Jamini Roy was one of the most famous painters of late-nineteenth and mid-twentieth century. The art of Jamini Roy was a milestone in contemporary Indian Art. Not only did it break away from the notion that art was the sole preserve of the upper classes and had to necessarily follow European styles but it also brought to fore the folk art language. Introduction of bold yet simple and minimal use of lines also brought in the new wave of reducing images to the bare essentials and yet tells the story emphatically.

Jamini Roy - categorized differently by different people - from folk artist to contemporary to rebel artist - was unique in himself and was one of the prime movers of the contemporary art movement in India. Jamini Roy - one of the fathers of Modern Indian Art.

Like Picasso, Jamini Roy is probably one of the most immediately recognizable artists in the history of Indian art. Even though one thinks that one has not seen his work, at least to those who have spent time in India, upon seeing an example, one instantly realizes having seen one somewhere, in someone’s house. The example of Picasso is telling in several ways, not the least of which is the extent to which Jamini Roy influenced and reshaped the course of modern Indian art.
In my opinion he can be well regarded as a 'colourist' because his colours had a luminous quality. He had used pure and opaque colours, juxtaposed to import character to his paintings. The colour scheme is predominantly is that of contrast, blues against reds, yellow against black – emitting male handsomeness- bold and structural. Although Jamini Roy had used warm colours yet the effect was cool and pleasing, amusing and charming, like a well-built structure. Jamini Roy used yellow and white to infuse light in his painting. Rejecting canvas and oil, he laid his strikingly bright direct colors on paper, sometimes on palm leaf mats. The result was an astonishing new beauty.

He never lost the mission of his life once perceived and he painted most of his paintings with the basic trends and tenets of folk art, i.e. simplicity rhythm, mythical and cultural themes. But he did not follow the traditional colour schemes of folk art. For example, in our country, the use of black and blue were not permitted in the auspicious ceremonies, but he refused to accept this grammar. He obviously and in abundance used the blue brown and grey colours in his colour scheme. By doing so his works became more brilliant and attractive in their effect. Furthermore, the lines became more confident, rhythmic and dynamic. Rai Krishna Das, a well-known
critic, mentioned in his book, ‘Bharat ki Chitrakala’: “the artist Jamini Roy inherits the same directness and the forces – which are the moving spirit of the primitive art.”

Jamini Roy experimented with local materials, like board, mats and cloth coated with binding substances. His palette switched to Indian colors derived from local materials, and made up the traditional way. In this way he turned his back on the expensive oils and materials of the academic style. His purpose was to find an Indian expression of themes, not only in the choice of subject but also in method of composition.

Jamini Roy started this change using the motif of the Santhal tribesman and women and they are amongst his most immediately appealing works to any collector of Indian art. Far removed from the western academic style or the Bengal revivalist style looking back to Indian miniatures, Roy focused on the everyday man and woman, a subject not treated before in Indian art. In many ways, like Ravi Varma, but coming from a different perspective. Roy wanted to make art accessible to the common man and not just the affluent and chosen few.

His style apparently harked to the traditions of the Patuas for the reason that he derived models from their crafts and made use of
abbreviation. But he did so with a clear formalistic notion. He never adhered to the format orientation and other rules and restrictions the Patuas religiously follow and from which they refuse to deviate. Even while copying a traditional pat, Jamini Roy showed his urbane approach and made it clear that he could remodel and restructure any tradition for working out his style.

With this notion, he made copies of the Kalighat Pats. The copies were hardly identical despite the use of the same models. He could freely replace the traditional use and character of line and colour to suit his own purpose which a traditional Patua would never have dared to do. The Kalighat Patua showed and accentuated concern with his bold contour line – hard outsides and tonal insides – created in a single sweeping stroke. The line had a magical quality suggesting both contour and volume, and hardly betrayed moments of indecision. Jamini Roy in his copy replaced the Kalighat line. He drew a flat outer line in a dark colour and an adjacent line in a subsidiary colour. He repeated this double-line technique in successive paintings. The quality of the double-line appears calculated and mechanical against the spontaneity of the Kalighat line. He consciously transformed the line of force, volume and tactile feeling into one of decoration to suit his purpose. One thing
he wanted to do away with was with the imitation of nature, as did
the European moderns, and in this pursuit he flattened his form by
replacing the Kalighat line with his flat double-line. The
abbreviated nature of form, the gesture of line, the use of colour for
the sake of colour, the total compositional clarity and the frontal
placement of the form without illusionistic depth, were the qualities
he made use of for evolving his style. With this formalistic notion
he copied the Kalighat Pats.

Therefore to dub his paintings as an offshoot of folk art would be a
mistake. He dipped in that primal, collective reservoir of form and
colour which defy time and space. Due to the inherent richness and
vital quality of his art, both in form and content some critics have
compared to Cezanne in the plastic strength of his paintings; to van
Gogh in his vision and depth; to Picasso in his line effects; to
Derain in his general appeal and with Monet in colour feeling.

For Jamini Roy painting was not only a means of depicting figures
for some practical purpose but a progress towards the non-
representational and the objective. He evolved formally organized
patterns of primary colours and pure lines. These are
characteristically bold and decorative with the overwhelming inner
reality of a man who has a basic awareness of spiritual values. In
this experiment he has developed abstract symbols, resulting in a form of contemporary expression which is modern in manner but profoundly Indian in feeling. This characteristic is most marked in his earlier popular iconographical compositions, particularly the Gopini figures whose forms have all the studied aloofness of the classical approach, distinct from his later experiments, such as with Christian icons.

Jamini Roy gave a novel and daring direction to the art of colonial India by evolving his idiom of expression out of Bengal's folk painting. His search was towards the cultural and ethnic identity as an Indian artist, particularly as a Bengali.

He was craving for that sense of belonging to a cultural tradition which is traced in the life and culture of the people. He successfully bridged the gap that developed in the cultures of the traditional rural Bengal and the colonial Kolkata. It was Jamini Roy who provided a broader base to the art of modern India by enriching it with ethnic substances.

Luckily for us, there are many Jamini Roy works still available and they are an essential part of any collection of contemporary Indian art. His influence on younger artists in style and subject matter was tremendous, and in many ways, the conflicts of influence that
concerned him are still of concern to contemporary artists as they try to find their own voices.

The similarities of the basic structure and other relevant elements like themes, colours or lines etc. of the work of Jamini Roy may be noticed in the works of some modern Indian artists and here we can mention the names of several artists, for example, Asit Haldar, Ramen Chakravarty, Mukul Dey, Hebbar, Sailoz Mukherji, K.Rajiah Almelkar, K.Srinivasulu, Sunil Madhav Sen, Badri Narayan and Sheila Auden etc.

So the importance of art of Jamini Roy is not merely because it is more or less impressed by Indian folk art but it has opted out the new principles of modern art and has evolved a new direction. The artists works and the ideals he stood for will continue to guide and inspire many for a long time to come.