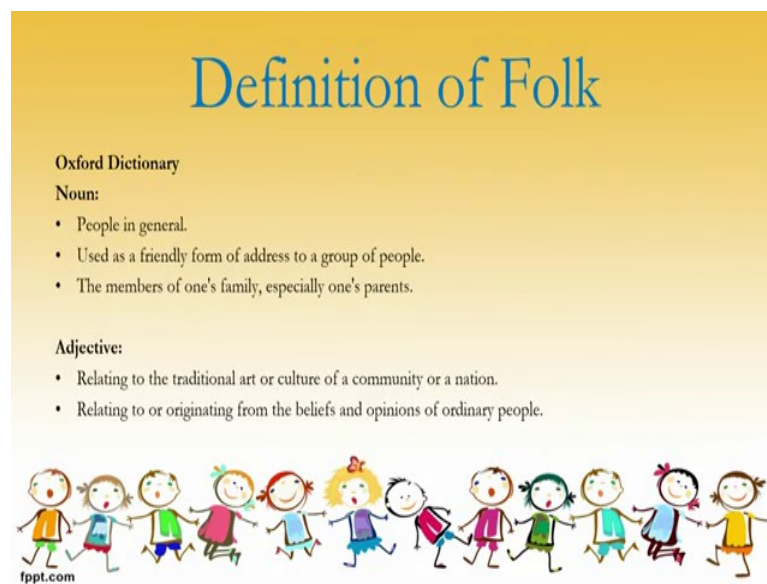


Artistic Exploration in Scientific Research And Technology
Dr. Bitasta Das
Department of UG Humanities
Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru

Lecture – 03
Idea of Folk

Hello, in today's class we will discuss about a concept of folk and folklore and from there on we will go to discuss what is folk art?

(Refer Slide Time: 00:40)




So, the idea of folk, in any standard dictionary you will see that the definition of folk has been defined as such; in noun form it is defined as people in general used as a friendly form of address to a group of people or the members of one's family specially ones parents. In adjective form it has been used to relate to this traditional art or culture of a community or a nation, relating to or originating from the belief and opinion of ordinary people.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:11)

Studies about the “folk”

- *Volkslied* (folk song)
- *Volksseele* (folk soul)
- *Volks Glaube* (folk belief)



A colorful illustration of a group of approximately 15 diverse children of various ethnicities and ages, holding hands and jumping joyfully. The children are wearing different colored clothing. The illustration is positioned at the bottom of the slide.


Studies about folk; the disciplinary of folklore is began in 19 century. One can find precursors in the 18 century usage of the term *volkslied* meaning folk song, *volksseele* meaning folk soul and *volks Glaube* means folk belief by German philosopher Herder, his famous anthology of folk songs *Volkslieder* (Refer Time: 01:37) was published in 1778, 79. But folklorist in the sense of this scholarly study of folklore did not emerge until later.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:48)

Emergence of Folkloristics

The study of folklore is called Folkloristics. This term was suggested by William Thoms, a British antiquarian in 1846.

Thoms has realized that scholarly work on materials of folkloristic nature was being carried on under various labels such as “Popular Antiquities” or “Popular Literature” and therefore needed a single label to designate this area of inquiry. He therefore suggested the compound Folk-Lore - the “Lore of the people” to replace all other somewhat cumbersome terms.



A colorful illustration of a group of approximately 15 diverse children of various ethnicities and ages, holding hands and jumping joyfully. The children are wearing different colored clothing. The illustration is positioned at the bottom of the slide.

The English word folklore was coined by Thoms in 1846 closely tied to the occurrence of romanticism and nationalism. The serious study of folklore found an enthusiastic audience among individuals, who felt nostalgia for the past and then necessity of documenting the existence of national consciousness or identity. The critical difficulty in various 19 century usage of the term, lay in the fact that it is inevitably defined as a dependent rather than a independent entity.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:20)



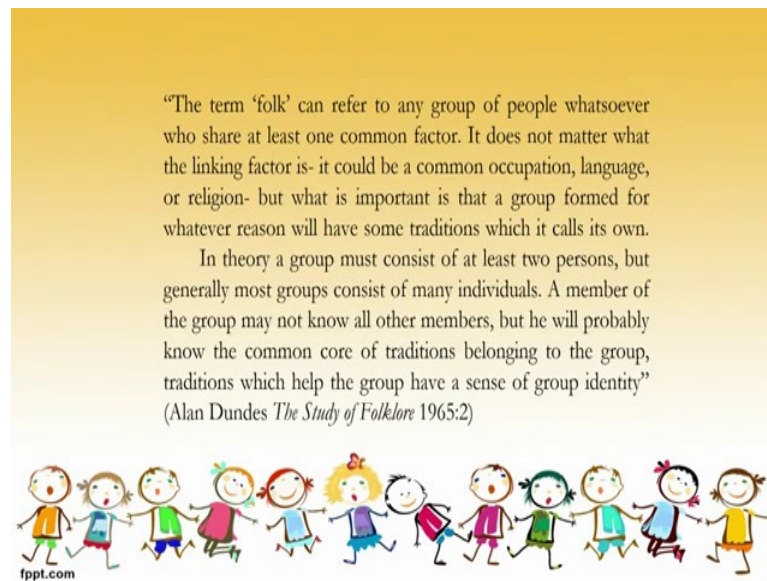
In other words folk was defined in contrast with or in opposition to some other population group; the folk were understood to be a group of people who constitute it the lower stratum so called valgus in populous, in contrast with the upper strata or elide of the that society.

The folk were contrasted on the other hand with civilization, they were the uncivilized element of a civilized society. But on the other hand they were also not also contrasted with the so called savage or primitive society, which was considered even lower in the evolutionary ladder. Folk as an old fashion segment living in the margins of a civilization was and for that matter still is equated with the concept of presence. The way in which folk occupied a kind of middle ground between the civilized elite and uncivilized savage can be perceived in emphasis placed upon a single culture trait the ability to read and write. The folk were understood to be illiterate in a literate society, as opposed to the

primitive people who were ethnocentrically label preliterate implying that they would achieve literacy as cultural evolution progressed.

In terms of the assumed unilinear cultural evolution sequence of savagery, barbarism and civilization through which all people were believed to pass. Through this form of comparative method historical reconstruction of the origin of the elite literates civilized European culture was to be undertaken.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:58)



However, with the works of folklore is like Alan Dundes, Richard Donson etc the usage of the term folklore expanded and it began to include the corpus of knowledge of and about any group which share at least one common treat. Alan Dundes in the study of folklore has described the term folk in as such, the term folk can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor, it does not matter what the linking factor is it could be a common occupation, language or religion. But what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some tradition which it calls its own.

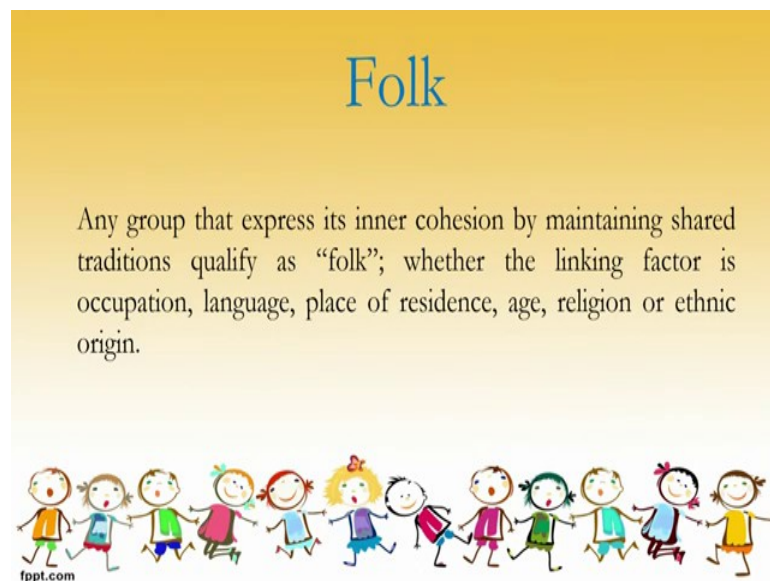
In theory a group must consist of at least two persons, but generally most people consist of many individuals, a member of the group may not know all the members, but he will probably know the common core of tradition belonging to the group. Traditions which help the group have a sense of group identity.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:00)



So, then who is a folk? Among others we are.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:06)




So, technically speaking, a folk is any group that express its inner cohesion by maintaining shared tradition qualify as folk; whether the linking factor is occupation, language, place of residence, age, religion or ethnic origin.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:21)

Folklore

Folklore consists of knowledge, legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs, fairy tales, stories, tall tales, and customs included in the traditions of a culture, subculture, or group.

It also includes the set of practices through which those expressive genres are shared.



fppt.com

And folklore is the knowledge that a folk group possesses, folklore consist of knowledge legends music oral traditions, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular belief, fairy, tales, stories, tall tales and customs included in the tradition of a culture, subculture or group. It also includes the set of practices through which these expressive genres are shared.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:45)

Division of Folklore

- **Oral literature:** “spoken, sung, and voiced forms of traditional utterances”
- **Material culture:** tangible elements, “techniques, skills, recipes and formulas”
- **Social folk customs:** “Here the emphasis is on group interaction rather than on individual skills and performances”
- **Performing folk arts:** “the conscious presentation of arts with folk instruments, dance costumes and scenario props”



fppt.com

The study of folklore has divided the folkloric material into four division, first is oral literature. Oral literature verbal art form folk literature or expressive literature are spoken sung and voiced form of traditional utterance oral narrative is a big sub division of this

group, which in turn has its own manifold distinction. For example, Myth Fairy Tale or Marchen romantic tale or novella, religious, tale, folk, tale, legend, animal tale, anecdote, joke, numskull tale etcetera at the major form oral narrative genres.

Another major division is oral poetry or folk poetry for example, folk epic, ballet, folk songs, lullabies, work songs and song associated with rituals and rights such as birth marriage and death are commonly found in almost all part of India which is the rich oral poetry connected with festive occasion feast and ceremonies. Proverbs and riddles are also an important part of oral literature; besides this major form of oral literature there are minor forms which also fall under above rubric they are chants, prayers(Refer Time: 06:57) laments, cries (Refer Time: 06:59) and even hollers.

The next is material culture. The physical folklore is generally called material culture, material culture respond to techniques, skills, recipes and formulas transmitted across the generation. Folk costume folk architecture and folk food are some examples. The third is social folk customs, the section of folklore is concerned with the family and communitarian observance of the people, rights of passage of birth, initiation marriage death and similar rites are few examples.

Songs and tales and other form of oral literature associated with a rites form an essential part of oral literature; while the social custom and ritualistic observation will fall under the social folk custom. The last is performing folk art, the section concerned primarily music dance and drama, but we must bear in mind that in the Indian folklore this divisions are not watertight (Refer Time: 08:05) they have many overlaps we will come to see in the next classes.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:10)



We must also mention about two important pioneering works in the field of folklore, first is the Grimm brothers' fairy tales which is a collection of initially it was a collection of 86 stories and it was published in 1812. The 7th edition was published in 1857, which contains 211 stories. The next is James George Frazer's two-volume work known as The Golden Bough, a study in comparative religion which was later changed to the Golden Bough or Study in Magic and Religion, these two are pioneering works in the area of folklore. Now we come to the section folk art, folk arts are not mere items of aesthetic certification.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:58)



They are art of the common people, folk art carry a word of symbolic meanings that are windows to community life. Folk arts are the art work that contain essence of tradition the art forms range from visual narrative and performative. The visual art are predominantly functional or utility reign created by hand or with limited mechanical aid for use by the maker or by a small group.

This art are often learned by observation without any formal training and the skills are handed down from generations after generations only by the word of the mouth, that is really living an individual signature.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:39)

Classification

CLASSICAL	FOLK	CONTEMPORARY
Written and codified (Authoritative text)	Loosely structured	Incorporates a range of different styles to create its own unique look
Formally learnt	Orally passed on	Self-taught
Author is known	Author unknown	Individualistic
Represents a nation	Represents a region	Transnational
Survives time	Survives time	Short lived
Spiritual/Philosophical themes	Natural cycle/Mundane themes	Topical themes
Selected participants	Everyone participates	Selected participants

For a clarity, let us divide the category folk and see how it is distinct from the other category that is the classical and the contemporary. The essential point of a classical art is that it is riddled written and codified; that means, it has an authoritative text whereas, folk is loosely structured. Contemporary incorporates a range of different styles to create its own unique look. Classical is formally learnt because it has its own code of conduct that is why it has to be formally learnt whereas, folk is orally passed on and contemporary is self taught.


In classical art, author is always known, but folk is in folk the author is unknown. Contemporary, it is individualistic classical represents a nation folk more often and not always represent a region. Contemporary is transnational classical survives time folk also survives time, in fact, it is known as timeless contemporary is mostly short lived.

The theme of classical art is spiritual and philosophical whereas, the theme of folk is natural cycle and mundane. In contemporary the theme is topical that is current. The participants of a classical form is always selected because it has to be formally learned it is got codified that is why it has to be trained up the participants have to be trained, so the participants are selected. But folk as because it is not formally learnt and it does not have a code it everyone can participate. And in contemporary also either selected participants because it also has to be formally learnt.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:41)

Characteristics of Folk category

- Common people are the mainspring of folk art.
- Folk art may accompany the celebration of various religious, social and family festivals.
- Fertility cult (human and land) as well as the problems of natural disasters like floods, famines and fire, diseases and accidents, directly or indirectly provide the theme of folk arts.
- Textual source or authorship is not important.
- Orally transmitted.
- Folk arts are often a mixture of genres- music, dance, songs, drama. The division into music, dance or drama is made based on the emphasis of the form.
- The purpose of folk arts can be summed up in three folds- social transaction, ritualistic performance and entertainment.



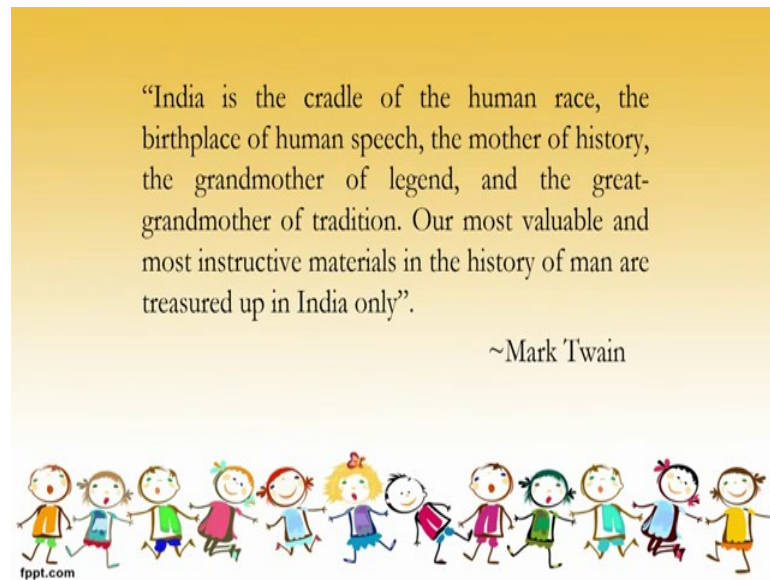
fppt.com

So, we can list out the characteristics of folk category as following, common people are the mainspring of folk art. Folk art may accompany the celebration of various religious social and a family festivals. Fertility cult human and land as well as the problems of natural disaster like flood famines and fire diseases and accidents directly or indirectly provide the theme of folk art. Textual source or authorship is not important its orally transmitted.

Folk art are often a mixture of genres music, dance, songs, drama. The divisions in music dance or drama is made based on the emphasis of the form, that is to say that. A folk art may contain dramatic element musical element or dance element, but the form which is more prominent become it gets its name like, a dance also has an narrative it also has a story it also has drama, but because it is more performative it gets its name as dance. The purpose of folk art can be summed up in three folds social transaction, that is to

exchange between the members of a group the cultural exchanges; its ritualistic performance many folk art are done during rituals, during festivals or this or during some observation and entertainment it is a sense of relaxation. So, these are the some of the characteristics of folk art category.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:17)



So, now we come to Indian folk art, Mark Twain had famously said this about India that India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and a great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive material in the history of man are treasured up in India only. This is to say that India is a treasure of rich culture.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:41)



The richness of its culture is manifested in various ways, be it music its art its songs its attire or the artifacts. One of the most prominent features of Indian folk art is the diversity, every region has its own distinct flavour of art and it is represented in its art, in its dance, in its narrative. So, in the following classes we hope to discuss, the folk art forms of India and see how it is diverse from one another as well as there are some overlaps.