Folk and Minor Art in India
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Lecture - 44
Need of Paradigm Shift II

I continue with the topic of Paradigm Shift by reading from Roma Chatterjee, as I mentioned in the previous lecture. In this part I am going to read out some of the parts so I am using this book as a reference that is Roma Chatterjee speaking with pictures that is written by Roma Chatterjee who is speaking with pictures folk art and the narrative tradition in India and printed by Routledge Publication.

So, here she writes the story telling potential of Gond art is increasingly being trapped by new forms of narration such as film and story books. Gond artists are in great demand as illustrators for children stories, cartoons and other such educational projects. In another part she is writing Tara Douglas the British animator who lives in New Delhi and runs the adivasi art trust and association that promotes Indian tribal art through animation collaborated with Leslie Mackenzie an animator based in Scotland to develop a project called the tallest story competition in 2001 to 2003.

Four folk tales were animated during different adivasi art styles. Leslie Mackenzie who directed the Gond film choose cut out animation as the technique that was best suited to Gond art style of patterned shapes. A workshop was organized in Bhopal to which 14 pradhan Gond artists were invited and Leslie Mackenzie worked with them to create the art work. The stencils demonstrating the animation poses were prepared in Scotland and the Pradhan Gond artists only had to fill and color them in using the distinctive patterns as texture. Each character was cut out and the body parts separated then these separated parts were fixed back together with blue tack creating two dimensional puppets. The characters were then animated by moving the puppets in small increments captured framed by frame on the video camera, the characters scene to move when the scene was played back.

Now according to Roma Chatterjee, to her experience she gave it a very different

analysis in the appreciation of the whole visual experience. She felt that whenever one image is created in Gond art and then its represented or re-represented in a very different form were all the images the kind of imaginary animals that they have there, categorically cut out and from one particular image they are moving towards another paradigm in terms of its expression that one was the illusion of movement created to them. The other one is the actual movement through animation that was provided to them.

So, it is a gap that has to be for filled up with a much more care and in all this projects we have seen that the images are not naturalistic, but when it gets a paradigm shift it becomes an animation then the movements are naturalistic, so there finds that contradiction has to be carefully tackled. So, it is not only the paradigm shift, but also how we are shifting it when we are talking about alternative it has to be an alternative in the true sense, it cannot contradict with the existing principle. That way a creative lot of entrance into the process of viewing, so one had to be very careful to address and handle the issue.

In the same context she is writing the Pradhan Gond painters have a verity of different ways in which they depict birds and flight sometimes they stream out like watery columns or a fluid shadows framing the birds body like a fiery hallow. Some birds seem to be wing less, like the hapless bird that lies on its back with its beak open desperately trying to swallow drops of rain that might fall from the parts sky over head. Birds do not always look like birds in the tradition, sometimes they look like fabulous creatures from another world and that is the characteristic of Gond. In another context she shares her experience and she says that by the time I arrived the workshop the stories for animation had already been selected. The choice of story was detected by the fact that it ended no dialogues and therefore no complicated lip sync movements.

The Gond story the squirrel dream "gilhari ke sapne" is a much loved story and often illustrated by Pradhan Gonda artists. To think of it as a single story is somewhat of a miss normal as it like all other traditional Gond stories has many variances. So, the story is like that there was a squirrel that lived on a tree she was very despondent and wished that she could be someone else. Perhaps, if she was a flower she would be happy, but then

she saw a bee seeping nectar from the flower. Perhaps, it would be better to be a fruit instead, as soon as this thoughts came to her mind she was magically transformed she became a flower and then a luscious fruit, but then she saw a bird coming towards her and was frightened as she suddenly remembered the birds eat fruit. The squirrel transformed herself into a bird only to nearly fall prey to a fox. She managed to evade the fox and decided that it would be better to become a powerful animal like the fox rather than a small bird, but no sooner had she taken a shape of a fox. Then she was confronted by the mighty lion; the king of the jungle.

She next took on the form of the lion, but the lion she thought can be killed by valley predators like jackals that may look small, but have weapons and can fell even lions. The smell of jackal urine is too powerful that it can even disorient large animals like the lion as the traditional story talks about. So, the squirrel then decided to become a jackal only to be confronted by man. The most powerful predator in the forest, the squirrel decided that the human form is the best of all. All animals are afraid of humans she thought, but she had not taken to account the conflictual world that humans live in turn by minor different wants and desires. She came to realize that the human world was the worst of all the many worlds that she had experienced. It was better to be a squirrel after all.

Now she describes the process of animation. The story had to be summarized keeping in mind taras dictum that we had all heard that morning. The most successful animated stories follow a beginning to end structure. The objective has to be clear at all times. It begins with the set up stage where we introduce the audience to the setting characters and circumstances of the story. It is followed by the conflict stage that is the point in the story line where thing start to go wrong for the characters. Then finally, we have the resolution stage the point in the movie when the conflict we have introduced come to the climax it resolved, a fail story is when the audience is confused about the end. In an oral tradition there is much dialogue and many side stories. In animation there is more action less dialogue and a simple story line. A film should be a fulfilling story telling experience and expression of characterization and personality.

There was a moment of confusion when the NIT students who were advised the group asked about the motivation of the story. What it was about, Thara had talked about the

financial aspect, animation is an expensive business and the artists had to think of a long line the saransh, a few sentences that would give a prospective investor or distributor the immediate sense of what the story was about. Narmada Prasad and Venkat, the two most articulate members of the Gond team said that the theme was motivation enough. The story recorded the life time of all creation from birth to death. The squirrels dream was the dream of each athma or the soul. The squirrel represents the atahma. Narmada Prasad said we have to go through 84 rooms to be born as human, 84 Lakh Venkat corrected.

Man is the biggest animal of all, but even he is scared of something man is scared of life. But the NIT students were not satisfied. There must be a reason why this squirrel is dissatisfied. We will have to show it in the film; see there the shift in paradigm is happening so one has to also give it into its completion because it is not just the compliments of the folk tale, but this is a complete animation film complete into it. So, they went over the stories step by step according to the logic of animation. The story had contributions which make the motivation of the main protagonist and clear. The story was divided into stages each stages determined by the transformation of the squirrel. The motivation for transformation was clear to the student. The squirrel changes into that which she most fears at the particular moment, but in the beginning she envies the beauty of the flower that too is understandable, but why should she change into a fruit when she sees the bee approaching.

So, it was decided that instead of a fruit the next transformation should be into a bee. Ravi Narmada Prasad is teenage son who probably had the most experience with modern forms of storytelling such as cartoons were not convinced that the fox posed threat to the bird, birds can fly away he said. The logic of the original story is such that the successive stages of the transformation are determined by the idea of sentence. Flower and fruit are in animate, birds and bees can fly, the animals are all earth bound, but four legged like squirrel except for the man who walks on two legs. It was decided that the story board the pictorial script which animators used to maintain continuity would depict the bird as a low flying one there were further problems.

Apart from the older Pradhan Gond artists no one present had heard about the potency of jackal's urine. The artists were reminded that the film would be viewed by children who

were unfamiliar with the Gond (Refer Time: 16:05). As one would expect the jackal avatar was dropped from the script. The artists were asked to think about the profile of their characters their motivations and personalities where they were situated and why and so on.

She writes the detailed description of the making that our focus is right now on the different possibilities of the medium. When we are shifting from a overall tradition which involves oration, images, performances, etcetera when we are putting it into a different light making animation out of it of course it has certain potential but it may also give us a very different thought. One that we discussed that when we are making those images which are otherwise not representational they are very nonobjective often a semi obstruct, in fact when we call something a bird it may not even look like a bird it may look like some other creature. So, these are the line texture and other things which are very pleasing and they are almost like a parallel form that is made here.

So, when we animate them in a naturalistic manner how everything moves that may not suite the context and the second thing is the kind of local authors when we give it a universal form we need to take care of that also and the whole task needs a lot of local intelligence rather the social intelligence. So, it is not the intelligence that is restricted to a community or to a nation, but its wide spread and we need to know the different age group the user groups and (Refer Time: 18:15) to them accordingly.

So, from here I am moving to another experience which is shared by her in to the context though it is not very fair to read a the books partially, but this is the best way I can present it but I would like you to read the full book to many more case studies and extensive field works that is involved into the work, so the other experience. Roma Chatterjee writes I now turn to another variant of this story called chameleons dream "girgit ke sapne". Given to me by Mangrove wiki, mangrove was school educated artist has been collecting stories from his older relatives in Patanghar to be used later as themes for his pictures. I have been able to acquire paintings of at least four narrative series of mangrove. As literate artist mangrove traits the story as a text and tries to match the sequence of episodes in the story to the images that he paints. He always describes the sequence of actions that make up the particular episode being depicted at the back of

the picture in writing. Individual paintings in this series are numbered to indicate the other in which events occur in the narrative.

Even though mangrove story has a similar episodic structure to that of the squirrel stream it differs in some important aspects and we can make the doubt. This is more like when the squirrel changes it changes its form and here when the girgit or the chameleon changes it also changes its color to match the context. So, the substitution of the squirrel by a chameleon is the main protagonist brings the message into sharper focus. The chameleon takes on the image of its environment by changing its color. It has no identity of its own. In mangroves rendition of the story the dream motive recurs frequently unlike the story recounted in the animation script where the dream finds scant mention. The chameleon goes from one dream state to another without waking up.

So, the basic aim of a picking up is kind of graphic novel or animation project are perhaps the same, it is to reach out the new audience to sustain to find out a new group of audience and survive in that way. The stories must survive the artists myths survive and the art works the style creation the identities everything needs to survive for justified reasons. In fact, as we discussed earlier also that when we were in a look out as a nation for a particular idiom that came through the folk and tribal art to us and this was the indigenous on the vernacular characteristics of the art form that gave us our identity.

So, there are many reasons why we feel that in today's context the story can play a very vital role. And an there is no end of a story telling as we know that the demand of new stories are not to be vanished ever it is going to survive for long, but its only the way the how we are going to tell the story when what form its going to come to the new audience that remains a very big question. So, in today's context when we look at storytelling and we talk about paradigm shift we see that every medium has its limitation, so it is not as easy to put it in the context that if we convert them into animation it is going to sustain forever.

So, we can also reconsider these things realizing their potential success possibilities of their success, but this is not the only way out and paradigm shift is just one way out. And shift in paradigm may happen in many different ways; they can purely survive as pure

forms of artistic expression, it can also find out its new place into the museums galleries and other places. So, paradigm shift is just one of the possibilities that we realized through this discussion, but there are many other ventures that are being made in this direction and it is going on. So, we in a constant must also be in a constant look out to find them and get into the research and extended further.