

Folk and Minor Art in India
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Lecture - 05
Evolution in Purpose: Ritualistic to Propagative

The study does aim towards the possible means of sustainability of a traditional culture in the context of the contemporary sources surrounding when it sustains or it survives. So, we talk about the aspect of survival which is connected to life. And the art work if it becomes may decoration or it lacks expression it becomes dead.

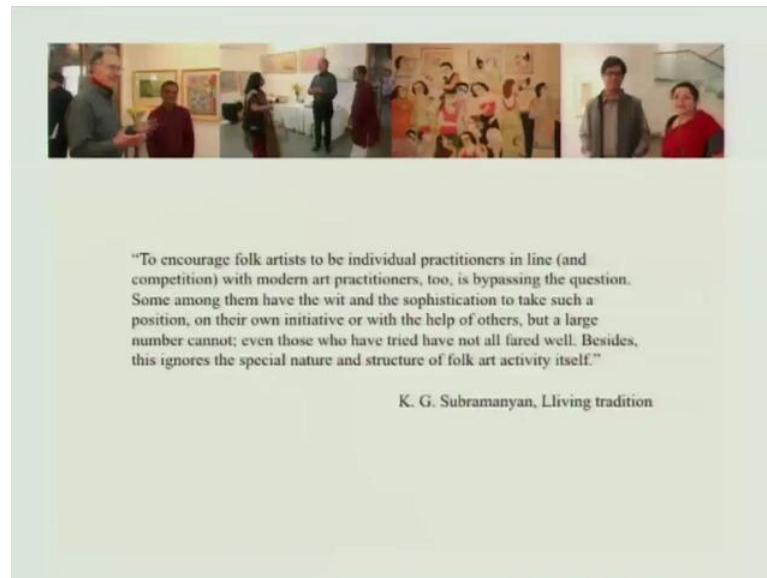
So, when we say the tradition is endangered it is dying we must also know that what are the factors that makes it die. Is it the superficial reputation or the same aesthetic motives or is it that the expression which is new. If something is new that may not be acceptable for a whole lot of people, but it also shows some possibility that it surviving with some new aesthetics, but if we keep on repeating certain art work that may lose it is soul and die some untimely death.

So, we are trying to look at it from the sustainability aspect what makes it more leaving and continuous. And when we see that this particular tradition is living for so long without any patronage as such it has certain qualities that we must hold confidence on this particular tradition that it is living on it is own without any patronage. So, it has a capacity of survival of it is own and you must identify those qualities that made it live such a long life. At that context the study will focus and scrutinize on the existing traditional and contemporary practices as well as the existence of contemporary elements in introspection to time bound obligations within the contemporary range of a traditional practice.

Regional and vernacular paintings which are zone based that is the tradition in India which is endangered of course, but in search of the survival of an alternative condition to match the need of time is something that will be concluded with some proper knowledge. So, when we say that the survival of the vernacular practices are one of our concern we must also see that what are the other alternatives that is a taking it is place and how

relevant they are and how the traitors continued through continuity.

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“To encourage folk artists to be individual practitioners in line and competition with modern art practitioners, too, is bypassing the question. Some among them have the wit and the sophistication to take such a position, on their own initiative or with the help of others, but a large number cannot; even those who have tried have not all fared well. Besides, this ignores the special nature and structure of folk art activity itself.” K G Subramanyan writes it in his book *Living Tradition*.

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The Present-day Interest for Folk Art

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- There are collectors who are instrumental in knowledge preservation to realize the cultural value of folk art specimens.
- The conservationists focuses on the preservation of the art forms as living traditions within the changing society.


Both are important for the cultural scene of the country.

Cultural imposition on society

If a traditional culture is expected to survive in isolation or as a conserved habitual entity within a changing society, it will only be preventive of a natural flow that leads towards brighter future.

The survival of a culture may depend on the market demand that restricts experiments and creativity.

In contemporary context, the sustenance of folk idiom is directed towards an external initiation of a cultural discourse. The emphasis is on the ethnicity of an individual rather than a community. The modern art scene in such cases requires being accommodative enough to include diverted style and expression.




Let us understand with a writings of K G Subramanyan the present-day interest for folk art. The present-day interest stands on it is historical and museological value. There are collectors who are instrumental in knowledge preservation to realize the cultural value of folk art specimens. The conservationist focuses on the preservation of the art forms as living traditions within the changing society. Both are important for the cultural scene of the country. Cultural imposition on the society is another very important factor that we need to discuss.

Any kind of cultural imposition can also be highly damaging if the culture is imposed on a practice. If you feel that it has to be conservative in some term and we keep on imposing the market on the survival of this tradition it may mislead us to a large extent. The survival may also depend on the market demand, if we say that the practitioners has to cope up with the market and be completely updated with the market demand and supply accordingly that may also not work in the favor of the artistic expression creativity and aesthetics. So, it is very important to create a market at the same time be slightly ignorant about how the market is moving.

So, in contemporary context this sustenance of folk idiom is directed towards a external initiation of the cultural discourse. The emphasis is on the ethnicity of an individual

rather than a community. The modern art scene is in such cases requires being accommodative enough to include diverted style and expression. It is in the past that it happen that the contemporary artist who are trained in art colleges and follow a more or less European academic style mixed with some Indian nationalistic ideas they prefer to display their art works with a few prominent and most impact full art works done by some eminent folk artists. And they got a success, but it is just two rarer an instance. There are still separate shows being conducted on folk art and there understood as a separate category that way they considered.

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Contemporary habitat as an alternative context for folk art

It is an undeniable fact that the elements and principle of folk art practice are the offshoots of a particular lifestyle that involves certain believes that is often regional and purely habitual. The lifestyle of an ethnic society is the life force that causes the art forms to emerge and grow.

To find the place, and justify the role of such cultural practices in today's society and culture, it requires a scrutiny to the guiding factors that determines its life.

1. If we count the traditional lifestyle as variable, the life of the practice is not guaranteed.
2. If we count the lifestyle as invariable, the life of the practice will be artificial and imposed.
3. If a new circumstance is accepted as an alternative lifestyle, the lifestyle may cause the art forms to alter.

The third option ensures a survival of the practice in new circumstances, which can support the practice to cope up with the contemporary art scene and cater to the need of the modern art market.

But to appreciate the new art forms as an outcome of an alternative condition, the society also needs adequate preparation.

It is an undeniable fact that the elements and principles of folk art practice are the offshoots of a particular life style that involves certain believes that is often regional and purely habitual. The life style of an ethnic society is the life force that causes the art form to emerge and grow. To find the place and justify the role of such cultural practices in today's society and culture it requires a scrutiny to the guiding factors that determines it is life. If we count the traditional life style as variable the life of the practice is not guaranteed. If we count the life style as in variable the life of the practice will be artificial and imposed. If new circumstances are accepted as an alternative life style the life style may cause the art forms to alter.

The third option ensures the survival of the practice in new circumstances, which can support the practice to cope up with the contemporary art scene and cater to the need of the modern art market. But to appreciate the new art forms as an outcome of an alternative condition, the society also needs adequate preparation. Although there is a relevant place of ancient texts in the contemporary subject matters in terms of its value and the core ethics it is also something that the (Refer Time: 08:53) conditions may destroy the flow to a large extent.


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The present study involves five of the traditional practices out of ten to twelve analogous traditions to represent the perspective of Indian folk painting. They belong to five neighboring states having stylistic differences that mark distinct identity in the due presence of much homogeneity in their context.

The practice that was restricted to the women of **Madhubani** for centuries and now for the last two decades showing signs of change with male members of the community taking it up as profession indicates the freedom that they have enjoyed being free from the ritualistic restraints yet having a free access to the traditional symbols and icons to maintain the stylistic identity. It also describes the difference in style based on the cast system and how these styles are facing reconciliation in contemporary expression.

Wall Paintings from the state of **Jharkhand** on the other hand is filled with primitive and tribal elements in spite of many similarities with Madhubani, in the ephemeral art forms. The images are spontaneous and rich in tribal aesthetics but vastly unexplored as a surviving tradition that is centered on age-old *Jadopatia* and their *Yamapata*.

2, 3. Sohari wall painting, Bilwara, Jharkhand, Jadopatia, Dumka



Rani Jha, The Abortion Clinic, 2004

So, anyway the practice that was restricted to the women of Madhubani for centuries and now for the last two decades showing signs of change with male members of the community taking up as professions indicates the freedom that they have enjoyed being free from the ritualistic restraints yet having a free access to the traditional, symbols and icons to maintain the stylistic identity. It also describes the difference in style based on a cast system that how this styles is facing reconciliation in contemporary expression.

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In Bengal what we see that the patuas they are also undergoing this kind of an evolution, where their practice started with a very different purpose of its own that was primarily to educate the community the common people with a moral value that conveyed through the ancient texts and ancient religious texts often. And then slowly it moved in to a very different direction with some connection where we see that it worked as the replacement of texts for the illiterates who could not read or write. So, in the condition where somebody is not able to read the text because of the language constraints, the images came handy to express the ideas of the stories.

So, most of the time what we see that the Patachitrakars of Bengal they underwent a very unique condition where they were a mostly (Refer Time: 11:32) the stories with their songs they created lyrics, they sang all those songs, at the same time illustrated the pictures they just made a kind of a graphic formation to depict all the stories and the moral values. They instigate certain kind of model values to the common people because most of the time the audiences were the women of the regular household in the absence of the men members of the community.

Most of the time the subjects were to instigate certain model ethics that was not very female friendly, but they were the thing that was depicted by their saying and slowly their things included lots of secular subject matters which are connected to the social standards, social stories and different themes which are more popular, and that way it evolved. And till now the tradition is perhaps being continued because of the new introduction of a new subject matters, new themes, new elements, and new imageries.

So, with that we are going to move to the next chapter which is connected to this particular topic which is about the contemporary practice, the nature of it and I will try to make you familiar with some of the art works which are made in the recent time. And you can then you can make out how different they are from the earlier one, but at the same time there is a route that creates a connection of from the past to the present. And you can also track the evolution in a very smooth manner.