

**Folk and Minor Art in India**  
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**Lecture – 04**  
**Timelessness: Primitive Connection**


In our 4th Lecture name the Timelessness and the Primitive Connection we are going to uncover a very interesting aspect of folk art, where sometimes we feel that folk art should be timeless in its characteristic. By the term timeless or ageless what we basically mean is that it should not be confined to a particular time. So, when we look at the examples of folk and minor art it should not show a contemporarised esthetics.

So, if it is traditionally made in a particular way it should have the same acetic quality throughout. But when we look at folk art and we say that they are made by people and they are for the people, the people are also changing. And the entire civilization they living the habitual livelihood there also undergoing a lot of change. So, it then remains a question that when can we really expect folk art to remain unchanged we cannot. But then in some instances we see that there are certain art works which are undergoing a common world view and that has some common connection that is global and that is just a condition where we see that it can be recognized from any prospective and we do not really need anything (Refer Time: 02:09) or iconic connection to recognize them.

And let us discuss the timelessness aspect of a folk and minor art, and also try to understand why the tribal arts which are practiced by the tribal communities often have this characteristic which is not undergoing any change and its developing style wise. But there are also elements which are getting added with, which are much more contemporary. So, try to assess the factor called timelessness in the context of folk and minor art in this lecture.

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(Top) Prehistoric cave painting at Bhimbetka, Madhya Pradesh

(Right) Warli painting, Maharashtra

Timelessness and primitive connection that is the topic that we going to discuss here; New Delhi based art historian and curator Yashodhara Dalmia found link between the prehistoric cave paintings of Bhimbetka, Madhya Pradesh and tribal Warli painting of Maharashtra. In her book “The painted world of the Warlis she claimed that the Warlis”, carry on a tradition, which dates back to 2500 or 3000 BCE. The mural paintings of Warlis are similar to those cave paintings of Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh.

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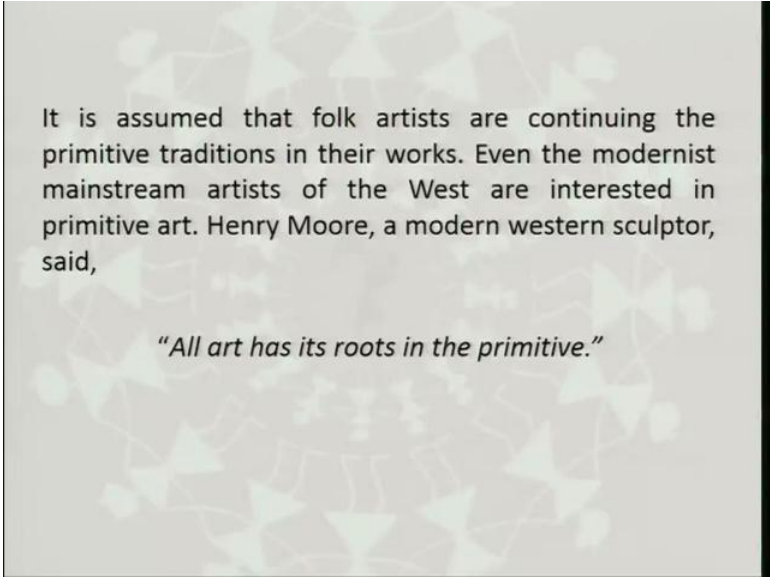
- K. G Subramanyin

Main stream art are generally meant to fulfill aesthetical aspects, not made for any utilitarian purpose. Unlike such main stream art folk art has ritualistic purpose beside aesthetics. Ancient art was also made for any functional purpose not only for the sake of art. In this respect there are similarities between primitive and folk art a completely aesthetical purpose of art is as we know a rather recent concept. "A contemporary aesthetical purpose for art is as we know a rather recent concept, it is only in the last few centuries that the aesthetics and functional have been condemned to isolated polarities, needing special effort as reconciliation." This is a quote by K G Subramanyin.

In the beginning of civilization what we see that they had been nothing called utility and aesthetics they were together and connected, it is only very recently that we see that we have separated aesthetics from the utilitarian objects in age of mass production. When the primitive community made a vase for example, it is paint to carry water they also decorated that particular vessel. Now we may always ask this question that what is the utility of these paintings the decoration that is made on the surface of it. And that is not a irrelevant question in that context that if a person is struggling and walking around 6 kilo meters a day to fetch a vessel full of water from a particular distance then what inspires that particular person to decorate that particular pot, there must be some reason.

Now what is the inspiration of this creative activity; it can be something which is connected to a deep superstitious belief, it can be a ritualistic pure ritualistic thing to make certain thing more auspicious, it can be something that change in the context using the same object and giving it a different significant by decorating it. Whatever the purpose of art it was something that was a practice and it still continues in different community. We still feel like doing a whole out of thing that can be called as art divide of any utility or any particular reason for it and we still practice that for no reason. And with that way we express ourselves we feel good about it and the reasons are very difficult to find out and the psychology the inspirations behind it is also equally difficult to decipher.

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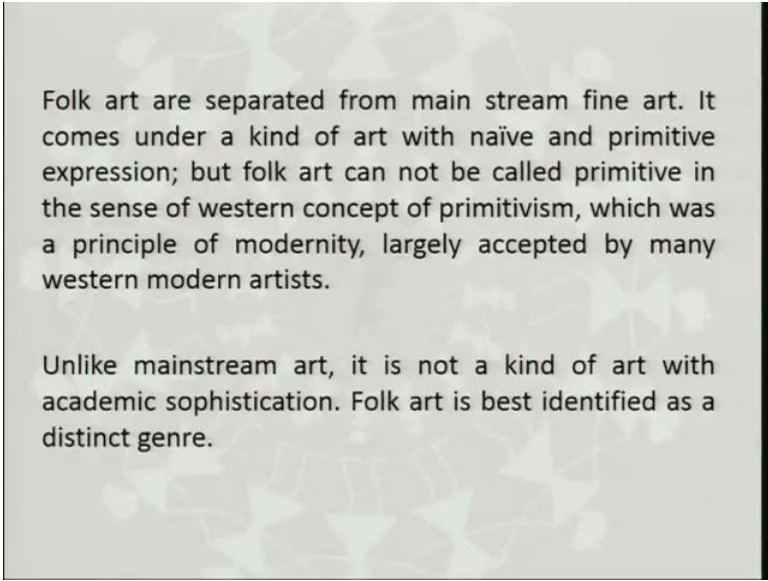
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We should also get back and see how Picasso, we having being trained in a particular Vanessa aesthetic that was something that he did in a very young age trained by his father he tried to find out a new definition of aesthetics that laid him to dropping into a exhibition space where the Negro native art works and the masks and other art effects and arts where displayed. And through that exhibition by experiencing the display

Picasso also realized that primitive aesthetics has a different definition of beauty. So, beauty does not really mean that all beauties are connected to the standard of Vanessa of 1815th and 1816th century.

And it is a realization that made the primitive art more significant in the modernist context. And as we see the first cubist painting by Picasso which was abstract or semi abstract painting which is known to be the first attempt to an abstract painting what he created that is the demoiselle the Avenel. What we see there is he created a face there with a sculptural feature that had certain resembles with the Negro sculptures of that time. And that was a different definition of beauty that we got to see and that probably has started a new era. So, primitive art and the ageless tile have its connection that influenced modernity and operated the fiber of understanding the modernity in a different direction.

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A Patua (folk painter)  
from West Bengal,  
is preparing paints



We have mentioning how the patuas made the paints and brush in Nandalal Bose's 'Shilpa Charcha' and Gurusaday Dutt's writings from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century .

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We have mentioning how the Patuas made the paints and brush in Nandalal Bose's 'Shilpa Charcha' and Gurusaday Dutt's writing from the early 20th century. These techniques and materials lack sophistication of modern paintings and resemble primitivist art.

So, it is not the permanent of the media the longevity of it rather the creative expression that has dominated and inspired this people to develop their, contains from a certain other inspiration social or otherwise. Whatever the reason is what we see here is folk art and minor art is actually undergoing a lot of change which is inevitable and we must accept those changes when it is taking place. So, permissivity is a quality or a agelessness is the quality that is highly admired at the same time that should not be fixed as a criteria and we must develop that kind of a tolerance towards the new subject matters being identified as long as the aesthetic qualities are maintained throughout.

We should always value the aesthetic quality that is coming though the age old traditional values, and the kind of aesthetics that is sharing a common world view. But we must not forget in this context that unless there is a change which is continuous and natural and that gets incorporated into the art work it cannot leave. So, when we talk about tradition it is not just the past, but present is also going to become past one day. And continuing with the same thing over and over again may not make much of a sense in that context.

So, in our next lecture we are going to talk about the issue of this evolving character and how the purpose of ritualistic art is evolving into a propagative secular purpose. In the next two lectures of our first module we are going to discuss a very intricate issue; the understanding has to be made clear at this point so that we get to the journey of looking thinking and appreciating the art works in its right relevant context.

It is all about how the art works have started as the ritualistic or customary practices and how they are evolving at a creative expression. So, the evolution is all about the ritualistic to the propagative or communicative things and we are trying to understand that into its right five verb. We will continue with our next lecture.