

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

Lecture - 38
New Aesthetics: Early Prints and Battala Prints

In this part of our lecture we are going to try and understand quite a few very important aspects that we discussed in the beginning of the course and right now may be you are in a make a position to have some clarity on them.

First of all like we must discuss on the contextualizing issue, so when we say that we are contextualizing folk art it raises a lot of different questions into its connecting understandings. First of all we question that what is the relevance of this practice in today's context, and that is a very question. You ask anybody even a person who is not hardly aware of this the practice such growth and its present condition that is familiar with some beautiful image or may be not. It is like a there are people who would just connect folk art as they have heard about the folk songs etcetera.

So, they connect certain rural practice which a connected to the rural victuals and that way they may frame a picture and even after then they will question the relevance of this practice in today's cultural margin. From this point it is very important to get a deeper look and try to unfold the entire discussion in a contextualize direction.

So, there the first thing that we must look at is what is a context that we are facing today, what is the relevance of folk art in that context? The practice as we said that it started with many different notions. To review it once more the primary notions were to provide common mass with the alternative education which is more like those who are not literate in a formal sense for them it was an alternatively literacy. Through usual they were getting connected to the age old sagas the epics the moral stories which are very important.

So, it was discussed many a time though people were literate they were not uneducated because of the practice of folk art and folk culture. Somehow we are taking a cultural perspective when we looking to it for that reason and also it goes to a social direction and that involves the socio political condition the economic factors and many other things in

to its because its finally related to a visual culture and also a literary culture that is connected to it.

So, there are other important aspects that we discussed earlier and I would also like to mention that in this context that one very important to role or purpose of folk art had been to educate common people and give them moral lesson. So, that way they worked as a social proliferation of different knowledge. Some times in different context be try to contextualize that in today's term. For example, when some awareness is needed in rural India on the vaccination, or female for decide. There are many are issues like dowry system and many other thinks that needs to spreaded out.

Many of the time the social reformer a socialist the activists and also from some other government organization and none government organizations, they take help of the exacting Patachitra painters and different places that a folk painters and there were actually asked to paint images to build up awareness. Sometimes it also has happened the folk painters themselves they got proactive and came up with imageries that had all this current events painted them it.

So, their roll is continued, but not as the only means but there are many other alternatives. If we think that the main role of folk art is to proliferate or propagate certain a awareness certain issues to common people then perhaps the other medians TV, internet, radio they have a better out rich. Because all these people now they are expose to all sort of cross media activities. In that context we can always see that the existing that the traditional purpose of folk art is lost to a great extend, but its leaving for a very different purpose and that is perhaps more glorified and more important it is the stylistic identity of folk art that give us our own endogenous style. And the style of execution which is very very endogenous for any folk practice that was there. It was needed for the context of the pre colonial and postcolonial India that we have been discussing.

We will continue our discussion in the same direction just to understand what happen to our country and to the visual culture of our country during this post colonial and also the pre colonial India. It just before independence and after independence and it is very important to look at any visual culture regardless a folk urban or anything else, in fact the main stream academic things in that perspective to understand what is needed what is the need of today's time. And that perhaps will also justify the need to study this topic this

kind of subject in today's time. As we know that not many of us are basically studying and researching on Indian folk and minor art. This is again to justify the contextual importance of it.

So, we are continuing from our last discussion of the academic and folk art tradition that was going parallelly during the pre and post colonial era. And then we also discussed the phenomenal of Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy and other people who became very very instrumental to understand the folk idioms to understand the folk ethos and that is perhaps most important for us to realize. Now that how the basic ethics, the basic value system that was there when folk art and minor art tradition in our India that is still on and there lots of thing to be taken from there.

o, I will begin this particular part of the module with a quotation from (Refer Time: 08:33) Roy, where he was committing on Kalighat painting that is urban tradition. And as we know that was something which was not like the rural Patachitra for tradition of India though it is a urban and rural both are Patachitra traditions, but they had been lot of deference between the two. Not so much in terms of the stylistic identity of course, there are quite a few very distinctive stylistic identity that make it very separate it is not very difficult to separate them and identify them very distinctively.

But this is also a fact that the tradition was there like the Kalighat pat painting of which is the urban tradition that was more to cater to the common people. It went to an extent toward they only supplied according to the public test that is never happen to with the other rural Patachitra tradition that we had in the districts of Bengal and also when we move to the Southern India or the Northern part the western India we saw that they are working for certain purposes, but story telling had been always emphasized and they responded to a very very very conscious term it is not very generalized unlike Kalighat Patachitra painting.

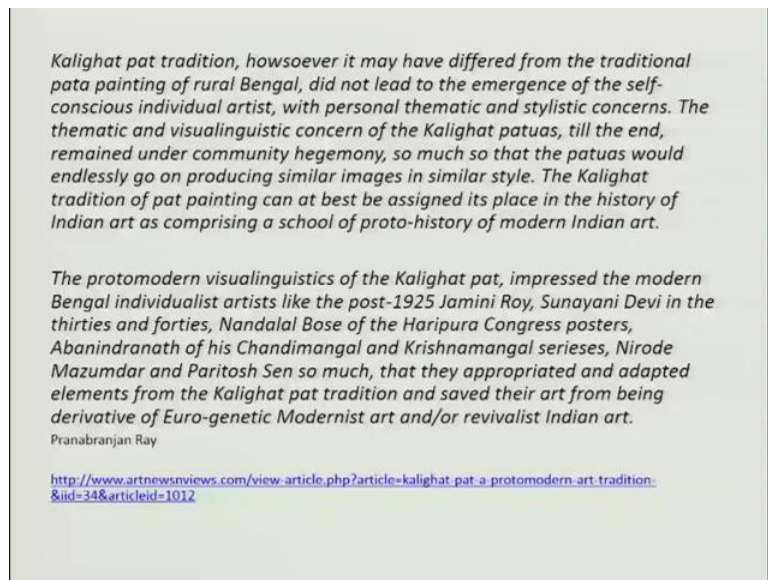
Of course Kalighat pat Patachitra painting was much more sophisticated, but it got under the influence of mass detection after a while and that was perhaps the basic reason of its decline also. So, in that way let me just read certain thoughts with the help of one quotation from the (Refer Time: 10:33) Roy in this context.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:36)



So, topic is contextualizing folk idiom and I am going to read (Refer Time: 10:41) Roy's comment on this.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:44)

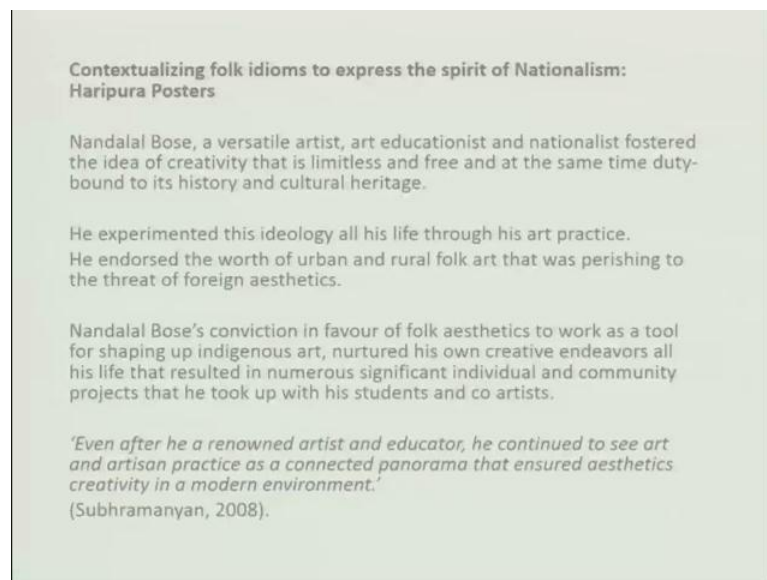


Kalighat pat tradition, howsoever it may have differed from the traditional pat painting of rural Bengal did not lead to to the emergence of the self conscious individual artist with personal thematic and systematic concerns. The thematic and visualesthetic concern of the Kalighat patuas till the end remained under community hegemony, so much so that the patuas would endlessly go on producing similar images in similar style.

The Kalighat tradition of pat painting can at best be assigned its place in the history of Indian art as comprising a school of proto history of modern Indian art.

The postmodern visulinguistics of Kalighat pat impressed the modern Bengal individualist artist like the post 1925 Jamini Roy, Sunayani Devi in the thirties and forties. Nandalal Bose of Haripura Congress posters, Abanindranath of his Chandimangal and Krishnamangal series, Nirode Mazumadar and Paritosh Sen so much that they appropriated and adapted elements from the Kalighat pat tradition and saved their art from being derivative of Euro-genetic modernist art and, or revivalist Indian art.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:21)



So, contextualizing folk idioms to express the spirit of Nationalism in context of Haripura Posters - Nandalal Bose, a versatile artist, art educationist and nationalist fostered the idea of creativity that is limitless and free and at the same time duty-bound to its history and cultural heritage. He experimented this ideology all his life through his art practice. He endorsed the worth of urban and rural folk art that was perishing to the threat of foreign aesthetics.

Nandalal Bose's conviction in favor of folk aesthetics to work as a tool for shaping up indigenous art, nurtured his own creative endeavors all his life that resulted in numerous significant individual and community projects that he took up with his students and co artists. So, caught from K J Subramanyam in this context "Even after he renowned artist

and educator, he continued to see art and artisan practice as a connected panorama that ensured aesthetics creativity in a modern environment”.

So, it was 1935 that Nandalal Bose took up the project to install an art show at Lucknow session of congress requested by Mahathma Gandhi as the part of the nation building endeavor of that time. It was a collective work accomplished and assisted by the Vinod Bihari Mukherjee, Vinayak Rao, Master ji, Prabhat Mohan bandyopadhyay and Asad Haldar. All the Bengal school disciples of Nandalal Bose, then in February 1938 at Haripura congress Bodeli, Gujarat - Nandalal Bose set an exemplary demonstration of environmental art project using local materials and the local art history. The environment was duly complemented by his paintings depicting Indian daily life seems much framed as Haripura posters, it is very interesting to see how he incorporated the secular subject matters into his art work and also to he adopted the style of the rural and urban folk paintings of that time.

And that was also very context relevant because he painted the poster to create impact to the mass. And connecting the local people at work it had a realist approach to it that made it much more appealing to the mass. It was very context specific at the same time universal. This is one aspect where we see that one artist who was the like give us a teacher by profession in an art school although that art school was also like (Refer Time: 15:58) who that was inspired by the nationalistic ideology and Nandalal Bose is known to be the one of the pioneers in the nationalist movement.

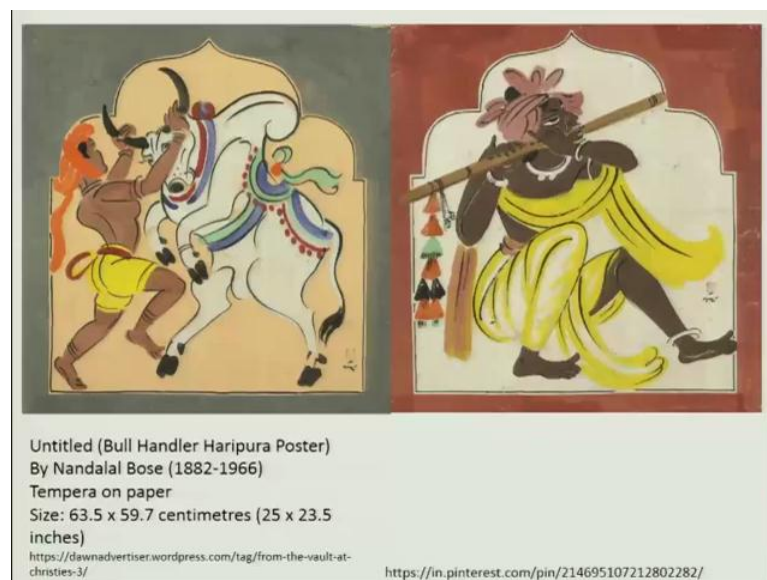
But this is also very interesting to see that a person who was trained in the academic style and art is taking up all these projects and realizing the importance of the folk idioms, folk ethos, and folk understanding and making certain art works which are exemplary. The works it followed the process close to the community folk art where everybody works in the same process. In fact, that was one reason because he was not working individually he was master minding project of course he did most of time, but he made his students a fellow colleagues to work with him in a team.

And I took the name Asoji was there (Refer Time: 17:09) was there and the many more people were there. And all of them they quickly learn the process because it was part of their regular training and they participated in the project many of them painted like

(Refer Time: 17:25) it was more like the learner parts where done by somebody then the other one put up the color and that way they put up all those posters.

So, it actually followed a process that was very close to the community practice of the folk art practice of our country, where the master painter leads the team and the production team they work for it. Nandalal painted nearly 80 posters by him selves in an approximate size of 2 feet by 2 feet those are mostly squarish paint with some art is on top. And his associate teammates made close copies of those paintings to multiply the number which is close to 400. Nandalal Bose admitted that he had chosen the pata style of painting for Haripura posters it is written and documented.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:39)



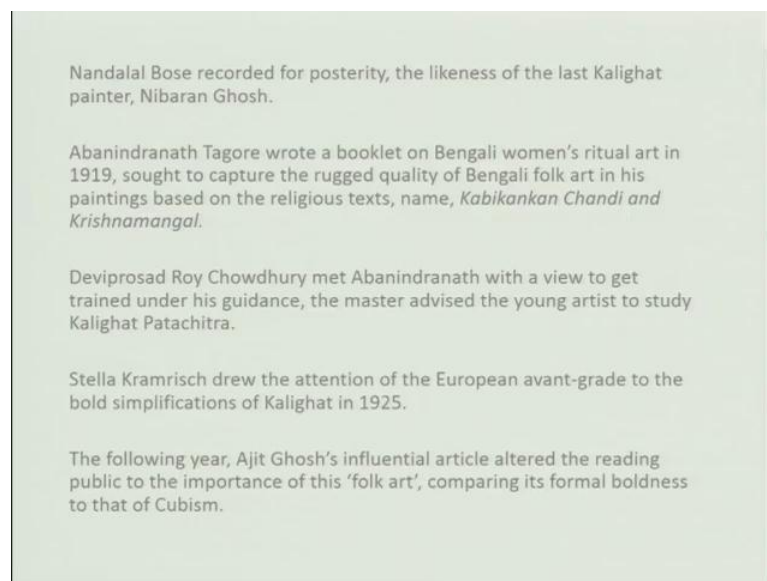
The text is vision and creation that is published by Bishuv Bharathi in 1999 when Nandalal bose is articles are there and he has stated it very clearly. The paintings were made in confide friends to maintains symmetrical order with the purpose of public display. The paintings were made at the outer periphery of the peruvian with the trail ambition of effective public viewing as the prime concern of these paintings. This strategic use of locally available art colors ensure vagrancy to the scheme, Nandalal bose used bold and strong long brush strokes to minimize the intricacy in order to make them more obverse and expressive.

The paintings have certain monumental quality to it that if the size is reduced or even increased the impact was not last ever. The lines and colors were bold brilliant and

energetic with simple graphic flatness that provided the painting with the fresh and smart appearance. The figurative compositions were apparently decorative and semi abstract, but there was a distinct dynamism in each composition that drag the posters to a greater depth. The obvious contours were needed for distinct viewing. So, brush strokes were large continuous and well rendered as well as the use of color was patchy calculative with an intention to create maximum affect through minimum application, typical of mural art projects.

The characters performing various activities like, playing musical instruments, hunting, controlling cattle, carpenters, and blacksmiths at work, women cooking and the derivatives of experiential realism. The compositions were rhythmic with dynamic forms to emanate a cheerful energy; the expression over power decorativeness reminiscent of the spontaneous spirit of Kalighat pat and other forms of folk paintings which is mentioned by Paramitra in 2007.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:24)



Nandalal Bose recorded for posterity, the likeness of the last Kalighat painter, Nibaran Gosh. Abanindranath Tagore wrote a booklet on Bengali women's ritual art in 19119, sought to capture the ragged quality of Bengali folk art in his paintings based on the religious texts, name, *Kabikankan Chandi and Krishnamangal*. Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury met Abaninandranath with a view to get trained under his guidance, the master advised the young artist to study Kalighat patrachitra.

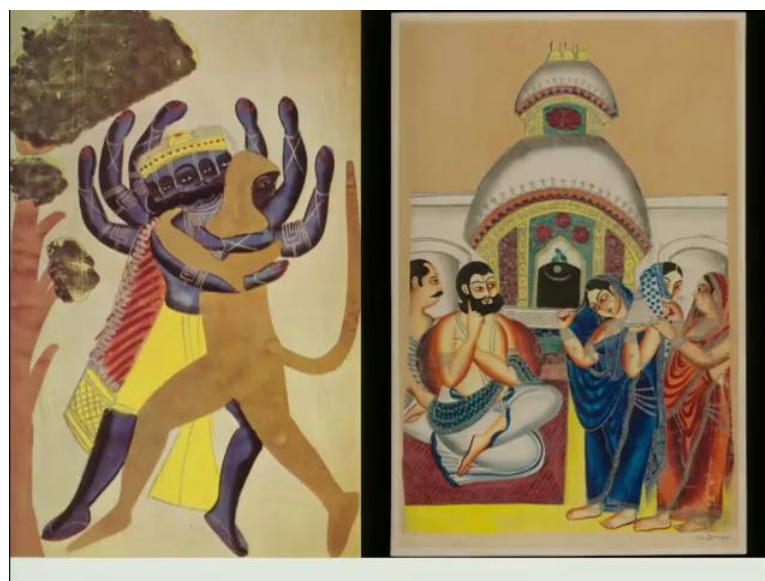
Stella Kramrisch drew the attention of the European avant-garde to the bold simplification of Kalighat painting in 1925. The following year, Ajith Gosha's influential article altered the reading public to the importance of this 'folk art', comparing its formal boldness to that of Cubism.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:42)



Seen in the picture are two images from Kalighat painting, the rural folk tradition of Western India.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:54)



The subject matter had a religious un ecular base. So, this is very evident and when you make more studies in to the Haripura poster or Kalighat painting tradition understanding the stylistic affinity there. In fact, when we look at the volumes created in Kalighat painting extensively also the kind of space that was part of Kalighat painting, we feel that this not only cubism but some bit of a (Refer Time: 23:33) and the western influence was there.

Though this is evident that this people will not directly connect to all this movement that took place in Europe they had the knowledge of it because many of the painters there were familiar with the current academic trained. And the study may go on and on in this direction, but right now we have to come back and stick to the context and move to our next lecture.