

The Importance of Folk and Tribal Art in Out Society

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Abstract

Folk art encompasses art produced from an indigenous culture or by peasants or other common people. It is often learned through serious apprenticeships or passed down among family members from generation to generation. It is important that the patterns, motifs, techniques and materials of folk art have special significance and can reveal a great deal about a culture or society to which it is belonged. It remains simple and decorative is its appeal because the constrictions and everything involved in folk art reveals much about the essential values or characteristics of a society. folk art is often studied by historians and anthropologists as an artistic window into what an ancient culture was like a tool to know about the past. In India it is found in the form of pottery, painting, music, dance, masks, Embroidery, Pottery etc. created, through some common but specific designs, patterns which classify them.

Key words- *Performing arts, folk art, primitively, culture, cultural, civilization, Heritage, mythological, artifacts, rituals, religious, decorative, occasions, diagrams, geometrical, forms, Symbolic, Embroidery, Pottery, Basketry, wood carving, Masks, paper-machee, anthropologists, Historians etc.*

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The subject of folk and tribal and crafts in India and their ornamentations makes interesting study, as it embraces various artifacts that have sprung from common and tribal people whose artistic expression is purely indigenous. Folk India comprises the vast majority of rural people who live in the countryside including farmers, peasants, shepherds, artisans, small traders, priests and others. Thus the folk arts are the life fluids of Indian Society. Every state and every region is full of different types of folk arts and crafts. Indian folk paintings are full of variations in their styles, patterns and images from one region to another region, reflecting the indigenous character.

Folk paintings did not emerge in chronological order but evolved in various districts of India depending mainly upon the rural cultures, mythological stories and everyday life or functions, rituals, The Ramayana, the Mahabharata and other sacred lore and ballads which form a basic part of Hindu philosophical ideology has inspired the folk and their religious beliefs since ages past. Very naturally each area in folk India has its own regional costumes, dances, songs, observances and particular village deities. This is why these artifacts vary from each other, but there have always been the fundamental links of common cultural affinities running all through between villages and towns which create a harmonious unity too. Thus the subject matter of folk art are from not only religious epics, books but also from daily village life, birds and animals and natural objects like, sun, moon, plants, trees etc.

The word tribal on the other hand connotes a social group, comprising a series of families, clans or generations, wherein their way of life still shows a particular deep-rooted inheritance and relation to an ancient past. There are about twenty-five million tribal people in India, and their concentration lies in a belt from Madhya Pradesh (Central India), eastwards along the Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura and other north-eastern areas of India. Some groups do also live, but in smaller numbers, in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Mysore, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. The name Adivasis is used in some of the States to refer to some of these tribal peoples—the expression meaning, the people who have lived here from the beginning or very earliest times. Many of the tribal people are descendants of chiefs and warriors, of artisans and builders, of dancers and musicians, of priests and seers and healers. The Gonds of Madhya Pradesh are believed to be descendants of ancient rulers who lorded it over the forest areas. Today, the majority of the tribal people are engaged in agriculture. And one of the outstanding traits noticeable

among a large number of them is their clan cohesiveness, and the deep consideration given to the rights of their people as a whole, with a sense of equality among the members of the clan. This spirit of working together and sharing together is admirable. Perhaps to some degree this is due to the system of dormitories set up among certain tribal people, as in the case of the Gonds and Murias of Madhya Pradesh, the Oraons of Bihar and certain tribal groups in Nagaland. In these centres of training, where the accent is on social norm and behavior, young boys stay till they are married, and learn group codes, dancing and singing under an elder. Referring to such dormitories in Nagaland, Verrier Elwin says, "prominent in many villages is the Morung or dormitory for young unmarried men-some tribes also have small house for the unmarried girls. The Morungs are guard-houses, recreation clubs, centers of education, art and discipline and have an important ceremonial purpose."¹

The art that is created by these tribes is known as tribal art where as a specific art forms which is created by the common people of any specific region is known as folk art. Both have similarity in the style and decorative motifs. As well as there is a similarity can be seen in prehistoric and Indus valley excavated articles.. Richard F.S. Starr says, "one of the most characteristic features of the painted pottery of Harappan sites is its preferences for repeat patterns built upon the variations and elaborations to be had from a grid of vertical and horizontal lines. The introduction of diagonal lines make possible various Combinations of triangles, while the division of the square into arcs opens up a field of curvilinear patterns based upon the same rectilinear foundations."² About the similarity of the patterns and designs Verrier Elwin says "on wall and door, on comb and tobacco case, the modern tribes man carves geometric and symbolic design that are thousands of years old, going right back to ancient civilizations of the Indus Valley"³

The mode of folk and tribal arts are- wall painting (murals), ornaments, jewelry , wood carving masks, floor designs, basketry, pottery, toys and puppets or Hand Embroidery etc. In every mode of art there are different patterns or designs according to the region or geographic conditions of the area. But these folk and tribal paintings usually, are made with natural colours on paper, cloth, leaf, earthen post, mud walls and scrolls etc The quality of freshness, spontaneity, sincerity and simplicity of this art is appreciable These art forms has a great value or importance in Indian Society as we can study the effects of the folk and tribal art upon Society under the following points

Shows Artistic and Aesthetic sense of folk

The folk artist—may it be the artisans, painters, singers, dancers or the lay household womenfolk—all living symbolically with their surroundings, were self-dependent from beginning until end and blissfully content in their creative Endeavour. Thus, the common people were individually and collectively involved hearts and souls in their recreational and erective activities and every aspect of such enterprise was an honest reflection of the collective creative Consciousness. These folk arts also show the Aesthetic sense of the common people. Their Art forms show the artistic and creative aptitude and talent of the common folk.

Ceremonial or Ritualistic Value-

What the common people especially women draw in these art forms is also as important as the line for the aesthetic evaluation of folk art. Since none of these paintings or drawings is made as a matter of pleasure only but also for the ritual accomplishment or for gaining prosperity, the Religious belief system remains the maturing force behind creating these art forms, such as Sanjhi in Uttar Pradesh, kolam in Tamil Nadu, Apen in Gujarat, Alpana in Bengal and Rangoli in Nepal, India and Bangladesh, Mandana in Rajasthan and many more are being created on different Ceremonies for the ritualistic purpose mostly by the women. She is unaware of the anatomical Principles or the rules of proportion or the technicalities of drawing, but she acts spontaneously to give expression to her feelings and emotions through her visionary abstractions or geometrical shapes that she has experienced while contemplating on the legends or tales associated with the particular ceremonial or fasting occasion. To express those abstractions in the formal medium, she explores and reduces to essentiality the visual material world around to find out a symbolic mode. It is through these essential abstract symbols that the whole structure of the painting is formalized, sanctified by the tradition and crystallized by usage through generations, those symbols have now stayed as a standard script for the pictographs.

On certain occasions, the Brahmans prepare mandala diagrams and auspicious paintings for their patrons in their houses. Therefore, three distinct categories of folk painting may be identified, of which two are totally the products of the creative enterprise of the womenfolk's and in another category may be such paintings, which are made by the Brahmans for their patrons in the villages and towns. The folk painting done on various cult-occasions to seek relief from the

incomprehensible pernicious forcer of nature for the well being of family and cattle, wealth by invoking the indulgence of gods and mother Goddess may be known as ritualistic folk paintings which are created for religious purpose. The formal contents of these paintings constitute triangles, squares, diamonds, circles, semi-circles, polygons, the astadal and swastika etc. These symbols though apparently geometrical figures, have world latent significance as interpreting elemental forces, the phenomenal world and its mortals.

Conductor of culture and heritage-

Ancient Indian folk painting and art styles have been passed down from generation to generation, and are still practiced in different parts of India. Being culturally diverse and distinct, a variety of art forms have evolved over the years, some are untouched by modernization. Although some have adapted to new paint, colours and materials, even though they are passing our civilization and culture to the next coming generation, as each of them depicts some religious epics or god and goddesses as well as nature motifs. But they all are unique, admirable and inimitable in their own right. For example Embroidery, as a folk art, has a rich tradition in India dating back to pre-historic times. Evidence is available that India is its original home, although no example of Indian needlework earlier than the 16th century is known to have survived, there is ample evidence that Embroidery was widely practiced in India from very early times.⁴ The bronze needles excavated at Mohenjodaro were most probably used for embroidery. A number of figures found at this and other Indus valley sites are draped in embroidered garments.⁵ In the same way the art of pottery is also transferred to the next civilization from these sites.

A kind of Decoration-

These folk and tribal paintings are decorative in their treatment, these are free from taboos and dogmas of the traditional orthodoxy and ritualism. For the Ceremonial and other folk paintings such as Madana, Rangoli, Alpana, Kolam, Madhubani, Santhal, Pithoro, Warli, Godna, Gond and Phad paintings etc. all are decorative in nature. The artists are at liberty to paint any form or design of his or her choice, only the style remains same. For detailed example indigenous art of his or her choice, only the style remains same. Singbhum embraces articles of daily use as well as those made on special occasions such as wedding and funerals. The masks made of paper machee in Singbhum have their own decorative significance. As well as paper Machee of Kashmir is famous for house wares and decorative items with

Dr. Anju Choudhary

delicate paintings and paper machee of Madras is well Known for large size sculpted images. The paper Machee of Saraikela (Jharkhand) and Charinda (Rajasthan) is popular for the mask for chhau Dance.⁶ Traditionally they used various art forms for decoration Among them body painting/ tatoo, stone cutting, bull painting, fresco, sculpting horse, elephant etc. Decoration of walls (madana) and pottery is very common art. The methods and materials used are traditional and handed down in the families, generation after generation and still persist with little alteration, It is unsophisticated of ever rough hewn, often with bold colours, The type of decorative designs has Characteristic of new stone age or Neolithic. The pattern become very schematic and is more geometrical.

A Source of earning livelihood:-

There were Patrons pay folk art and artists In olden days People who professionally create the folk art earn their livelihood as Phad painting of Rajasthan and painting of kalighat were the most sellable art forms, and the artist of many popular embroideries earn for their work But now some last decades of technological innovations folk art and artist were being ignored So folk art forms began to disappear. But now a days government is generating new plans to protect folk arts. As “The state Government will take the step needed to ensure that folk artistes get the appropriate remuneration for their performance,” said the minister for information, Public Relations Palle Raghunatha Reddy.⁷ A country as diverse as India is symbolized by the plurality of its culture. India has one of the world’s largest collections of songs, music, dance, Theatre, folk traditions, performing arts, rites and rituals, paintings and within that are known, as the Intangible cultural Heritage, (ICH) of humanity. In order to preserve these elements, the ministry of culture implements a number of schemes and programs aimed at providing finical support to individuals, groups and cultural organizations engaged in performing, visual and literary arts etc.⁸

Thus folk art is any form of art which is local to a particular geography, and may have slowly gained the stature of importance in the society. A folk art is not limited to any particular discipline for example dance, music, painting Embroideries and even sports can take the form of a folk art And all are equally important in our society for the cultural preservation. It is important as folk art is often studied by historians and anthropologists as an artistic window into what an ancient culture was like a tool to know about the past.

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