

Transcript of the Deliverance of Dr. Diana Fox in the Inaugural Session of The English Lyceum.

Transcript prepared by: Sourabhi Dutta Roy

7:54] **Dr. Fox:** Greetings everyone. It is such an honour and pleasure to be here. Let's begin the session. I would like to thank Doctor Banerjee and the team for inviting me to this inaugural lecture as I said it's such an honour.

[8:38] **Sarannaya Bose:** Ma'am.

[8:39] **Dr. Fox:** Yes.

[8:40] **Sarannaya Bose:** Before we move on, I'd request you to launch our website.

[8:49] **Dr. Fox:** Okay. Other than stating that the website is now launched, is there any other detail that you would like me to share?

[9:02] **Sarannaya Bose:** Thank you ma'am. You may now begin with today's session.

[9:06] **Dr. Fox:** Wonderful. Thank you very much. Could you please go back to the previous slide, the title slide, the title of my talk? There you go. Stories are everywhere, an anthropological lens into folklore analysis. And for those of you who may not be aware, Anthropology is a four subfield discipline. It contains biological anthropology and archaeology which are both sciences, life sciences and geological sciences included. It also includes cultural anthropology and I'm trained in cultural anthropology as well as the other subfields and linguistic anthropology. Therefore, anthropology embraces the social sciences, the life sciences and the humanities, and it is through this particular lens of humanities, since this is a literary forum, that I will be discussing folklore today. Although it is interesting to note that in the ancient past, in deep time, archaeological remains also indicate that stories are part of being human.

[10:31] **Dr. Fox:** So let's now move on to the next slide and I'll share the outline of my talk today. I'm going to be talking about the anthropological categories and characteristics of folklore briefly, and then move somewhat quickly through the first four theoretical frameworks of Functionalism, which is as we know, dated but still helpful in folkloric studies, Structure theory, which is a little bit different from Structuralism, Psychoanalysis psychology, and then the areas of my specialty, Feminism, Gender analysis, Queer folkloristics, and Decoloniality. And it's important to point out from the onset that while academics like to identify specific theories and often associate themselves with specific theories, they are interactive and overlapping and I hope that by the end of the presentation you'll see how this is the case. Then I will share a few ethnographic examples from my field work in Nepal and in the Caribbean, especially Jamaica, in order to give you some opportunity to see how these theoretical frameworks can be applied to interpreting the meaning of folklore.

[11:56] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide please. So if you see on the top, I've separated folk and lore with an asterisk and that is just to bring your attention to the fact that the word folklore comes from

the German word 'Volk', and 'Volk' means people. Folklore and lore means stories. So folklore generally refers to stories of the people. Of everyday people. And in anthropology we make a distinction between informal culture, which is another word for folklore versus formal culture. Culture, as you may know, refers to all the systems of meanings, the values, norms, practices, symbol systems that are integrated into a cultural system which is always emergent, always challenged, and occurs at these multiple levels of both informal everyday life and of course the authoritative realm of institutions, such as the law, for instance, or even the institution of the university. So even though I'm going to be talking about folklore here, for instance, I am not producing folklore here. This is not an environment in which folklore is produced. Folklore is passed down by word of mouth, by observation, by imitation in the very same ways that everyday culture is passed down to children throughout the life cycle in a process that anthropologists refer to as enculturation and sociologists refer to as socialisation.

[13:44] **Dr. Fox:** So within the realm of informal culture, we find these four genres that Doctor Banerjee already mentioned. Verbal lore, which refers to stories, narratives, jokes, prayers, chants, all kinds of expressions of verbal behaviour that are passed down in this fashion. Narrative lore stories as a particular genre. But even when we're telling jokes, even when we're making greetings to one another, even when we're saying prayers or chants or singing lullabies or ballads, all of those are examples of verbal lore. We're also telling stories. They may be part of larger stories, but they are stories nonetheless.

[14:39] **Dr. Fox:** Material lore comes in two forms: permanent and ephemeral. Now we know that nothing is permanent. But here what is crucial is the intention of permanence. So human beings create objects through knowledge passed down again, through these processes of observation, everyday life, word of mouth in the informal realm, they produce objects that we hope last in the world. So for example, certain artefacts that are passed down through generations, through families, family heirlooms for instance, are examples of permanent material lore. Gravestones are another example. Jewellery, linens, perhaps shawls, items of import that pass down a history or 'her story', we have the word story there of family and community life.

[15:45] **Dr. Fox:** Ephemeral lore: lore that is not sustained. It is lore that is intended to be destroyed and this means, for example, that it is created with deep meaning nonetheless, but people, the folk who create it, know it will not last. A quick example might be a beautiful meal that takes hours to create, days perhaps to organise, and then it is devoured within a short period of time. Mandalas, for example. Sand mandalas that the monks of Tibet create are an example of ephemeral material lore, and all things that are ephemeral have a reason for being ephemeral. Of course, the Mandalas are ephemeral because the idea is that as soon as they are completed, the universe has changed and so the Mandala must change as well.

[16:49] **Dr. Fox:** The next genre of lore is Customary lore, and this refers to behaviour, habitual behaviour, behaviour that is expected, that is normative and that is regularised in everyday life. The last genre is Ritual, which is the most complex genre of lore, and ritual has many different forms. There's rites of passage, for example, that transport people from one stage of life to the

next. In the movement across our lifespan, there are rites that. Those are rites of passage. There are rites of initiation. There are all kinds of rites that are inclusive of all of the other forms of lore. Now again, just like theory, genres of lore are separated so that they can be analysed and understood and taught, but they are interactive. When we prepare a ritual meal, for example, we are including ephemeral and permanent material items. We are using items to create the meal, but those items may be edible, or they may be pots and pans and silverware and other things that are passed down. We're also using verbal lore. Unless there is a vow of silence, that is taken. Verbal lore is the process of talking and telling stories about the meal. Many ritual meals, for instance, have symbolic items, and so those symbolic items are also customary. There may be words that are repeated during a ritual. All those forms of lore are coming together in the ritual process.

[18:38] **Dr. Fox:** In addition, we look at the characteristics of lore. All lore is tradition. That means it is expected, normative, passed down and repeated behaviour. However, we have to dissolve ourselves of the view that traditions are always ancient. Human beings are always creating traditions. Traditions are not static. They are at the same time continuous. They repeat some elements so that they are recognized as part of a long standing tradition or a relatively newly created one. But they also are dynamic. So the characteristics of continuity and dynamism are part of traditions. All lore is also performed. And because folklore is informal, when we say that lore is performed, we don't mean that this is necessarily on a stage in a formal setting, but it is the action, the practice of enacting the folklore in everyday life. And you know that members of your folk group understand the performance when they respond in appropriate ways. So almost every culture, for example, has verbal lore for when somebody sneezes. The saying 'bless you', for example, in English, goes back to a long tradition of protecting persons from evil spirits entering into their bodies when they sneeze. And so the 'bless you' is the response to the sneeze. And then the 'thank you' is the response to the performance of saying 'bless you'. 'Bless you' is a performance.

[20:23] **Dr. Fox:** Now notice that those words, those simple words of 'bless you', are part of a larger story that I just told about people fearing that evil spirits will enter their body when they sneeze. And this is encased even within a broader story about understandings of sickness and well-being that are passed down and understood even when times change, even with the biomedical understanding of disease or the germ theory of disease. Persons still say 'bless you' as a form of courtesy, though few people still believe that evil spirits enter the body. So all lore is tradition. It's performed, and it is also a text, and in this sense it's connected to this literary analysis. A text refers to the body of lore that is part of any genre. And it is the particular aspects of lore that are then analysed and given meaning by a group of people. The determination to sustain that lore and to pass it down the text is also what folklorists analyse when they're trying to understand a folk performance.

[21:42] **Dr. Fox:** Okay, let's move on to the next slide, please. Okay, what I'm doing here in advance of sharing the theories is introducing you to a concept, that of theory that comes from Leanne Simpson, 'Land is pedagogy', which is an North American indigenous concept of theory. So I'm anticipating here what I'm going to talk about briefly when I get to Decolonial

theory. Theory, in the indigenous North American way of thinking, is itself a form of embodied practice. It is a framework for understanding the world, for understanding how each family, community, and generation of people are embedded within a worldview. Note again that a worldview in its explanation of how individuals, family and communities are part of a worldview is also part of a story. So theories, as ways of explaining are also stories. But for indigenous peoples, they are embodied, they reflect a spiritual presence and emotion, and they are contextualised within everyday lives. So that is not typically how we think about theory in academia. But as academia moves towards decolonizing itself, it's important to understand how different groups of people think about the explanations that give meaning to their world.

[23:29] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide, please. So from a folkloristics standpoint, that is the study of folklore from an anthropological viewpoint, we explain theories as explanations that allow us to understand informal and formal cultural phenomena and how they interact. Even though I've defined two different forms of culture, informal and formal, they are not separate from each other. They are quite interactive because systems that regulate human beings within societies shape when and how informal culture can be generated. I hope that will become clear as I go through this process. But here's one quick example: Burial rites, for instance, can be regarded as a form of folklore. They tell stories about life and death. What happens to the spirit, if there's a belief in the spirit, when the spirit passes on? And they embody rites of passage transitions into the afterworld. But burial practices also are part of social organisation and political decisions about what happens to bodies when they die. In other words, we have to follow the laws about the dispensation, the disposal of bodies within the context of social regulations. So informal and formal culture are always interactive.

[25:11] **Dr. Fox:** Theories also help us to understand how different groups ascribe meaning to the folklore that they participate in and create. They allow us to create analytical folk genres. They allow us to understand the difference between description and analysis. So I can describe what happens at a burial rite and in that description I'm telling a story. But that is different from an analysis which seeks to explain why these steps occur, why the very life is [inaudible 25:47]. I also want to underscore the trap of one theoretical approach, as I mentioned earlier. It's really important not to just hang on to one and one theory. But to draw from multiple theories. Humanity is complex and there is rarely, if ever, one theory that will explain all of human behaviour. And folklore is part of human behaviour. We call those 'one approaches totalizing' theories and postmodern theoretical frameworks. And we reject those by their claims to universality rather than their recognition of the cultural context and particularities that shape people's lives.

[26:31] **Dr. Fox:** So let's move on. What I'm sharing now is not a complete list of theoretical frameworks, but just some that are, I believe, most useful and which also reflect my work. Next slide, please. So structure is the first theoretical framework. All folklore has a structure, an order, a pattern of being created from beginning to end. Whether it is the gathering of resources, whether it is the creation of a recipe step by step, whether it's the telling of the joke that you have to tell in a particular way for it to be funny and interpreted as funny. Whether it is when a prayer is stated at a particular gathering or ritual practice. Within rites of passage,

anthropologists have noted three particular stages, for instance, that are crucial in all rites of passage. What is particularly fascinating is that all over the world, anthropologists have noted that rites of passage include a stage of separation, that is, when the individual or individuals who are undergoing the rite of passage are removed in preparation for the ritual from everyday life. They are removed psychologically, they understand they are going through a transformation and they also can be removed physically from the everyday patterns of their lives.

[27:59] **Dr. Fox:** Liminality refers to in betwixt and in between. It's the stage of transformation when people are suspended from their previous social roles and before they're reincorporated into their new social roles. So a liminal stage in a marriage rite of passage, for example, refers to the individuals who are not yet married. But they're not single anymore. They're in this suspended state, and that state is often considered to be a dangerous state, a state that's fraught because the transition to reincorporation into the new social status is absolutely crucial. Therefore, during that stage, there are often sacred words customarily stated. So here I'm saying verbal lore and is customarily used during this rite of passage. I've just invoked three different genres of folklore here for you. So structure is an analysis of the component parts of folklore, how they're ordered, and why they are ordered in such a fashion.

[29:11] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide please. I hope that as I'm speaking to you about these theories that you're conjuring up different examples of folklore from your own everyday lives and trying to think how these theories may be useful for you in understanding the different genres that we all possess. All human beings possess folklore. One example of functionalism, because it's a broad ranging theory, it's also a theory that emerged in British social science during the colonial period, and for that reason it is limited in its value because it tends to focus on a kind of present to them rather than the dynamism of folklore and culture. But nonetheless I find useful Bascom's 'four functions or purposes of folklore'. Folklore in stories, morality tales, for example, often teaches children caution and care, their explanations of risk, and how to avoid risk. For example, much Native American storytelling teaches children about the dangers that are inherent in the world, and we find this actually throughout cultural folk life.

[30:30] **Dr. Fox:** A second function, according to Bascom, is keeping people in the focal group in line with cultural norms. Culture is, by its nature, a kind of constraining and conservative process. In order for members to be recognized, or in order for individuals to be recognized as members of a culture group, they have to conform to certain principles, to norms. Although we do find, of course, in the third function of folklore that persons also try to escape the limits of culture, they challenge culture. Both processes are going on at the same time. Adults, for instance, are often trying to urge their children to conform to rules of cultural behaviour. Let's look again at marriage, for instance. Many cultures around the world have norms of marriage. These are customary practices that are also framed within the formal culture of the state that identifies laws for marriage. But in folk marriage, for example, the norms, rules, or customs of marriage may prescribe whom a person can or cannot marry., whether it's exogamous (out of the group) or endogamous (within a particular group). Ideas of race, ethnicity, religion, class, past, all of those are features of endogamous marriage. And many people today are trying, and

throughout history have tried, to escape the limits of culture of these constraining rules. And that's how culture changes. They push back against it. Functionalism's fourth objective is also to validate folk culture, to confirm a sense of identity and belonging. All human beings are social beings, that is part of the nature of being human. We are socialised and enculturated within groups. We become full adult humans within groups. We learn how to walk, to speak, to perform everyday actions within a particular cultural setting. And folk culture reinforces and creates a sense of belonging through sharing of stories, through sharing of rituals, through all of the genres of verbal lore.

[33:01] **Dr. Fox:** Please go to the next slide. Psychoanalytic theory. I'm sure you're all familiar with Freud's ideas of the subconscious and the unconscious, which refers to those emotions and thoughts that are either just below our conscious level or which we are not aware of, and which Freud interpreted as being available to be accessed through analytic processes that tapped into the dream world. Freud also wrote about the ritual process and asserted that in rituals many of our unconscious features are surfaced often within the liminal space. Freud identified three parts of the human personality. For healthy psychological health are integrated the Superego, which refers to the idea of society's morals, and you can see here how this is linked to the functionalist theory of the sense of belonging and the constraining effects of culture that socialise people into particular groups. So the Superego interacts with the ego (the concept of 'I', the personal identity) and the Id (taboos, desires and fears). And it is in the realm of the Id and also the liminal space where those unconscious or subconscious worlds are located. So when anthropologists are trying to understand what is being surfaced, for example in rites of passage or rituals that involve going into trance or being taken by the spirit, they are trying to understand what is beneath the surface that is being expressed through the ritual process. And here again we see other forms of genres that come into play. In many cultures of the world, the material lore of the drum is used to put persons into trance through the regulation of the heartbeat and breathing through repetition of rhythm. Repetition of rhythm refers to the customary lore. Sometimes chants are also accompanying the rhythm of the drum. So here we have verbal lore in the chants that are customarily performed through the material lore of the drums in order to surface a story about human beings existing in a liminal space where their subconscious fears or desires are expressed in the rite of passage.

[35:57] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide, please. Well, as you know, psychological theory emerged from early psychoanalytic theory, and there are many, many theorists who are involved in this. These are really just nutshells touching the surface of these theories, but my goal here is to give you a sense in the event that one or more are particularly interesting to you and you want to delve into them as you analyse verbal folklore, which I assume is the primary form of folklore for literary analysis in this Lyceum and in the literary space. But you should also not forget that literary forms are also accompanied through customary norms and through the other genres that I've mentioned. So psychological theory recognizes that there are emotions that human beings are expected to express at certain particular points in their daily lives. So we've talked about weddings. We've talked about funerals. At weddings, for instance, the emotion of joy is expected to be expressed. How joy is customarily expressed varies from culture to culture and how mourning is expressed in funerary rites. And in some cultural spaces, for example, in Irish

wakes, there's often both a combination of mourning and celebration of the life of the deceased. So psychological theory is interested in the expression of emotions that accompany particular folk genres. It is also interested in the stages of life that human beings go through. And throughout human societies, all societies have generally noted shared developmental stages: birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age, and death, often these correspond to changes in the body. And there are various rites of passage. There are various norms and expectations. There are various games. Games are also a form of customary lore, but also involve a material lore that are played at different stages of childhood. And often those games are stories. Stories are embedded in all these forms of lore. When children are teaching other children how to play a new game, they are telling them a story. And why that game is important. Why that game is played is also calling for another story.

[38: 40] **Dr. Fox:** So folklorists are interested in identifying when they're looking at folklore and they're looking at the genres, which particular stage of life as a genre is aimed at. And it is not only aimed at one stage of life. There are some genres of folklore, such as weddings, for instance, where all persons are involved in the ritual. Yet at the same time, the understanding of that ritual and the meaning of that ritual will vary depending on the stage of life. So folklorists would want to understand what the stories that children might tell about a wedding are? What are the stories that adolescents or adults might tell? And this varies depending upon their experiences in life. Adolescents might be preparing for marriage. Even in some societies where there's still childhood marriage and cultures are telling stories about childhood marriage. The laws in formal culture might be challenging the folk practice. What happens to the stories of folklore about child marriage? Informal culture is intervening in an attempt to protect children from marriage through the law. That's just an example of how formal and informal culture interact and it's important for folklorists who are studying these expressions of lore to identify the different stages of life that people are involved in, and what stories they're telling to one another and to each other within those stages, and cultivating meaning about those various forms of folklore. Okay, and on the right hand column, I also give an example of emotions and how particular genres of lore evoke particular emotions. So mothers, aunts, and hopefully increasingly, fathers are singing lullabies to children when they put them to sleep. The purpose of a lullaby, it has a function. The function is to ease the child into sleep. It evokes a particular motion of safety. So here again I'm jumping across theories: functionalism, psychological theory, a stage of life, in order to understand and explain the particular genre of verbal lore that is a lullaby.

[41:23] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide, please. Okay, moving into feminist theories and gender analysis. I have a number of slides in this area. It's important to observe and recognize that there are many forms of feminism, and those forms of feminism will be useful in explaining the different genres of folklore, depending on what the genre is. Yet all feminisms contain two arms: the arm of scholarship and the arm of activism. Let's take an example of eco-feminism, which has long roots in India with women forest protectors, for example. Eco-feminism might be particularly interested in understanding the role of women as forest protectors. But if, for instance, those forests are disappearing due to the imposition of corporate deforestation that is sanctioned by the state, then a feminist analysis might seek to work with women folk, to try to

find ways, to intervene, to help to protect the forest. Whenever we talk about feminine theory, we're trying to understand how folk genres can be understood of the patriarchal nation from the way there's male dominance and culture in religion and the ways in which feminisms' arm of activism can create opportunities or portals for destabilising dominant and inequitable gender systems.

[43:05] **Dr. Fox:** The well known Pakistani feminist scholar Fazia Afzal Khan has argued in her study of Pakistani women singers and I quote "feminist theories of gendered spectatorship lead to resistant readings of the patriarchal nation." So oftentimes women's songs, for instance, and verbal lore are songs that are critiquing the norms, the customary lore. For instance, marriage. The Masai women in Kenya, for instance, participate in a cultural system of patrilineal marriage with multiple spouses. Polygyny. And very young women can be married to very old men who have multiple wives. Yet those young women create songs when they're herding cattle, for instance, or doing their other various chores, songs that critique. That kind of customary lore that they've been married into, and they sing wistfully of having lovers who care for them, who appeal to them, and whom they have as their own in a romantic story of love. If we look at gender and gender systems, feminists are interested in the ways in which cultures organise the roles of men and women, as well as in many places, intersex individuals who are recognized as transgender. In India, of course, Hijras. And there are many societies around the world where there are three, four, even five genders that have various social roles, appearances, behaviours, and expressions of emotions. So gender analysis and folklore is not necessarily the same as feminist analysis because it doesn't have, it sometimes does, but doesn't always have an arm of activism to bring about transformation. It's interested in understanding and documenting and learning about the ways in which, if we look at appearance, for example, the material lore of clothing might be displayed in the performance of a third or fourth gender. So if an individual is a male bodied individual and performs a third gender, that third gender would appear in the appearance of particular jewellery, for example, of hairstyles, and even in the movements of the body. Drag performance, for example, which are now being banned in the United States and many of the Republican states are indicative of the ways in which third genders, fourth genders challenge the hegemony of a binary gender system. They are counter hegemonic to that system and as such they are problematic for those persons who want to reinforce their own story of a binary gender system.

[46:25] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide please. Let's take a little closer look here at some of the ways that feminists and gender analysis can be harnessed for empowerment against denigration. There are many stories that are told in indigenous societies around the world that tell of a time when women were in control of decision making and when things went wrong, and therefore this is an explanation, a rationalisation for patriarchal or patrilineal social organisation. Men took control because women were unable to manage the complexity of social life. There are also other stories in societies that might be, for instance, matrilineal, where dissent is reckoned through the mother's line, and where women have significant access to decision making in the political and social realms. And in those kinds of societies which are found throughout the world, although to lesser extent than patrilineal patriarchal societies, there are stories of how men destroyed the original order of things and therefore women had to take over. So there are

all kinds of ways that stories are harnessed both to explain the contemporary order of things and that order of things may in fact reproduce a kind of denigration, a social inferiority in persons, and so gender analysis and feminist intervention often try to identify the ways in which those stories marginalised and try to reproduce a proclaimed divine order and the ways in which new stories can be told in order to refute what is often the culturally prescribed biological determinism. That means that social roles are explained by virtue of people's biology. They are seen to be socially flowing. Roles are flowing from biological sex. Those kinds of societies tend to have very denigrating and limiting opportunities. Not only for girls and women, but they also limit men, for example, in their ability to express a range of emotions and in their ability to participate in some customary forms of lore. So feminists who have conducted these gender analyses often work with communities to think about ways that they can develop new stories, new rituals. In Africa, for instance, where in southern Sahelian Africa, where there might be practices of female genital mutilation, there are many feminists, anthropologists who are working with communities to try to change that customary practice that is harmful and to introduce, along with local community members, new rites of passage, new rituals, and new stories of empowerment that challenge denigration.

[50:07] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide, please. Okay, Decolonial theory. I hope that many of you are familiar with Decolonial theory, which critiques the perceived universality of 'Western knowledges.' I say 'knowledges' very explicitly because if we're going to unpack the assumption of the universality of any other forms of knowledge, we must do the same with quote unquote "Western knowledges." There is no one West. In fact, the late anthropologist David Graeber, has written an article called 'There Never Was a West'. But when we say the West, we know what we're talking about. We're talking of a kind of code for the political imperial domination of Western societies. But that also imposes a particular time lens because we know historically other societies have also engaged in imperialism and today there's also many expressions of imperialism in the rising fascism of many societies worldwide. So those societies and this is formal culture imposing different political structures and laws around education, for example. They impose a kind of imperialism of knowledge that, as I say here, gobbles up other knowledges. Decoloniality critiques that, gobbling up, critiques that attempt to be universal and brings an ethical responsibility to it. Along with that critique of caring for all beings and for the land, decoloniality has an activist lens to it, even within the Academy. To think far into the future, what are the ideal systems? What are the practices? What is the folklore that various cultures have developed to allow accountability to one another and to all living beings? Decoloniality and folklore analysis is particularly interested in surfacing those submerged ways of thinking and being through the acts of coloniality and imperialist militarism.

[52:37] **Dr. Fox:** Feminist decoloniality challenges the overlay and interaction of patriarchal systems. So wherever there was European colonialism and beforehand in other parts of the world, for example, let's take for instance Japanese imperialism, there was a form of patriarchy that was imposed through the imposition of colonial systems. And those shaped people's ways of thinking. Let me give you another example of that. In native North American societies there was the existence of three/four and sometimes even five genders, as I've previously noted. But with the imposition of patriarchal Christianity, those ideas were eroded, they were challenged,

they were undermined and the binary notion of gender was introduced. However, with the rise of the American Indian Movement in the 1970s, that social movement activism sought to surface those belief systems and those ways of being that had embraced multiple genders in their folk world views. That movement is now known as the 'Two Spirit Movement'. 'Two spirits' are persons who embody both masculine and feminine characteristics and they have begun to build greater awareness of the ways in which formal culture has sought to erase informal culture. But wherever informal culture sought that erasure, there have been underground movements, counter hegemonic movements, where people have continued to tell their stories and express their ways of being, even if they are marginalised and not well known or widespread. So decolonial folklore seeks to surface those and we see that today for instance in 'powwows'. Powwows are gatherings of tribes across North America that come together to build a sense of unity across indigenous peoples' spaces where there are dance competitions and drumming competitions and beautiful costumes. It's a real rich display, a performance of all the genres of folklore. And now there are two spirit pow wows. There are powwows where two spirits who have become emboldened, who have found their roots, who are free now to express themselves, are coming together to perform those dances and recreate new dances that are telling stories of world views that embrace a world with multiple genders in the historical record and also in mythology, which is another form of narrative lore. So mythologies often reinforce this functionalist constraining aspect of culture. But mythologies can also embrace new ways of looking at things by creating new traditions that also draw on a liberatory past that has been oppressed through the imposition of formal cultural systems.

[56:00] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide, please. So as I've noted already, decoloniality is a form of reviving and reclaiming. So this is just kind of a summary of what I've said in a clear way I think, so that you can retain it. How did indigenous and nonwestern peoples understand, describe, and explain their worlds before settler, colonial and imperialist structures? I know this is the work of decoloniality throughout the post colonial world, a world that is striving still to dismantle itself from persistent coloniality. It involves learning new ways of thinking about how contemporary peoples around the world see themselves and understand their experiences. Decoloniality is not requesting a return to some nostalgic lost way of being, but to find ways to integrate multiple ways of being and new ways of thinking that meet the requirements of our contemporary times, such as climate crisis, the environmental globe, the global environmental crisis, as mentioned earlier, the rise of fascist governments around the world, the rise of conservative regimes that reject the diversity of people in all kinds of ways. Those are again formal systems, formal culture that is seeking to influence folk culture. So folk decoloniality revives these ways of thinking to work with existing ideas and emerging ideas that can allow for a sustainable future, both culturally and environmentally. And folklorists who are involved in this decolonial process, whether it's feminist or not, ask questions such as how do we collaborate across our differences to arrive at shared pedagogical goals, processes, and curricula? How can we use our spaces of teaching and learning to build awareness of these multiple kinds of stories? Some stories that are conflicting, some stories that are seeking sustainability, stories that are seeking liberation, that are through reviving and reclaiming.

[58:30] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide, please. Here are some examples now of my own work. In 2019, I was in Nepal for my sabbatical and I was looking at contemporary women's arts movements. I was working with both quote unquote "fine artists" and "folk artists". And in this example of Ragini Upadhaya Grela, who was the first woman Commissioner of the Arts in Nepal, I want to show you how both formal and informal culture come together, that is, folk culture and the culture of authority are found in her work. For part of my own methodology and building feminist colonial partnerships is to build relationships, build friendships. So you can see me here, I'm eating with Ragani. Down below, I'm sipping wine, or she's sipping wine, but I'm also taking a picture and sipping wine. She's showing me her print workshop. She is one of the first women printmakers in Nepal, and she's talking to me about the ideas of her art, which were to bring a social and political critique to the Nepali system of governance and also to worldwide gender rigid roles. In Nepal, as in many places there are stories of goddesses that emphasise a cherishing, a love and a worship of goddesses. But then she would point out how in everyday life, women were denigrated rather than worshipped and cherished.

[1:00:24] **Dr. Fox:** So if we can go to the next slide, we can see how she brings together folk culture and authoritative culture together in her painting. Here she has an image of the sacred cow, which is being divided and torn apart by lions who are hungry politicians, greedy politicians. They're talking on their cell phones. They're trying to grab a hold of the part of the state and the beautiful sacred cow, which as you all know, has such an important place in the folkloric imagination and in the everyday customary practices in India and in Nepal. This is part of her series called the 'GaiJatra' series from 2009, where she harnesses the sacred cow as a vehicle for critiquing politicians. So here we have the intertwining of both formal culture and informal culture which blows apart that binary of fine art and folk art. Since folk art is drawing on her quote unquote, "Fine Art Training" which is drawing on folk art ideas. We find this is true everywhere. If you look at what is known as classical culture in any society such as Western classical music. All of those classical music pieces have their origins in folk melodies and folk dances. And they were elaborated on through the brilliance of classical composers. There's always a relationship between formal and informal culture, and it is one of the goals of the folklorist to analyse how they come together and to draw on the various theories. Here we see a decolonial theory. We see a feminist critique because the male politicians are, look. Here is a very, very graphic image of a male politician. I'm trying to suck on the udder of the cow, to receive its sustenance while at the same time tearing it apart. So multiple theories are at work here. The goal of this art is to raise consciousness and to generate a sense of critique that can be transformative. So again, that's a part of the feminist activist lens that Ragini brings.

[1:02:45] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide, please. Here we have examples from her 2011 'Nature Speaks' series. We have on this one slide here with two river goddesses meeting. They are meeting to discuss the environmental destruction and the pollution of rivers in Nepal and on the other side you have the tree. She has painted many tree families. This is the embodiment of animistic spirit in nature, and polytheistic identities in nature bringing nature alive, showing that nature is not just an object or resource for human consumption. But again, trying to assert a worldview towards a long term sustainable future. Again, it's bringing in these themes from folk mythology with a critique of the destructive state that is threatening nature and all our survival.

[1:03:52] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide please. In addition to studying with Ragani and other again quote unquote "fine artists", I travelled South to Janakpur on the border of India to study a form of folk art called 'Mithila art'. You can see me with the women. Head and shoulders [laughs]. I'm so much taller than they were. They were lovely and they invited me into their world, into their studio. I had a translator. And if you can see, on the far right at what you're seeing here is structure. I'm learning how Mithila paintings are created. I learned that there was the border first created and then the internal part of the drawing and then other borders around the figures. So I was learning the process of creating Mithila art and I was also interested in the themes. This is a very small picture but on the top part, of the top left, from the way I'm looking at it, you can see me pointing to a painting. There was an artist in the studio who took it upon herself to insert dynamism into Mithila painting, of course, it's always been dynamic, that is changing out while the form has been reproduced, but the figures are also dynamic because Mithila art tells stories. Mithila art is like the Griot, the African Griot, who moves from community to community, telling stories about what is important, about social roles, about changing ethics. And here in that painting you see a blue figure. That figure is a policeman. And this painting is telling a story of the law against child marriage, which I referred to earlier when I spoke about marriage.

[1:05:49] **Dr. Fox:** And in the painting, hopefully the PowerPoint can be shared with folks and if you can expand that, what you'll see is a little girl who's being decorated in preparation for her wedding by her mother and a policeman is coming to enact a fine on the family. On the other side of the painting is a jailhouse. The parents are being taken to jail. In 2015, the new constitution, formal culture of Nepal inscribed laws against child marriage which still takes place because social life takes time to catch up with law when law is the first agent of change. Sometimes social life changes first and pushes formal culture to change. But in this instance the constitution changed and folk art form is being used to educate people about this new law. And a number of NGOs working in the area string together in a big banner the various paintings that teach about the law and take them around the town in a newly developed customary practice of educating through movement through communities. Historically, Mithila art was painted on buildings before ceremonies on houses. It was painted by women. It became a form of art that men excelled at when it was commodified. There again we have formal culture intervening in informal culture. This was women's folk art. It became masculinized when it was commodified and sold. And now this is the studio of Wajid Shah, a well known Mithila artist whom I know well, who invited me to his studio, who is now retraining women who have lost the art of that socialisation aspect of Mithila art and he is teaching it to them through a formal process. But nonetheless it is folk art that is telling a story of a changing formal culture.

[1:08:01] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide please. Okay, I know I'm going overtime here, so just very quickly. Queer folkloristics is a process that pushes the notion of queer to beyond sexuality, beyond gender diversity, to systems that challenge dominant social norms.

[1:08:30] **Dr. Fox:** Next slide please. I want to close. If I have time, Do I have time to show the trailer? I produced and directed a film in Jamaica called 'Many Loves One Heart, Story of

Courage and Resilience.' This is a film that tells stories of LGBT persons in a society that has laws that came from British colonialism criminalizing Gay Sex and [laughs] I wanted to make a film that showed an emerging social movement in Jamaica, challenging these colonial laws and showing a pride celebration. I produced this film in 2016 during the second Pride celebration ever in Jamaica. It has continued to occur and to grow. Although still amidst a climate, a legal climate that is anti LGBT, but there is a folk culture that is supportive and anti hegemonic embracing a queer folkloristics of inclusion and diversity. So when you watch this very short film you will see all the forms of lore here. You'll see material lore in the clothing, you'll see verbal lore in the stories that are being told, you'll see customary lore in the behaviours that people describe, you'll see formal culture and its imposition on informal culture, and you will see at the end the pride celebration that is now a tradition and a very important ritual for this folk group in Jamaican society. You can show it now.

[1:10:20] [video starts]

[Music]

[1:10:37] Speaker 1: In Jamaica, buggery is against the law. People feel that they have a right to attack. There aren't any sanctions. They know they'll get away with it.

[1:10:51] Speaker 2: People all run from their homes and communities. Homelessness and displacement is a big feature as part of the LGBT experience in Jamaica.

[1:11:03] Speaker 3: The Bible has consistently been used by Christians to empower them in their promotion of human rights abuses.

[Music]

[1:11:21] Speaker 4: The police will, especially if they're homophobic, they will tend to pick at you, pick you up, take you to the station.

[1:11:28] Speaker 5: Everywhere I go, I'm scared. It's like I'm living in a straight person's world. It's like we don't exist.

[Music]

[1:11:52] Speaker 2: Having been a victim of discrimination myself, I thought that there was something more that I could do for my community.

[1:11:59] Speaker 4: I've dedicated my life towards making Jamaica a better place for LGBT Jamaicans and for everybody.

[1:12:07] Speaker 3: We also need groups like the church to come on board. It's about health care, it's about legal representation, it's about getting respect, having their basic human rights protected.

[1:12:21] Speaker 4: I bleed red just like you. I feel sick just like you. I love just like you.

[1:12:29] Speaker 5: I would love to meet somebody who makes me feel what I never used to get from my mother, my father. Somebody who would care.

[1:12:41] Speaker 6: This is what this is about. Let me love, let me choose love. I fight every day for your freedom to choose love. Give me the space to find my own love.

[Music]

[1:13:15] Dr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

[Video ends]

[1:13:18] **Dr. Fox:** Thank you so much. So, in closing, you can see in this short clip the material lore of pride. You can see the formal culture of the church and the state apparatus that's imposing itself. Even in the title of the film, I'm appealing to folk culture. Many love, One heart. You may know Bob Marley's song, 'One Love, One Heart.' Many loves is an appeal to the diversity of genders and sexualities and calling on a customary folk song. It's been, of course, popularised and it's all over the world, but Jamaicans sing that song in taxicabs. They sing it as they are humming and cleaning the house. It is integrated into the verbal lore of folk society. So the material lore, the stories, these are stories that are being told of courage and resilience, that are seeking to transform the persistent coloniality in the creation of a new society that embraces multiple genders, harnesses activism, and ultimately uses the power of storytelling to build empathy and compassion for all human beings. Thank you so much.