

CONCEPT NOTE

31st session of Indian Art History Congress
to be held at
Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), Amarkantak (M.P.)
(16th to 18th February 2024)

"FOLK AND TRIBAL ELEMENTS IN INDIAN ART"

Conceptualised by
Prof. Maruti Nandan Prasad Tiwari

	
Anga Deva of Tribal art of Bastar	Pashupati-Rudra-Shiva Tala, Bilaspur (Chhattisgarh 7th century CE)

Indian art and tradition have been shaped by several cultural elements emerging from the society in reference to past as well as present. An important, vibrant and apparent of such elements and forms could be seen in India's (*Bharatvarsh*) diverse folk and tribal communities and their day-to-day life and verbal and visual expressions. The visual art forms of such communities are characterized by a range of materials (clay, metal, stone, wood etc.), techniques and archaic forms. This could be seen in sculptures/icons (Indus Valley terracotta and dancing metal figures), paintings, symbols, weaving, textile etc. It also includes living art and culture such as folk and tribal songs, dance and other activities of life. The folk and tribal elements are to be seen in respect of past and present covering time

span from Pre-historic to modern times and all the regions of India. Also in the art expressions of main cultic traditions in the context of renderings of different forms of Shiva and other deities and narratives from *Ramayana*, Mahabharata, *Krishna-Lila*, Buddhist *Jatakas* and Jaina stories, the presence of folk and tribal elements are to be identified. Such examples show that besides independent characters of folk and tribal elements, those were integrated with main stream as well. The folk and tribal elements are noticed right from the time of Pre-historic and Sindhu-Sarasvati culture. The present floor paintings (*Bhumi-Alankarana*) in the forms of *Alpana*, *Rangoli*, *Mandana*, *Chauk-Purna* and the wall-paintings (like *Madhubani* painting), made daily or on festive and auspicious occasions (of Deepawali, marriage (*Kohabar*), *Karva-Chouth*) in every house, contain folk elements.

It is difficult to say that folk and tribal elements were having merely exclusive character and expression. The coins and *stupas* and temples, the figures of *Yakshas* and *Yakshis*, *Ganas*, lady huntress (*Akhetika*), *Parnashabari* and unique image of possibly 'Pashupati Rudra' Shiva from Tala-Gaon (7th century CE, Bilashpur, Chhattisgarh) and Anga-Deva (a unique tribal deity of Bastar) invariably reveal the pervading (*Sarvavyapi*) and inclusive character of folk and tribal art. Nothing is beyond the *Loka* (world) and hence *Loka-Kala* includes tribal art also. The tree, animal, bird and other forms of nature were accepted both in folk and tribal art and culture. Therefore, in the ensuing 31st session of Indian Art History Congress (IAHC), the study of folk and tribal elements in respect of Indian art forms is to be presented from Pre-historic times to the present day underlining regional landmarks in the frame of exclusiveness and inclusiveness.

Folk art is all pervading and discernible in every kind of art expression belonging to different regions showing diversity. It is discernible in the art belonging to all the three main religious streams (Vaidik-Puranic, Buddhist and Jaina) as inclusive elements but in the art forms of the rural communities it is identifiable as exclusive folk elements, which is close to the nature and the experience of the common man. These visual art forms are to be seen in sculptures (stone, clay, wood etc.), icons, paintings, textile,

dance, music and also in verbal contexts (folk-songs, folk-stories). The art forms specially living ones are more functional and are being used in the daily life of the rural society for the purposes of rituals, worship and decoration. Likewise the tribal art of India is characterized by its simplicity and minimalism showing very less forms and iconographic details. The art form of tribal community is archaic in character, showing very little change in terms of time and space. Their forms and composition show geometric patterns and symbols derived mainly from world of nature. Like folk art, tribal art is also functional and related to daily life. There are more than 700 tribes in India and the papers could be on any specific tribe and its arts for example Bodo, Santhal, Munda, Kol, Bhil, Baiga and others.

Both the folk and tribal art in India are being recognised as essential spirit of cultural heritage of *Bharatiya-Sanskriti* (Indian culture), which are now a days is preserved and promoted at different levels by different means. The main objective of coming session of IAHC is to have research oriented papers on different aspects of folk and tribal elements in Indian art, which may include their renderings in stone and all other mediums like terracotta, wood, textile and also performing arts, folk and tribal songs ranging from Pre-historic to the contemporary period. The papers on folk and tribal art could be conceptual, survey based, thematic, comparative or related to certain specific period or region or tribes. It is expected that the papers will have the holistic and interactive approach giving observations/conclusions supported by illustrations. We can also discuss in papers about preservation and promotion of folk and tribal arts.

*[I acknowledge with thanks the help of **Prof. Alok Shrotriya** (Local Secretary of 31st session of IAHC, IGNTU, Amarkantak) and **Dr. Shanti Swaroop Sinha** (Joint Secretary of IAHC, Varanasi) in formulating concept-note]*