

**Folk and Minor Art in India**  
**Prof. Shatarupa Thakurta Roy**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur**

**Lecture - 01**  
**Changing Definition of Folk and Minor Art**

The course will cover the topic of Folk and Minor Art in India. To begin the topic like this we must clarify certain aspects of its understanding. How we understand and recognize it? How we define it? How folk art is generally understood and how it should be understood? And this is the thing which will work as the focal interest for the whole course.

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Studying Indian folk art in the contributory becomes much more relevant as it undergoes change. The conventional understanding of folk art is relative to the ritualistic costumes, the customary ethics and some other utilities in purposes are connected to it. The common understanding of its function is to authentic a cultural identity of a particular place, a particular nation, a society and more over the ethnic society that holds a collective community value and the ascetics that is reflective of the comprehensive expression of the worlds tradition and culture. Nevertheless, the contemporary scenario clearly indicates the practice today is not confined to people, who are unexposed or cannot well ignore it of what is going on around them socially and culturally.

So, they have certain exposure to the cultural scenario of the present world. The folk artists are connected to the museums, the government polices, the non-government agencies, the foreign collectives, the foreign patrons, the cultural historians and also the tourist, the travelers, the artist from different region are also known to each other as they attain the similar kind of activities together. They participate in different kind of national and international exhibitions, art camps, art fairs, and also they compete with each other for the different kind of cultural activities. So, even if, when we talk about this particular practice, it is undergoing a lot of different cultural issues that is finally, working as operational factor and that is also changing the mode of definition from time to time.

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The traditional art forms with an ethnic regional base in our country were treated as a source of commercial revenue generation in post-colonial policy

If we look at it as the post colonial policy of our country where it stood some relevance he say, that initially the traditional art forms with an ethnic religion base in the context of India were treated as a source of commercial revenue generation and that was the post colonial policy it was designed that way.

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Traditional art thrived as cultural industry rather than artistic expression

But in the traditional art forms flourish as a cultural industry rather than an artistic expression for a very long time in the beginning of it.

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It is rather a recent phenomenon that the interest in traditional art forms is directed to watch exploration of the expressive potential of its aesthetic idioms. This is used as a language and the mode of communication and more over, most importantly it is used as an artistic expression and this is independent of any other cultural politics that is related to the shipping up of this particular practice, in the post colonial country policies of the country.

The social and cultural anthropologists are pioneered in collecting the record and documenting the cultural art forms in their own terms in their own ways.

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The modern artists after some initial hesitation connected with the simplistic principles of folk art that was instrumental to support modern expression and aesthetics

At the same time the modern artists after some initial hesitation connected with the simplistic principles of folk art that was instrumental to support modern expression and aesthetics. Folk art represents the world's ethnic culture, general understanding of folk art forms and made for the people.

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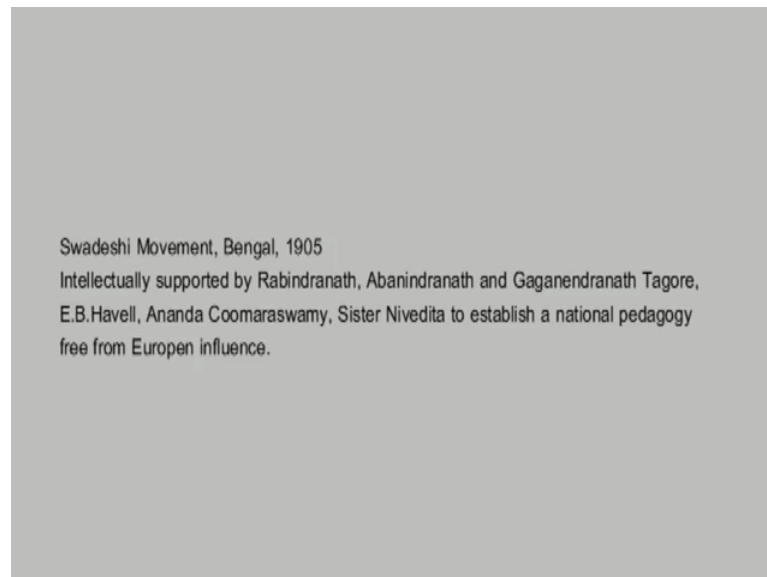


Folk Art represents ethnic culture  
Folk Art forms are made for the people by the people  
The definition thus undergoes recurring changes as people who practice the art form undertake dynamic lifestyle to suit time

And they created by the people for the people. The definition thus undergoes recurring changes as people who practice the art form undertake dynamic lifestyle to suit their time.

Now, in this context we must not skip or a few very important issues that will make it more clear to us, why we aim at studying this topic? From academic direction that is also connected to the political scenario of our country over the past 100 years and we can go back further.

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So, if we just go back to the time of Swadeshi Movement that took place in Bengal in 1905 that was intellectually supported by Tagore's namely Abanindranath, Rabindranath and Gaganendranath Tagore, E. B. Havell, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Sister Nivedita and many more to establish a national pedagogy which is free from the European influence. Now, that was perhaps needed of nationalism in that particular time. So, E. B. Havell for him emphasized, was on the authenticity in reference to the Pre-Islamic India whereas Ananda coomaraswamy had the cultural nationalist agenda where he approached to, it is particular domain and that is something which particularly questioned the nature of Gandhara art in traditional form in search of a root that flowed into the initiatives of Mahatma Gandhi who entered Indian politics in 1950.


Nationalism was largely molded by the ideology of late nineteenth century arts and crafts movement late by Maurice of Europe, who went against the McKenzie productions with the romantic notion when we look at the nationalism. The nature of nationalism which in 1905 or post 1905 Bengal, we feel that it is true Sister Nivedita that the art and craft movement, ideology of art and craft movement of Europe was re-essence and the faith

that we can have a nature like that in the regular life style and the regular cultural practices in our country to get back our lost identity. Then we say that it is a lost identity we also held ourselves responsible to make a few comments on why the crisis took place at the first time.

It is all because when the countrymen were losing some kind of faith on the cultural identities of a nation, it was very important to go back and find out certain pure practices which existed in our country much, much before the foreign inventions had taken place in many different forms, in many different times latest was the longest. The European from the Britishers who came from Britain and stayed back ruled for very long time, but it was the time when we wanted a Swaraj or the self-ruling self-governance. So, in that particular time getting back to a cultural identity and feeling confident about our cultural root was very, very relevant for the nationalist and that is the perhaps reason that we looked back. We started looking for the specimens which are still during the time stage, but it was a variable there and that is how it all started, but when we started bragging the context of people like Mahatma Gandhi who dreamt of nationalist India.

We must also think of notion of Tagore in the nationalist context, where the notion was much more romantic. He thought of a social utopia along with Nandalal Bose, Sister Nivedita that they thought of a condition which is much more in a ideal situation, what should be the ideal village? What should be the ideal living for the Indians? In that particular time, just before the independence it was something which was shaking up that is conceived by all this people with lot of romantic notion that was connected to the big murals and the impact of time and, how they can also operate the basic culture of mass production? How they can give more emphasis to the hand crafted objects? That is our own, but not everywhere, it reflected the reality and we must understand those intricate details of this particular phenomenon.

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Gandhi's idea of self sufficient village to raise anti colonial struggle who entered Indian politics in 1915. Tagore as a romantic materialized the cultural utopia in the form of Santiniketan

So, when we talk about the romantic world of Tagore, we talked about Gandhi's idea of self sufficient village to rise anti colonial struggle. Tagore as a romantic, he materialized the cultural utopia and form of making of Santiniketan academic institute, where the local people and the students they live together with some cultural practices which give its identity. There has been another notion that got introduced by 1942 by another name who was B. R. Ambedkar. On the other hand, he presented the crowd reality of the Indian village that was the actually the center of violence. It was not real move cell for the Indian village concept that took place in Santiniketan. It was on the contrary that he said that these are far from being romantic sites of cultural harmony and that is the point that had to be addressed in that context.

Now, when we call the art practices of these rural areas as the tribal art, folk art, adivasi art they may also mislead us to a great extent. These are some terms that are creative by the British colonial administrative heads for their own convenience.



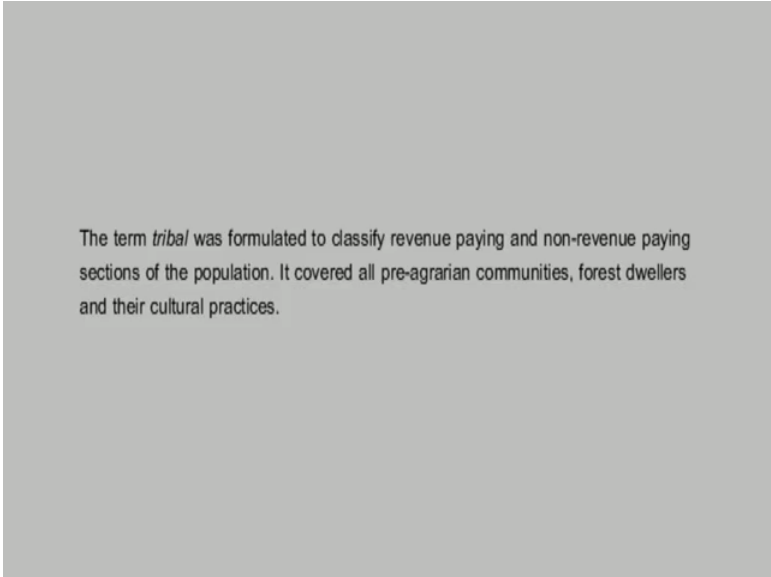
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Tribal, Folk and Adivasi are misleading terms created by the British Colonial administration while mapping its subject population into a conveniently classified ethnographic category

And it was all point by British colonial administration while they were mapping its subject population into a conveniently classified ethnographic category that is actually got nothing to do with how it takes in today's time.

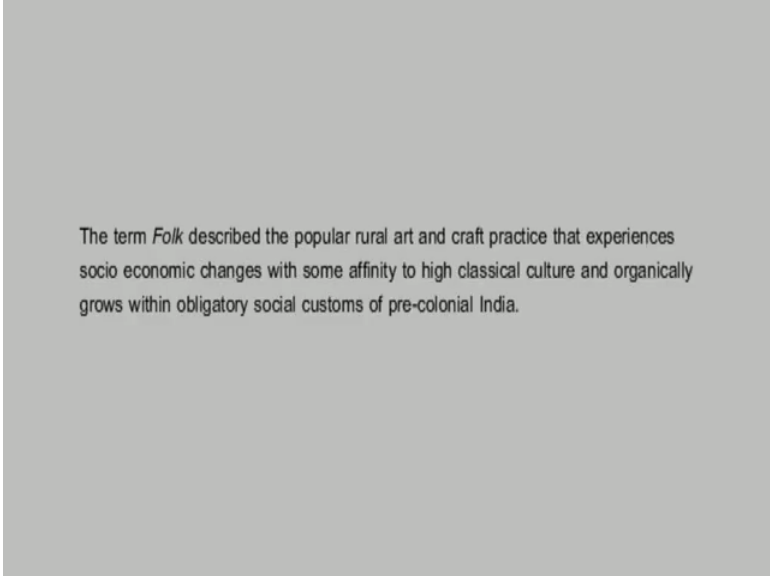
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The term *tribal* was formulated to classify revenue paying and non-revenue paying sections of the population. It covered all pre-agrarian communities, forest dwellers and their cultural practices.

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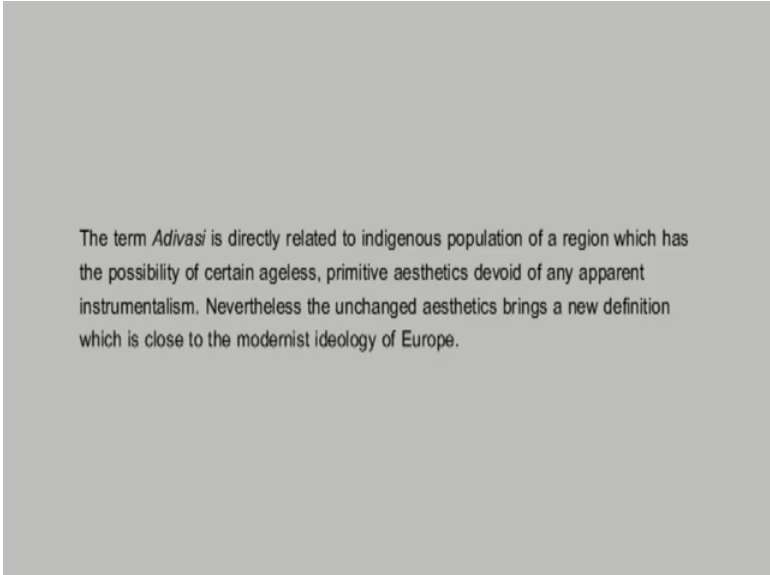
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The term *Folk* described the popular rural art and craft practice that experiences socio economic changes with some affinity to high classical culture and organically grows within obligatory social customs of pre-colonial India.

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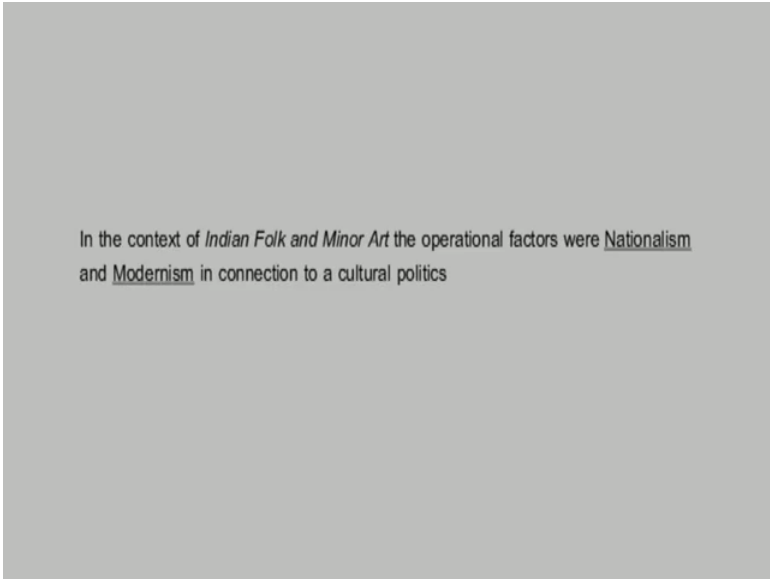


The term *Adivasi* is directly related to indigenous population of a region which has the possibility of certain ageless, primitive aesthetics devoid of any apparent instrumentalism. Nevertheless the unchanged aesthetics brings a new definition which is close to the modernist ideology of Europe.

The term Adivasi is directly connected to the indigenous population of a region that has possibilities of some ageless, primitive aesthetics devoid of any apparent instrumentalism and also the unchanged aesthetics bring a new definition which is close to the modernist ideology of Europe. Again where we felt that we should not borrow from anywhere else

and we must simply stick to the ideology of the past. The past India, how it was and how the traditional is living in the contributory notion, but again we connected nationalism with those two different factors because when we talked about modernism; modernism came through primitive art and culture in Europe. So, we borrowed the idea to certain extent from Europe again that in very nationalized way.

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