathi, The Hindu, June 21, 2013)

So, it is the same context of the possible symbiotic coexistence of folk art and academic practice that has really been effective in the modern art scenario. Behind the simplified line and color formations Jamini Roy made a conscious effort to bring in the nuisance of modernity in his artistic expressions that was obligatory rather than instinctive. So, I will read a quotation from the writing of Shailaja Tripathi, in The Hindu, June 21, 2013 that I found to be relevant to put in this context. So, it is written above the exhibition that they put up. The goal is to reexamine Jamini Roy we wanted to contextualize and the exhibition shows the way he projected the rural and indigenous community I wanted to show he was experimental when he moved to the folk idiom the figuration, lyrical lines, and idyllic pastoral scenes evoke a certain kind of feeling and mood which is very close to the atmosphere of Krishna and Vrindavan.

On the other hand his figuration in his Christ series is so different there the figures are erect straight with hieratic poses. He was narrating a story that belonged to an alien culture, but there was certain intimacy, but still it manages to create a sort of timeline like in 1919 and 1920 when he rejected European academism. He painted a series of sensuous Santhal woman though he was still using oil; there is Santhal dance which is horizontal panel depicting Santhal women towards the end of 1920s he had moved to pure folk idiom.

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Jamini Roy's bent towards folk idioms justifies his intention to paint images that everyone could decipher and relate to.

So, it is a matter of borrowing and aesthetic sensibility from one's own root and returning it with added refinement. Jamini Roy had exploited the vernacular of folk aesthetics effectively to draw the attention of art lovers towards Indian aesthetics and succeeded to a great extent.

If you put Jamini Roy as parallel to Ravi Verma we can understand and answer many of our questions in this context. Ravi Verma from his own cultural root and the kind of academic education that he achieved created a bend with the same intention he wanted the Indian mind to be interested into Indian subject matters whereas, Jamini Roy being the academic painters trained in the same academic tradition almost he shifted to the rural Indian style to give the Indian feel to the Indian people, because he knew that did he has to do something Indian and the entire question of Indianess it is taking its own term and then the turn is telling us how they are shifting and moving.

So, in Jamini Roy when he is speaking up a tradition by going back to his own village where he was born, before he left for the academic training in a European style he comes back and he meets the Patuas of his own village. He goes to the traditional potters he spends time with them he will lives with them and then he masters the technique of there, then he got inside the rural living and he could understand that the style is lying there. Of

course, when he brings it as a contemporary expression as a contemporary artist he came up with a much more sophistication and that was also perhaps needed for the Indian folk art. So, he was an example and there are you know lots of saying that sometimes he was he was also as popular as Ravi Verma if I cannot measure it very objectively, but still Jamini Roy's painting was there in every wall everywhere even now there is a lot of demand for Jamini Roy's prints.

So, in his life time only he had to produce one paintings several times it is also said that he appointed quite a few artist the village painters of that time to produce those things because he was not able to supply them in to the sufficient number. So, we can make out that this is one sensibility that was highly adored by people because that was perhaps the need of the time and that too he wanted his work to go to each and every hand regardless of their cultural identity, regardless of their ethnic identities and all. So, from there let us also focus in to a very different direction to talk about the armature and the professional because as we a mentioning here that you know this is something that when Jamini Roy is nurturing a rural style it is not just instinctive, but he is giving it academic dimensions.

So, from there we are coming back and we are trying to understand the difference or the finites, that the armature and the professional artists they established and their creations. So, will again K G Subramanyan this in this context that our educational system has broadened and diversified in the last few decades, but despite this we are left to wonder whether it is (Refer Time: 19:34) to our real content. Our educational system has broadened and diversified in the last few decades, but despite this we are left to wonder whether it is tailored to our real context not only does it seem to have lost sight of it is basic objectives, but also of our immediate social needs such as employment and ordered group behavior. So, for contemporary Indian art and ingenuous identity in Indian art in that matter the concerned continuously shifts and its ongoing process even now it shift it is focus more than the conflict of vernacular or academic and moves into the conflict of this academic and the professionals.

Education responsive to social needs and profession reflective of a particular ethnic society can contribute to effective human operation, it consists better functionality that mends the gap between the nature and the culture within a social periphery. The aim of education if only is to create a culture then the norms of the culture should also be verified with a greater responsibility from everyone side, from creators, from viewers,

from the critics, from the accommodations or curator historians and everybody is a part of it. If showing pictures and singing songs are looked down upon or considered as a derogatory profession of the derogatory category then the education system should also be refined enough to indoctrinate the essential worth of the traditional art or any kind of traditional act, rather than eliminated from the academic discourse.

So, I will quote K G Subramanyan once again here where societies were not so large and complicated most human activities drew out of human beings. Concern for themselves they are fellow beings and their environment and the links between this were reasonably clear and transparent giving rise to a sense of total order or something close to it. The stylistic elements in art that is closely associated to our way of living within a cultural boundary are factors we are based identified with. In many occasions they act as a most expressive means of individual communication and appreciative for their ageless quality illustrated narrative scrolls emerged as an effective tool for communicating the illiterate or the semi illiterate populace for a very long time. It functioned as a mode of educating common mass with ethical knowledge of ancient texts and current happenings.

Today when literacy level has raised it is comparatively much much better and there are alternative means of communications also, the role of folk painters instead of losing it is significance surfaced with a new identity that is of natural artists role who are able to extract aesthetic possibilities from anything that is available to them. The effortless ease of the artistic expression in many an instance is capable of challenging the academic notions of creating art. The academic curriculum lacks behind in many ways to establish that particular discipline with probability of solicitation; however, the folk art practice on the other hand should also be cautious not to be waged by the tide of mass production and that may cause damage to the soul of the expression. So, it is all about how artistically we interpret them, how artistically we realize the need of expression and it all depends on, then it should not be surviving for the sake of it. Then we cannot call it alive and sustainability is a far away question then.

Needs a different in today's time that ranges from making comics, animations, telling stories through books, illustrations different kinds of printings are added, there are documentaries and feature films being made there are many other ways of the communication outrage through media, through culture, but ultimately it is a story telling that is connected and that is nurturing the (Refer Time: 25:48) of it for a very long time.



So, understanding the time, understand the ideologies of the time, the exponents who realize that and they acted in a timely fashion in spite of many other influences have been discussed in this module, module 7 and I would like you to do the further studies on it because it is a wide range that is not written in one text book it is not put in one text. So, I tried to compile them as a study material as much as possible, but we need to do reading into the direction because it is something that I am just touching upon many different issues to conclude.

So, in our next module we are going to conclude these things with many other references and bring it to an end.