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Editorial

Greetings!

Dear Comrades,

For the first time in 6 years of its existence, TSJ is releasing late. And I take every responsibility for that. No excuses, it's my fault. I apologize and promise to bring out the next issue on time.

The good thing is that in spite of not getting indexed in Scopus or other commercial panels like CARE etc., papers have come in this issue as well. And people across the globe are showing their interest in the Journal.

What more may I want?

Thanks to the authors.

Happy Reading!

Dr. Sourav Gupta

Editor, TSJ.

Date: 27 June 2022

Place: Koraput,

Odisha

*Shifting Connotations of Krishna Jatra: A Semiological Reading of selected
Bangla Jatrapalas*

Sujata Mukhopadhyay

Abstract

Sri Krishna has been the sub theme of Bengali Folk theatre and a latent motif in *bangla palagaans* used in Jatrapalas. Popularly known as Krishna Jatra, these plays had a cohesive effect on the erstwhile masses, as it made its audiences laugh and cry in unison. Bangla Jatrapalas like *Kurukshetre Krishna, Krishna Sudama, Radha Krishna, Radhar Manbhanjan* are some of the Jatrapalas analysed in this research paper to give a more focused approach to the *palagaans* used in them. It is evident that most of the narratives of the *palagaans* have borrowed greatly from the Grand Narratives. However, a semiological study of the plays show Krishna in many avataars, especially in the Bangla *palagaans* used in the plays. He is shown to be a warrior, a diplomat, a lover and at times the iconoclast of same sex love. A semiological analysis of the themes of the Jatrapalas has been done which hinges mainly on the *Palagaans*. The Narrative of the different *Palagaans* have been deconstructed using the semiological method of connotation and denotation and the act of signification. The mediated texts of the Jatrapalas have been done to expose the interplay of meanings in different levels, the use of polysemy in *palagaans* and the metaphorical depth of the dialogues used in the Jatrapalas. The research design is a semiotic analysis of the texts of the *Jatrapala Kurukshetre Krishna, Radhar Manbhanjan and Krishna Sudama*. The sensuality associated with Krishna and Radha, the validation of extramarital love and polygamy has been focused on in *Krishna Leela Jatrapala*. Lastly, the approach to deifying Sri Krishna as

the flagbearer of Hindutva as seen in the representation of his character in the epic serial Mahabharat by BR Chopra has been analyzed.

Keywords: Krishna Jatra, polysemy, Kurukshetre Krishna, *palagaan*, Hindutva

Introduction

According to Merriam and Webster, a drama is defined as, “A composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a story through action and dialogue and designed for theatrical performance’ (Merriam et al 1969: 252). Though most provinces in India have their typical local flavour portrayed in their plays, yet a deep analysis of most of them reveals that they all have references to the Indian Grand Narratives i.e the Ramayan and the Mahabharat and its focus of the triumph of Right over Wrong, of Good over Evil. The Krishna Cult is one of the many local leanings seen in the folk theatre of Bengal during the early 19th century, borrowing heavily from the quote in the Mahabharat “ *Narayanam Namaskritya*” meaning I bow to the spirit of Lord Krishna. In her research work Shilpi Maitra mentions that Krishna Leela as a form of religious subject has not only been significant form of study in Bhagavat Puranas but also in different forms of folk theatres (Varadapande 1982: 23). The colourful lores, legends and myths of Krishna have been manifested in several Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical texts. Krishna becomes the perfect incarnation of honesty, love, beauty, virtue and justice in many folk narrations all over India. Being influenced from quite a few mythologies, the Krishna cult has diverse impact on Raas Leela, Krishna Leela as well as to the Jatrapala tradition of West Bengal. It is significant to note that Krishna’s life and philosophy have been elaborated not only in Mahabharata but also in

Puranas, specifically in Vishnu, Harivamsha, Bhagavata and Brahmavaivada while later became a part of Krishna cult

Narasi Mehta, in his seminal work on the reference of Krishna in Bengali Folk theatre says that Mahaprabhu of West Bengal was known to be much influenced by the thoughts and philosophies of Krishna. The Krishna cult had immense impact on his life that spread the message of love and virtue. The eternal relationship of love between Radha and Krishna became a commonly explored theme in Indian Arts and Paintings which included different schools including Rajasthani, Gujarati, Basauli, Kangra, Mughal etc.

An eminent aspect of these specificities of Jatrapala had been Krishna Jatra which began during the medieval ages where this form of folk drama was known as 'Nata Gita' which meant dance accompanied by music. Those themes were basically based on Mahabharata and Ramayana. Interesting enough, less dramatic elements were used including dialogues. It was through music and dance that the subject was contextualised. The doctrines of Krishna faith and Krishna consciousness that were preached by Chaitanya influenced the life style and thought process of the entire Bengali community. Previously as a folk drama, it mainly concentrated on the love events of Radha and Krishna. Chaitanya himself being the custodian of this Bhakti Movement played the role of Rukmini (the devoted wife of Sri Krishna) which later became the primary embodiment of Jatra. This became the first instance of the performance of a folk drama in Bengal where the associates of Sri Chaitanya also played different roles.

This specific form of Jatra was known as Krishna Jatra as it was enveloped with the life events of this great deity. With the evolution of different forms of

Jatrapalas, this Krishna Jatra as a traditional art maintained its beauty and authenticity (Bhattacharya 1978: 30). However with the onset of the Eighteenth century, the socio-political and religious Bengal suffered a huge change. With this change, the diversion from Vaishnav cult was taking place. Culturally it had varied impacts on the mindsets of the people. The thematic preoccupation regarding the easy form of Krishna Jatra changed from the amorous relationship of Krishna and Radha to secular and unorthodox topics. Rural drama or folk drama was mainly based on the episodes of the daily life of the people. Interesting enough for the common folk, the common themes related to their lives fascinated them other than the Puranic episodes and other historical heroes. Although certain themes were always told from a religious perspective and included stories from Mangal Kavyas which preached different cults of Gods and Goddesses. Such forms of Jatrapalas were noted for its maintenance of standard tradition of the culture specific attributes of the Bengali community. The new form of drama that emerged during the 19th C in Bengal was known as ‘Nala-Dmayanti Jatra’ which was based on certain incidents and episodes of Mahabharata and was absolutely attached from the theme of Krishna Jatra.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of working on this research were to find out the following:-

1. The shift in connotation in the representation of Krishna in Bangla *Jatrapala* over time
2. The interpretation of polysemy used in Krishna *Palagaans*
3. The blurring of boundaries in the constructing the identity of Krishna in *Jatrapala* versus TV serial- Sri Krishna.

1.2 Research Design

A semiological Analysis of the texts of popular Bangla *Jatrapala* has been done for the purpose of this research- Kurukshetre Krishna, Krishna Sudama and Sri Radhar Manbhanjan has been referred. The electronic version of all the *Jatrapalas* have been downloaded from YouTube and certain fixed parameters used in semiological analysis was used. This research is closely connected to iconographic analysis. The signs, symbols and dialogues used in all the *Jatrapalas* have been scrutinized. A semiotic analysis of the cultural parameters and their interpretation vis a vis the traditional one have been presented to show the transcendence in the construction of meanings attached to the representation of Sri Krishna in the Bangla *Jatrapala*. This semiotic approach has been grounded in the works of Roland Barthes, Christian Metz, Umberto Eco and others. Identification analysis, another tool of semiology has been applied to understand the metaphorical Rhetoric used in the *Palagaan*, that is associated with almost all the 3 *Jatrapala* referred above.

This gives a sense of understanding to the audience especially pertaining to the polysemy used in these *palagaan*. The term polysemy refers to the "interpretive scope of media texts, the argument being that several interpretations coexist as potentials in any one text" (Jensen 1995, p. 75). The divinity with which Sri Krishna has been represented in popular media is subjective and open to interpretations. Infact, with the passage of time, the Bangla *palagaans* used in Krishna Jatra have become more susceptible to feed the desires of mass culture. Over a period of a quarter of a century, the entire stage, montage, props and spectatorship of the Krishna Jatra has undergone a sea change.

There are several parameters used to analyze the semiological content in all these 3 *Jatrapalas*- a) the use of index b) the use of connotations in the Krishna *Palagaan* c) the shifting connotations in the representation of Krishna in these 3 *Jatrapalas*. An index is a sign that shows evidence of the concept or object being represented. An index doesn't resemble the object or concept being represented. Instead it resembles something that implies the object or concept. A comparative analysis has been used as a research tool between Krishna *Jatrapala* and its TV counterpart in the late 2000s to analyse the changing parameters in the understanding and interpretation of the iconicisation of Sri Krishna as a permanent fixture in Indian religiosities.

The downloaded *Jatrapalas* mentioned above have been analysed into the following codes-

- a) The timing of appearance of Sri Krishna
- b) The use of metaphors in dialogues.
- c) The attire and cultural meaning generated by Sri Krishna in all 3 *Jatrapalas*
- d) The use of lyrics in *Palagaans* used in Krishna Jatra as polysemy.

Bengali lyrics used in this research paper(for *Palagaans* used in the Krishna Jatra) has been given along with its English translation, for the readers to understand the use of polysemy and metaphors. A comparative analysis has been done on the Television representation of the serial Sri Krishna.

1.3 Use of Polysemy in Krishna *Palagaan*

Noted writer John Fiske came up with the word 'polysemy'- the multiplicity of meanings which the media text evokes. Fiske also said that all media texts

should have one dominant convention shared by the audiences or readers of that text. Polysemy has been used in abundance in most of the *palagaans* of Bengal, especially pertaining to Sri Krishna's different overtures in Bangla *Jatrapala*. Baishnav Padabali, Krishna Bhajan, and prehistoric texts represent couplets which have ample use of polysemy. The divinity associated with Sri Krishna forbids many scholars to use expletives about the romantic overtures with Radha, the sexual connotation of the latter's *abhisaar* to meet and mate with Krishna has been written in metaphors.

The word *Pala* in Bengali means a specific part of the *Leela* of Lord Krishna in Vrindavan. *Leela* signifies the activities of Lord Krishna throughout his life . His noble performances, the major incidents and the affairs of love with the Gopees, and such *leelas* are innumerable. There are many titles of *Pala Kirtan* based on the themes of the *leelas*, but from the musicological point of view, *Pala Kirtan* represents a special class of *Kirtan*. In some of the *palas* the *kirtan* singer narrates the psychological condition of Srimati Radharani, the heroine of the play. The titles are named as *Purvarag*, *Anurag*, *Abhisar*, *Rasleela*, *Gostho leela*, *Nauka Vilas*, *Mathur etc.* The language and idea of a *Pala* may be tough enough for common people , for which it requires explanations to make it intelligible. These explanations are given by the singers in local language and in usual musical manner. These are named as *Akhar*. The main theme of the most *Palas* are comedic and in some other it is tragic, but in all cases the play ends in a comedy when Radha and Krishna unite which is called *Milan* (unison)

In this research, the *pala kirtan* sung in the Krishna Jatra have been analysed. The Jatra *pala* taken into consideration are Sri Radhar Manbhanjan, Kurukshaetre Krishna and Krishna Sudama. It is noteworthy to mention that in most of the erstwhile Krishna *palagaans*, one particular *kirtan* has been used

almost like a ritual. In Kurukshetre Krishna, the jatra pala ends with the characters coming together to sing praise for the lord. Whether Krishna has been deified or represented as a scheming diplomat, the end of all the Krishna Jatra sing praises for the Lord, which signifies the overarching hegemony of the *Jatrapala* producers in the divinity of Krishna. These blend perfectly with the religious narrative of a nation which considers Sri Krishna to be a God and even his misdeeds are considered to part of his *leela*, or playfulness.

The first *palagaan* to be considered is Joy Radhe Radhe. This gaan is almost an anthem in most of the Krishna Jatra, originally sung by the famous singer Mahesh Ranjan Shome.

Joy Radhe Radhe

Krishna Krishna

Gobinda Gobinda Bolo re

Chharo rey mon Kapot Chaturi

Bodole bolo Hari Hari

Hari naam param brahma jiber mool dharma

Adharma kukarmo chharo re

Chharo re mon bhaber aasha

Ajapaa naam e koro re nasha

Radha goibinda naam ti bodone loiye

Nayano neere soda bhaasho re.

This song exemplifies the divinity of Sri Krishna and renders him as the supreme God. It urges the mortals to forsake selfishness, slyness and *adharma*, and embrace Sri Krishna as the Liberator of all sins. It also urges the devotees to come out of all addiction because Radha Krishna *naam* is the supreme addiction

which leads us to redemption. The fact that Krishna was the protégé is the Kurukshetra war and he himself was unethical in many of his endeavors during the war is not mentioned or fathomed in the above *palagaan*. The gaan itself is like religious opium used to lure thousands of devotees in the name of Sri Krishna.

In Sri Radhikar Manbhanjan, another *palagaan* is used to justify the romantic overtures of Krishna with Radha who is his maami (maternal uncle's wife) and a married woman. Krishna flirts with Radharani and the *palagaan* also speaks about the sexual overtures, the pleasure that Krishna gets from Radha after *Milan* (here unity of hearts is written, though Milan suggests unity of body as well). Not only in Bangla *Palagaan*, even the Baul gharana of Bengal is replete with songs that speak of the physical bonding of Radha and Krishna, used metaphorically as *Milan*. It is a ritual of the Bauls to speak in metaphors in their songs, and the songs they sing are about love of the highest form, where the body and mind unites with the supreme. However, the *palagaans* used in praise of Krishna also speak about the physical desires of Radha, albeit in the use of polysemy.

The *Palagaan* "Krishna bole Amar Radha" has been taken from the *Jatrapala* 'Sri Radhikar Manbhanjan'. There is clear indication in the verses that Radha is having desire for Krishna, she speaks about her body on fire with desire for Krishna, who in turn says that the beauty of Radha is more enthralling than their lovemaking. However the interesting part of the entire text of the *palagaan* is that it is made to be deciphered by the audience as *aatmic Prem* or 'love of the soul for the soul of another'. In order to evoke the divinity of Sri Krishna, his love making to Radha has also been considered as part of his *leela* as the last verse will tell. After teasing Radha with sexual innuendos, Krishna

frees himself of all impunities when the devotees sing praise of the Lord. The interesting part is even after behaving like any normal person, having lust and desire for the woman, Krishna has been bestowed with the power of the Divine-
সবাই মিলে হরিবল প্রেম ভালোবেসে bears testimony of that.

কৃষ্ণ বলে আমার রাধা
বদন তুলে চাও
আর রাধা বলে কেনো মিছে
আমারে জ্বালাও,
মরি নিজেরই জ্বালায়
মরি নিজের জ্বালায়।
কৃষ্ণবলে তোমার কাছে রতি কোথায় লাগে
কৃষ্ণবলে তোমার কাছে রতি কোথায় লাগে,
রাধা বলে এসব কথা বললেই হত আগে
গোল তো মিটেই যেত।
রাধাকৃষ্ণের মিলন হল ঝগড়া বিবাদ শেষে
সবাই মিলে হরিবল প্রেম ভালোবেসে

Another *palagaan* used in Krishna Sudama *jatrapala* (a Krishna Jatra) has the following lines which has the use of polysemy- originally sung by Shilpi Das in the album Kobe Gour Pabo- “ Akbar Krishna Bole Bahu Tule” goes to say

Ekbar Krishna bole bahu tule
nachore mon pothe pothe
Moner jala dure jabe
Krishno prem udoy hobe

*Ekbar Krishno bole bahu tule
nachore mon pothe pothe
Bishoy-bashona shob chere, chere
Prano bhore dako taare, taare
Noyone heyro shodai krishno, krishna
Mukhete bolo sodai krishna,
hare krishna
Tora aay aay aay aay, aye amar bhai
Tora chol chol chol chol bridabone jai
Ekbar Krishno bole bahu tule
nachore mon pothe pothe
Charo-re ei bhober asha, asha
Namete koro re nesh, nesh*

It is interesting to see that one particular motif in the narration of the *palagaan* is present in most of the Krishna Jatra, that is, salvation lies in the repetition of the name of Krishna. Devotees seeing the *jatrapala* are advised to take the name of Krishna while in sleep, in awakening and in any problems of life. Likewise this can be termed as a form of persuasive communication by the religious honchos of the society to perpetuate the name of Krishna among the masses. The popular culture of India is the manifestation of many deities and religious connotations. Gendered divisions among the beliefs is a common thing- when Krishna is participating and succumbing to an extramarital affair with his maternal aunt, he is still termed as the saviour of Mankind- whereas the woman in question becomes *Kalankini* or woman with a lost face. A very popular Baul song prevalent in West Bengal goes to say-

Maa I hey, Kalankini Radha
Kadam Gachey uthiya achey Kanu Haramjada
Maa e tui joley na jaiyo
Parar loke naam rekheche kalankini Radha
Maa e tui joley na jaiyo

The opening of the *Jatrapala Sri Radhar Manbhanjan* shows Sri Radha going to the poolside to bathe along with her friends or *sakhis*. However, Krishna is hiding on the branches of the Kadam tree, ready to steal her clothes and make her embarrassed in front of her friends. This particular scene depicts the lust and sexual playfulness of Sri Krishna. He not only torments her, but does such foreplay (*Ratikriya*) which evokes desire in radha and she craves for unity with her soulmate. So much is the desire evoked by Krishna that Radha forsakes all social bondages and runs to Krishna for their secret meetings, earning the name of *Kalankini* (fallen woman). The same goes of the second *palagaansang* in the Krishna Jatra “ Sri Radhar Manbhanjan”- where Radha is termed as *Prem Pagolini* or a woman gone mad in love.

Ami prem pagolini Radha,,
Tumi ananda Ghanashyam.
Tabo dak sune chhute jai bone na mani kuler badha,
Nitya e premier gagarir shire,,
Niti asi ami jamunar tire,,
Anga bhasaye taranga nire suni tabo basari sadha,
Jug juganto ananta kaal rhidoyo brindabone,,
Tomate amate ei liila nath cholechhe sangopone,,
Mor sathe kande prem bigolita ,
Tumi ananda Ghanashyam ,ami prem pagolini Radha,,

The meaning of the text runs into polysemy- the *palagaan* is replete with sexual conversation camouflaged in metaphorical rhetoric. It also represents the irony of fate that is meted out to Radha who is intermittently called *pagolini* or mad, or kalankini (fallen woman). The hypocrisy prevalent in society, again a tool of semiological analysis becomes pertinent when the victim (Radha) calls herself *Pagolini* (mad) for the unison with Krishna. The person who however is the cause of all her physical pangs is referred to as ‘ tumi ananda Ghanashyam’ or the icon of everlasting happiness. The onus of falling in love has been transferred entirely on Radha who is made to say that she runs to the banks of the River Yamuna to relieve her aching body from desire, with the cold water. She also says that until her body can unite with Ghanashyam (Sri Krishna) she will not be at peace and she does not care about the rules of society as far as meeting Krishna on the sly is concerned.

The characterisation of Krishna which emerges from the different Jatra Palas specially where Krishna emerges as a scheming diplomat, an unethical politician all get diluted in the final few scenes of the Jatra and particularly in the closing lines. In another *Jatrapala* called “ Krishna Leela” the closing line goes like this-

নামভজনামচিন্তনামকরসার
অনন্তকৃষ্ণেরনামমহিমাঅপার।
যেইনামসেইকৃষ্ণভজনিষ্ঠাকরি
যেইনামসেইকৃষ্ণভজনিষ্ঠাকরি
নামেরসহিতআছেনআপনিশ্রীহরি।

শোনোশোনোওরেভাইনামসংকীর্তন
যেনামশ্রবণেহয়পাপবিমোচন,
কৃষ্ণনামহরিনামবড়ইমধুর
যেজনকৃষ্ণভজেসেবড়চতুর।
হরেকৃষ্ণ, হরেকৃষ্ণ, কৃষ্ণকৃষ্ণ, হরেহরে
হরেরাম, হরেরাম, রামরাম, হরেহরে।

1.4 Krishna and sensuality in Bangla Jatrapala Krishna Leela and Kurukshatre Krishna

Sensuality in almost any context tends to be a highly controversial subject and the social rules and norms of Indian culture often place great constraints on love and desire, marriage and kinship, and sexual agency. While relationships between religion, gender, and sexuality are also regularly fraught with a variety of tensions in Vaishnava practice, Krishna is still most often portrayed in conjunction with his lover Radha. That is, either a figure in devotional poetry and narrative or as enshrined deities. For many devotees, however, these sacred spaces are not necessarily viewed as permission to transgress gendered norms.

Rather, these sacred spaces are more properly understood as places where erotic sensuality and fleshly licentiousness are translated into an admirable longing for the divine. Similar interpretations abound in regards to plays or performances, and other acts of worship that focus on Krishna's divine eroticism as a central theme. But Krishna has many lovers and one of his most famous companions is the legendary archer Arjun. While Krishna and Arjuna's love is commonly read as symbolising the unity of the human spirit and the

divine Self, it is significant that same-sex love is a part of Hindu Vaishnav practice. Popular stories of Krishna and Arjuna are one of the most commonly invoked textual references to models of same-sex love in India by Hindu priests today. This is particularly eminent in the *Jatrapala* “Kurukshetre Krishna”. This play is different from the other *palas* mentioned in the research paper as it emphasises Krishna as the core of the happenings in the Kurukshetra war between the *kauravs* and the Pandavs, and it is again him who provokes, manipulates, advises and admonishes the Pandavs to kill their kin in the war of dharma vs adharma. It is here that we also get the hint of same sex love between Arjun and Krishna where the former adores and trusts the latter completely and surrenders himself at the feet of Krishna

Hey Krishno.

Hey Krishno Koruna Shindhu Dino Bondho Jagatpaotae.

Gopi esho Gopika Kanto Radha kanto Namhostutae.

Probhu Shoroane naoo tumi Amake.

Probhu Shoroane naoo tumi Amake.

Joye Radhe Govindo gopal gododhtra

Krishno Chandra koro Kripa Koro na Sagor.

Probhu Shoroane naoo tumi Amake.

Probhu Shoroane naoo tumi Amake.

There has been a repetition of the words “ shaorone nao amake”- Arjuna finds divine peace in surrendering his mind and body at the feet of Sri Krishna. It denotes the purest form of love between two sexes- a love that has attained the heights of divinity. In all the Krishna *jatrapalas* that have been used as reference, the characterisation of Arjun has been of a man who is masculine,

having Aryan features, a fighter, a protector of the distressed. On the other hand, Krishna is shown to have feminine qualities like associating with the gopinis, manipulating the Kurukshetra war from behind, and not fearing to use unfair methods to defeat the kauravas. He is shrewd, diplomatic and keeps his cool all the time. In some scenes of the *jatrapala* Kurukshetre Krishna, this feminisation of Krishna is seen- and the relationship between the muscular Arjuna and Krishna evokes sensuality, particularly when Arjun wants to surrender himself at the feet of Sri Krishna.

Krishna is one of the most beloved deities of Hindu India. He appears as the mischievous divine lover (*Radha-Krishna*) in North India, while being a patronage of art, music, and poetry (*Vitobha Krishna*) in Maharashtra in central India. He is associated with Dvaita philosophy and monastic traditions (*Udupi Krishna*) in Karnataka and Guruvayor in Kerala in the South. Images and stories of Krishna are ubiquitous throughout South Asia. As the eighth incarnation of the Vedic deity Vishnu in traditional Brahmanical Hinduism, or the Supreme Being himself in Vaishnavism¹. Krishna also appears in multiple literary epics throughout Indian history. In other devotional literary traditions, he plays a role in the *Cankam* poetic corpus of early Tamil texts and in the theatrical dramas of both the past, namely the *Balacharita* of the Gupta period (AD 320 to 550), and the present, such as the *ras lilas* of present-day Vrindavan. In each of these various traditions, Krishna, as a personality and as a deity, is associated with romantic love, gender transgression, eroticism, and sex.

In “Sri Radhar Manbhanjan” we see a complete transformation in the characterisation of Krishna. He is portrayed in this *jatrapala* as virile and mischievous. He secretly meets his lover Radha in the banks of the Jamuna dtorments her with eroticism. Radha is unable to contain her composure and

loses herself in Krishna's love. The following lines sung in the *jatrapala* are a tacit reflection of the ecstasy and the pain that Radha feels simultaneously, reeling in sensual pleasure after her *abhisaar* with Sri Krishna. She says that her body is burning in ecstasy after loving Krishna, and asks her friends (*sakhis*) helplessly how she can cool her body. She says further- nobody will ever fathom the kind of pleasure mixed pain she undergoes when she is unable to meet her lover. She cries in his absence, every cell of her body cries for reunion with Krishna. She is missing her “ kalachaand” another name of Krishna and wants to go to his land with a garland and marry him.

কৃষ্ণপ্রেমেপোড়াদেহ
কিদিয়েজুড়াইবলোসখি?
কিদিয়েজুড়াইবলোসখি?
কৃষ্ণপ্রেমেপোড়াদেহ
কিদিয়েজুড়াইবলোসখি?
কিদিয়েজুড়াইবলোসখি?

কেবুঝবেঅন্তরেরজ্বালা
কেবুঝবেঅন্তরেরজ্বালা,
কেমোছাইবেআঁখি?
কিদিয়েজুড়াইবলোসখি?
কিদিয়েজুড়াইবলোসখি

?

যেইদেশেতেআছেআমার
বন্ধুচাঁদকালা,

সেইদেশেতেযাবনিয়ে

..

ফুলেরওমালা।

In the Bengali *Jatrapala* “ Krishna Leela”, the romance between Radha and her lover Krishna is taken up a notch higher. It is interesting to note that in a country where the religious values are part and parcel of the socialization process of its inhabitants, the extramarital relationship between Radha and Krishna is given a religious and sanctified fervour. In this *jatrapala*, not only is sensuality justifies, even extramarital relationships get a nod as Krishna is considered to be an Avataar. Krishna is lovingly referred as ‘ Radharaman’ (meaning one who has consummated his relationship sexually with Radha) and the same terminology is used in this song from the *jatrapala* Krishna Leela. Here, both Radha and Krishna are performing their Rasleela (game of togetherness) by moving to and fro from a sling (jhulan). To provoke them to perform their loving acts more, the female companions of Radha delve into deep eroticism in the following lines-

দোলেরাইকিশোরীদোলেরাসবিহারী,

ঝুলনদোলায়রাধারবংশীধারী।

ওলোলিতা, ওবিশাখাঝুলনদোলাদাওদুলিয়ে,

ওলোলিতা, ওবিশাখাঝুলনদোলাদাওদুলিয়ে,

শ্যামসায়রেরাধাকমল,

শ্যামসায়রেরাধাকমল,

ফোটাওআরওটেউতুলিয়ে।

দোলেশ্যামলসুদয়দোলেসাওপিয়ালী

দোলেরাইকিশোরীদোলেরাসবিহারী,

বুলনদোলায়রাধারবংশীধারী।

ওসোহেলী, ওমিতালিছন্দগানেদাওভরিয়ে
ওসোহেলী, ওমিতালিছন্দগানেদাওভরিয়ে
নুপুরবাঁশিরএইমিলনে, নুপুরবাঁশিরএইমিলনে,
মধুরধ্বনিরসুরছড়িয়ে।
দোলেরাধারমণদোলেগিরিধারী
দোলেরাইকিশোরীদোলেরাসবিহারী,
বুলনদোলায়রাধারবংশীধারী।

Thus, we see an assemblage of images, a blurring of imagination in the portrayal in the character of Lord Krishna. In true postmodern form, his image keeps changing from situation to situation. Krishna appears in a variety of gender and sex combinations that can be, and have been, read as alternatively bisexual, transgender, and intersex (hermaphrodite). One of his more well-known transformations, for example, is that of Mohini, a transient female form he once adopted in order to fulfil the obligations of a marriage and kinship contract. Given this model of divine gender fluidity and effective relationships, it follows that intimate same-sex friendships are a common occurrence in Hindu mythology even now.

What is especially fascinating was that this particular image of divine love has also fueled a notable degree of activism among queer Vaishnavas today. In other words, that contemporary Vaishnava activist in India who leverage erotic models of divine love are doing so as a way of creating queer identities perceived as distinctly Indian. This is particularly important because the view of many Hindu fundamentalists (Hindutva) in India and conservative news

organisations in the West is to paint homosexuality in South Asia as a colonial imposition indicative of a kind of Westernisation that is antithetical to “traditional” Indian culture.

1.5 Krishna as the flagbearer of Hinduism in the serial Mahabharat

The television serial Mahabharat by BR Chopra crossed the records of high TRP during the late 90s in India. It has been reported that while the serial was aired on Sundays, most of the lanes and roads of Northern India would be deserted. Women finished their morning chores and cooking before Mahabharat started at 10.30 am. Such was the impact of the teleserial that the Indian families sat glued to the TV set to devour each and every episode. Scholars have said that Mahabharat can be hailed as a forbearer of the Hindutva agenda propagandised by a certain political party, because it was in 1993 when the Babri masjid demolition took place and the iconic Rathayatra to Ayodhya took the entire northern half of India by storm. The political repercussions of the serial were many and is not limited only to the characterisation of Krishna. But it is an undeniable fact that the shlokas versed by Krishna to Arjun during the Kurukshetra war has been hailed as the ideological foundations of Hindutva as a religion in itself. The study of Krishna’s avatar in the teleserial is being referred to in this research paper as it will help the readers to have an objective analysis of the semiological transgressions in the characterisation of Krishna in Bangla Jatrapalas vs Hindi serials. By doing this, the reader will be able to understand the postmodern moorings of Krishna as a symbol of Hindu culture. The various images that has been associated with Lord Krishna is as varied as the number of moving images constructed keeping him in the center. The Mahabharat serial received a top notch appreciation because of the depiction of Krishna in his myriad character.

The Hindi serial Mahabharat successfully answers the questions of Dharma which makes it reliable as a text and established a relation between the human being and God. We can see from so many instances that have taken place in this epic. It is estimated that the war took place around 5000 BC. More accurately, it took place in 3139 BC. Lord Krishna, who is considered to be the 8th avatar of Lord Vishnu played a major role in this war. It happened towards the end of Dwapayuga. It is believed that there are four yugas, Satya Yuga, Trataya Yuga, Dwapar Yuga, and Kali Yuga. It is also believed by the Hindus that Lord Vishnu existed in Satya Yuga, Lord Rama in Trateya, Lord Krishna in Dwapar Yuga, and Lord Jagannath in Kali-yuga. This cycle is fictional to be repeated. Bhagwad Purana gives constant details about Lord Krishna and also accounts details about the preachings of Shri Krishna to Arjuna on the frontline when the latter refused to fight with the Kauravas as they were his cousins. This teaching is very popular as ShrimadBhagwad Gita which is reflected as the holy book of Hinduism. This book tells us how Shri Krishna explained Arjuna about the content of the Vedas. Occasionally a combination of Bhagwad Gita, The Puranas, Mahābhārata is taken to be the Fifth Veda.

Confidence in mediation has played a very critical role in this epic Mahabharata. Mahabharata, one of the greatest wars ever can be considered as a strategy of Krishna which saw a clash between the monarchical powers is an outcome of highly developed strategic thinking and planning. This war could only be at par with the success of the Britishers in the Second World War which involved instigating Nazi Germany to clash with the united Soviet Union thereby destroying one another. It is a general notion especially in India that high moral ground should be maintained whenever there is any war or even in politics at any expense. In the serial Mahabharat the opening song is that of Krishnas words saying

“Yada yada hi dharmasya
glaanirbhavati bhaarat/
Abhyutthaanam adharmasya/
tadaatmaanam srijaamyaham/
Paritranaay saadhunaam/
vinaashaay cha dushkritaam/
Dharm sansthaapanaarthaay
/sambhavaami yuge yuge
“I’m the scruples in the heart of all living beings/
I ‘m their start, their being, their conclusion/
I’m the wits of the senses/
I’m the beaming sun amongst lights/
I’m the song in revered lore/
I’m the sovereign of deities/
I’m the cleric of great seers...”

Lord Krishna has been depicted as the representative of Dharma in the teleserial Mahabharat. The shlokas uttered by Krishna during the Kuriukshetra war have been epitomised as the bahgvad Gita, considered to be a sacred book for the Hindus. he epitomic Bhagvad Gita reconciles the motives, reasons, the cause and effects of one’s actions – Dharmic or otherwise. Arjuna and Krishna were known to argue when they embarked upon the battle of Kurukshetra, where Arjuna tells Krishna that if they were to fight, they would be clearly incurring a sin by destroying Dharma. To this, Krishna replies to Arjuna that the truth is in fact the contrary. By not fighting, Arjuna would be defying his personal dharma, and thus committing a sin. Lord Krishna further says, “One’s own dharma, performed imperfectly, is better than another’s dharma well performed. Destruction in one’s own dharma is better, for to perform another’s dharma

leads to danger.” (Bg. 3.35) Thus, the chapter ends, apparently summarizing the entire epic. “It is better to engage in one’s own occupation, even though one may perform it imperfectly, than to accept another’s occupation and perform it perfectly.” (Bg. 18.47).

The social relationship associated with “friendship” (sakhyam) is a dharmic relationship that includes notions like “companionship in battle,” “warrior pact,” and “mutual trust and loyalty.”² The relationships of the combatants to their charioteers are crucial to the outcome of the battle and part of a wider network of complicated social relationships of partial or symbolic brotherhood and friendship (Hilfbeitel 1982: 85-111, esp. 88, 91-97). The chariot warrior (kshatriya) and his charioteer (suta) should work together in a finely tuned. On the chariot, the warrior and the charioteer put themselves into a situation of ultimate mutual trust, where the life of each is in the other’s hands. The warrior must protect his charioteer, who was probably unarmed, and the charioteer must also protect the warrior by skilfully guiding the horses. This allows for friendship between unequals.

Krishna calls Arjuna “friend” or “comrade” (sakha), Krishna speaks to him as His devotee within the context of the transmission of esoteric knowledge from the Vedic seers onwards: Thus received by succession, The royal seers knew this; After a long time here on earth, This yoga has been lost, Arjuna. This ancient yoga is today Declared by Me to you, Since you are My devotee and friend. This secret is supreme indeed. (Gita 4.2-3; Sargeant 1994: 202-03; cf. Gita 18.67) Still under the spell of Krishna’s overwhelming visual appearance as Vishnu, Arjuna finally praises Krishna as the father (pita) and guru of the world who should be adored (pujyas):

“You are the father of the world,

*of all things moving and motionless.
You are to be adored by this world.
You are the most venerable Guru.
There is nothing like You in the three worlds.
How then could there be another greater,
O Being of incomparable glory?”
(Gita 11.43; Sargeant 1994: 495)*

Krishna also states that He is all-destroying death, and the origin of those things that are yet to be (10.34). Arjuna then asserts that his delusion is gone (11.1). The decisive turning point or catalyst in their dialogue, however, is the shift from Krishna’s teaching to his overwhelming appearance (11.9). At this sight, Arjuna confesses that he is losing his sense of direction and finds no comfort (11.25). In fact, he is terrified. He speaks in a choked voice to Krishna (11.35) and starts to apologize for having spoken to Him as a friend and comrade: Whatever I have said impetuously as if in ordinary friendship, “Oh Krishna, Oh Son of Yadu, Oh Comrade,” In ignorance of Your majesty, Through negligence or even through affection, And if, with humorous purpose, You were disrespectfully treated, While at play, resting, while seated or while dining, When alone, O Krishna, or even before the eyes of others, For that I ask forgiveness of You, immeasurable One. (Gita 11.41-42; Sargeant 1994: 493-94) Then the verse quoted above follows, with the line “You are the most venerable Guru” (11.43). After Krishna’s theophany, Arjuna’s questions no longer have dramatic value: he is “convinced” and is merely asking for clarifications on points of doctrine .

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*Performing Women: A Critical Study of Construction of 'Woman' in
Ancient Indian Drama*

Mrityunjay Kumar Prabhakar

Abstract

It is obvious that representation of women in Ancient Indian Drama and Sanskrit dramaturgy was not as powerful and iconic as men though woman have been integral part of Indian drama and dramaturgy since its inception. The question is not about assigning greater roles to women characters but the question is the mere representation of the 'women'. The 'women' of the most of the Sanskrit plays have been shown as passive and at the receiving end while their 'men' counterparts have been shown active and doers, barring few exceptions. And as Bharata in his first chapter of Natyasastra written, Drama is mere representation of the real world. In that sense whether the kind of representation given to 'Woman' in Sanskrit Drama/Ancient Indian Drama do signify anything or suggest about the real well being of the 'woman' in society.

Keywords: Sanskrit Drama, Ancient Indian Drama, Performing Women, Woman Performers, Feminism

Introduction

The question keep occurring in my mind that whether the walking, talking and co-living women folk we indulge with in our daily life from our own family to our office spaces to the wider society are real ones or the represented ones? Whether

the women we interact with in our life are real women or they are the gender constructs of the society? These questions comes to my mind as I have felt that most of them are just shadow of themselves, as if they are not leading their lives but representing somebody else. They might be co-living, co-existing and breathing beside their male counterparts in a family, office or society but they have nothing leading life of their own. Sometimes, it feels like they are programmed like any robot or computer to perform certain tasks in certain manner and are no living beings like their male counterparts, as we see that even their wishes are mostly not for themselves but for their loved ones or closed family members or others. From where this 'woman' folk has arrived? The answer is that this woman folk has been created through a lot of efforts, deliberation and designing which controls not only their behaviour but also their thinking and mind. This becomes more real, specially, when we talk about the older times or ancient India.

In the ancient times, which was a predominant men's world, woman presence was as good as being absent. They were always there but their presence was hardly felt apart from the roles assigned to them. This is how history has been made and this is what we got through different available literatures. Though, literature has not been considered as authentic source of history but they do signify the reality of the world in their own way. The representation of 'woman' in ancient texts specifically Ancient Indian Drama or Sanskrit plays have a lot to say not only about the plight of 'woman' in society as subject but also the construction of 'woman' as an object. How these are inter-related or connected and how these things started interpolating with each-other, and what are its impact or after-effects are the main concerns of this paper.

Representation of Woman in Ancient Indian Drama

It is obvious that representation of women in Ancient Indian Drama or Sanskrit dramaturgy was not as powerful and iconic as men though women have been integral part of Indian drama and dramaturgy since its inception. The question is not about assigning greater roles to women characters but the question is the mere representation of 'women'. The 'women' of the most of the Sanskrit plays have been shown as passive and at the receiving end while their 'men' counterparts have been shown active and doers, barring few exceptions. This is what feminist scholar Laura Mulvey observes, *In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been spilt between active/male and passive/female*, in her article 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' published in *Screen (16(3): 6-18)*. Here, the portrayal of 'women' in many sense is as good as 'performing' them as these women are created through the lens of men's gaze and desire.

Most of the women characters of Ancient Indian Plays or Sanskrit plays (Though, I will be limiting myself to the Sanskrit plays written till 12th century AD) seem to be developed as desired by men. The presentation of 'women' here is limited to their physicality in many senses. In many cases even in love stories, which is a predominant theme of Sanskrit drama, 'women' are portrayed as 'beloved' or 'love interest' rather than projected them, too, as lovers. Love is supposed to be the equalizer of men and women but here, too, they are at the receiving end. This is what I call objectification of women subject. In a way, the representation of 'women' in Sanskrit plays looks similar to what the feminist scholars Propp and De Lauretis discuss as objectification of 'women', utilizing the actantial model of Geimas, which proposes a schema based on six functions (Sender, Subject, Object,

Helper, Opponent, Receiver) in any narrative, and which had a wider application in dramatic and theatrical contexts, as discussed by Elaine Aston [1988: 39]:

To give an example of the actantial model: in a traditional love narrative the hero (Subject), under the influence of love (Sender), seeks the heroine (Object), as a result of his own desire (Receiver), and is aided by friends (Helper/s), or opposed by his adversaries, often the heroine's father/guardian (Opponent/s).ⁱ

This is exactly how 'women' have been objectified in most of the narratives of Ancient Indian Drama/Sanskrit plays. In the absence of women playwrights, performers (?), producers, directors, organizers and viewers this was very much expected, as the women voice/presence was either hidden or totally absent. They are being represented as mere victims of the choices the protagonists made or their fates, whether it's plays like *Abhijnanasakuntal*, *Malvikaagnimitram*, *Vikramourvasiyam*, *Swapanvasavdatta*, *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarsika*, *Uttarramcharitam* or any other play.

Examples of Women Characters in Ancient Indian Drama

Let's take examples of woman characters from the play texts which are part of Ancient Indian Drama or Sanskrit Drama. I will try to establish what I have said earlier in this article through the examples of woman characters of the plays, which are supposed to be the representation of the actual woman folk of that time. Through, these characters we will not only get the hint towards what I was talking about but also the proof of the same. I will try here to establish my notion through

some of the important woman characters of Ancient Indian Drama, as taking each and every character and talking about them would be not feasible.

Let's take first the most prominent woman character *Sakuntala*, as example, portrayed in Ancient Indian Drama by none other than *Kalidasa*, one of the greatest poet and playwright of the period. *Sakuntala* became the archetype of woman figure through the play *Abhijnanasakuntal* in ancient India. She became the most sought after female protagonist after that and many poets later tried to re-create her look alike under different names and figures in later phases. *Sakuntala* of the play *Abhijnanasakuntal* is probably the ideal woman figure and wish of every male of Indian society. She is young (sweet sixteen), charming, alluring, loving, caring, and devoted. She is playful as a lover and dutiful as wife to her husband. She remains faithful towards her husband, even if she had gone through a lot of miseries from his own hands. What else a male can demand from his beloved? She possess all five qualities prescribed by *Chanakya Neeti* to be an ideal woman.

According to *Chanakya Neeti* there are five qualities prescribed by Chanakya, which makes a woman best among the lot. They are being compassionate and polite (Daya aur Vinamrta), following dharma (Dharm ka palan), habit of hoarding (Sanchay karne ki pravriti), sweet voice (Vani ki madhurata) and being six times more courageous than male (Purushon se chhah guna sahas). If we analyse the character of *Sakuntala* in the light of *Chanakya Neeti*, we will find that she quite fit in the frame developed by Chanakya in his *Chanakya Neeti*.

In the play once Dusyanta goes away from Ashrama after making merry with her, he didn't even worry to get back to her, neither has he remembered her when she approaches him with colleagues from Ashrama, as saint Kanya had sent her to the

King once he finds out that she has done *gandarva vivaha* and she is now pregnant. Though, in the narrative *Kalidasa* had rescued him from his deeds with the use of dramatic convention of ‘curse’ given by *Durvasa* rishi, but we all know that in the actual narrative of Mahabharata, nothing this sort happens. And even if this was due to the curse itself how *Sakuntala* could be knowing and being considerate about the same. With all humiliation she had felt, she had to leave the palace with the baby in her womb. She faced her agony without any complain. Does she look like a real woman? I think, absolutely not. She is the creation of man’s desire and that’s why she is the most desirable and sought after character of Indian mythology and society. This is what I call ‘construction’ of woman for consumption of the male ego and desire.

The same case can be seen in the character of *Vasavadatta* in the narrative of *Swapnavasavadatta* written by one of the oldest playwrights of Ancient Indian Drama named *Bhasa*. The narrative of Ujjain’s princess Vasavadatta’s *gandharva vivaha* with king Udayana, king of Kosal, has been told in the earlier play titled *Pratigyayougandhrayan* by Bhasa. In *Swapnavasavadatta* Bhasa comes up with the story of their falling apart as in the very first act of the play it has been established that *Vasavadatta* has become a victim of a great fire and thus *Udayana* has lost her as his kingdom, which has been snatched by his enemy. This has been planned by Udayana’s able minister *Yougandhrayan*, as he believes that in the presence of *Vasavadatta*, he will not act accordingly, as the time demands. And to win back his kingdom he has to be in action and marry the *Padmavati*, princess of Magadh, to gather and take support of the army of Magadha to win back his state. The play depicts the story of their *Viyoga* (separation) and ultimately they come together in the end when *Udayana* wins back his kingdom with the support of Magadha army. In this

text also not only the character of *Vasavadatta* but also of *Padmavati* are being used by the playwright as if they are here merely as wish fulfilling creatures of *Udayana*, not the real human beings, who have their own desires and thinking. And this is true for most of the other plays of Ancient Indian Drama. This is also very much evident through the concept of *Nayika Bheda* developed by *Bharata* in *Natysastra*.

The Concept of *Nayika Bheda*

If, we see, the categorization of women characters portrayed in Sanskrit plays or advised to portray in such light through some dramaturgical texts and other sources through the concept of *Nayika-Bheda*, we will come to know that even these categorization has been done keeping men at centre of the discourse. Be it the differentiation of *Nayikas* by *Bharata* in his famous dramaturgical text *Natyashastra* or by *Agnipurana*, women here are differentiated according to their relation with their men and their mental or emotional state. They are eight in numbers; *Vasaksajja Nayika*, *Virahotkanthita Nayika*, *Svadhinabhartruka Nayika*, *Kalahantarita Nayika*, *Khandita Nayika*, *Vipralabdha Nayika*, *Proshitabhartruka Nayika* and *Abhisarika Nayika*, as defined in sloka number 210-211 of chapter twenty four of *Natyasastra*.ⁱⁱ

Here, *Vasaksajja Nayika* is the one who is ready or dressed up for the union, *Virahotkanthita Nayika* is the one who is distressed by separation, *Svadhinabhartruka Nayika* is the one who is having her husband in subjection, *Kalahantarita Nayika* is the one who separated by quarrel, *Khandita Nayika* is the one who is enraged with her lover, *Vipralabdha Nayika* is the one who is deceived

by her lover, *Proshita Bhartruka Nayika* is the one who has a sojourning husband and *Abhisarika Nayika* is the one who is going to meet her lover. Thus, we see that all this classification is based on the 'women' relationship and emotional state with their 'men'. If, I argue on the basis of the characters like *Sakuntala*, *Malavika*, *Urvashi*, *Padmavati*, *Vasavadatta*, *Vasantsena*, *Tapti*, *Sita*, *Draupadi*, *Hidimba*, *Dharni* and other main characters introduced in different plays by various playwrights like *Kalidas*, *Bhas*, *Bhavbhuti* & others, these characters have either been woven around *Nayika-Bheda* or provided authenticity to those categorization.

Woman as part of Theatre Repertory

Though, it is believed that women were part of the performing troupes in ancient times and they used to play women characters represented in the Sanskrit plays but there is hardly any fact available regarding the same. Either the aestheticians, philosophers and critics of Indian dramaturgy are silent on the issue or they haven't found any practice. The practitioners are supposed to be degenerated and not suitable to live in civil society, as suggested by Indian politician cum philosopher *Kautilya* in his text *Arthashastra*.

There shall be no grounds or buildings intended for recreation [in the new settlements]. Actors, dancers, singers, musicians, professional story tellers, and minstrels shall not obstruct the work [of the people], because in villages which provide no shelter [to outsiders], the people will be {fully} involved in the work of fields. [Consequently] there will be an increase in the supply of labour, money, commodities, grains and liquid products. {2.1.33-35}.ⁱⁱⁱ

The deliberate marginalization of performer community, which is still obvious in the present society, was very much there in ancient times and this must be the reason behind the silencing of ‘women’ performers in the history. As, ‘women’ performers must have faced two layered marginalization, first as being performer and second being a women. Thus, we need to focus on the issue of marginalization of women performers as a whole and unearth the ‘hidden’ or ‘silenced’ voice of women and their reasons in particular as suggested by Elaine Aston in feminist method of theatre studies:

The ‘new direction’ in theatre history was exposing the history of male domination of the stage and recovering women’s performances which, like so much of women’s culture, had been ‘hidden’ and silenced by a body of conservative, male criticism.^{iv}

Woman as Performed Entity

There is hardly any doubt about it that any art practice in general or performance in particular has its roots in the immediate setting of the society. The society influence the art practices and performances in various ways which is not just limited to acquiring narratives and forms from them. In the same way art practices or performances also influence the society in long terms. In connection to that it is also interesting to note that whether the ‘women’ represented as ‘object’ in Sanskrit performances and dramatic texts had played any role in ‘objectification’ of ‘women’ in society. This is the central thrust of this research.

The theatre history and dramaturgy of Ancient Indian Drama and study of it shows that ‘woman’ has been constructed as other than ‘man’ and it has been represented

in various Sanskrit play texts. As feminist scholar De Lauretis mentions that historically woman has been represented as other than man and how feminist scholarship is trying to identify and analyze it:

Feminist scholarship in recent years has been centrally concerned with the theoretical discourses of representation articulated through the texts of a number of cultural fields: art, cinema, media, advertising, theatre, etc. In consequence, feminist analysis of representation has identified the oppressive discourse of engendered representation which constructs and positions 'woman' as 'the other-from-man'.^v

In the light of this new thinking when we try to analyse the same various questions arise about the woman folk and its representation in Ancient India and Ancient Indian Drama. Some of these are;

Whether the portrayal of women in Sanskrit drama subjective or objective? Whether the image of the 'objectified' women also reflected in 'subjective' women or just 'subjective' women got 'objectified' in the portrayal of the characters? Did the 'Performed Women' became the prototype of society women and sooner or later their characteristics have been adopted by them? Does the portrayal of women in plays and literature of Sanskrit texts are mere representation of women of the society or these performed women have constituted the women of the society in longer period. Have performed women played any role in developing the women kind in general society?

And surprisingly answers to all these questions are in affirmative. The Performed entity of 'woman' later get translated into real 'woman' as society has set the expectation from them in the similar fashion and because of the resonance of the

same was everywhere and the society was predominantly run by the dictums of the men, the woman kid of the society had no option but to follow the suit. And thus slowly the real woman got transformed into the performed entity, because the society had different expectations from them and they have no other option than accepting the same as they were devoid of the property rights and they can't even have proper education.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be argued safely that Ancient Indian Drama and its dramaturgical texts and their performances had played a vital role in construction of the women of our society. The role assigned to them and expectations from the women characters in a play was always to please the 'man' of the family or society. The portrayal of women in plays and literatures of Ancient Indian Drama and various Sanskrit texts are not mere representation of women of the society but these performed women have framed and constituted the women of the society in the longer period. Here, the performed entity of women overshadowed the women of the society and sooner or later they got transformed into performed entities.

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*Artistic Elements in Always Ultra and Soklin
Advertisements on Television*

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Abstract

This paper is on artistic elements in Always Ultra and Soklin advertisements on television. The study attempts to fill the lacuna, which exist on artistic elements which are used for commercial purpose advertising, which cannot be achieved without the artist. Hence, the importance of the artist was considered in relation to the kind of job he has been trained to do and how this imparts on advertising. The paper examined two television advert strands known as always Ultra and Soklin because of their lavishness of artistic elements in the advertisement. The paper observed the need to address the problems of ineffective persuasion in advertising, which being a means of marketing must have induce losses. The desire to check ineffective advert persuasion led to the discovery of the effectiveness of the artist and artistic elements as potential sources. The paper acknowledged artistic skills which have the capacity to utilize artistic elements with a view to effectively persuade potential customers to patronize artist and artistic elements

endorsed products and services. The findings revealed that artistic element remain the platform on which effective advertising of goods and services subsists that with a high yield returns for the persuasive appeal of the artist and artistic elements. It is on this platform that the findings of this paper revealed that artistic elements constitute persuasive appeal strength television advertising. It therefore recommends the use of artistic elements in the use of television advertising for effective persuasive appeal.

Introduction

Advertising is a marketing communication of information, usually planned and produced to be persuasive in nature about product, services or ideas by identified sponsors through any media. Advertising is the most essential in every sales promotion. It enhances everything that promotes the sales of a product not just to create a demand for a product but educational and business purpose.

According to C. E. Baker,

80% of all impressions are received through the eye. It has been discovered that people like motion pictures rather than words. Baker went further to explain that an average person grows familiar to this state of affairs that he is hardly aware of it. It has been noticed that most people think of communication as something that has to do with words. He further posits that picture communication functions on the subconscious level. It happens fast in such a way that we comprehend messages without much effort (34).

Although it cannot be ascertain the exact day, month or year, that advertising began it has been known to be part of human culture across he world, particularly in Nigeria what is classified as advertising existed before western modernity toot over African civilization which the people are more at home with.

According to Josef Bel-Molokwu:

Advertising is as old as man. The word comes from the Latin word ‘advertere’ meaning to draw attention to. He further posits that in Nigeria, the earliest recorded activities that could be described as advertising in its crude form include the town criers, early morning gong signals that alerted the village dwellers of an impending announcement” (9).

The traditional African medium performed the universal communication function of disseminating information about available goods, services and ideas to the people. The first formal media advertisement ever carried in Nigeria was in IWE IROHIN established by Reverend Henry Townsend and was in form of information on shipping movement and cargo. It was classified category advert. From then on, other sorts of advertisements began to appear in the newspaper, while growth of printing saw emergence of well printed black and white posters which led to the birth or organized outdoor advertising we know today.

With the oil boom of early 1970s, there was uproar in business activities and turn over. This led to the need for more advertisements by some companies and the formation of more advertising agencies. Such agencies include Rosabel, Goldmark, PAL, Insight communication and others. Today in Nigeria advertising is now a big

business. There are more than two hundred agencies register with the Association of Adverting Agencies in Nigeria (AAAN) and about two hundred small agencies not registered with AAAN. Procter and Gamble the producer of *Always Ultra* is one of such companies among others who budget as much as 30% of its budget on advertising a year while Soklin is still among the leading detergents in Nigeria due to their advertising strategies.

Artistic elements in the adverts of *Always Ultra* and *Soklin*, as this study stands to examine refers the art and act of the advert of the two products, such as the story, setting, songs, characterization, costume, metaphorical language, the shots, quality of pictures and photography, the dramatics, etc, that are deployed in the adverts strategy to persuade potential customers. Advertising strategy is a campaign developed by a business to encourage potential customers to purchase a product or patronize a service. Advertising strategy is focused on a target audience that is the potential buyer of the product out of the population. Advertising strategies include factors such as geographic location, perceived demographics of the audience, price points, and special offers. It also includes the type of advertising media, such as billboards, websites or television that will be used to present the product.

Historical Background of Soklin and Always Ultra

Soklin and Always Ultra have engaged advertising in the promotion of their products. Soklin is a product of Eko Supreme Resources, Agbara, Ogun State. The desire for hygiene, cleanliness and stain remover endeared Soklin to its customers which the producer started in 1996 as a flagship brand. As common with most products and services, Soklin must cross the hurdle of competition because there are so many competitors in the market. Therefore in attempt to overcome its

competitors in the markets it engaged in the promotion of its products in the market through the television so as to bring its product to the knowledge of a larger market target. This is not enough as the advert requires a competitive appeal that can aid customers' decision to purchase no other soup than Soklin. Getting the right appeal takes a good advert with very good artistic elements.

Procter and Gamble is an American multinational consumer goods company with headquarters in Cincinnati. It commenced operation in Nigeria in 1992 and since then it has grown and expanded tremendously, contributing to the development of the Nigerian economy. They started local production of Always Sanitary pads in the year 1993, and expanded into producing pampers, diapers and Vicks throat drops in 1994. In 2004 they commissioned an ultra-modern unique Always Sanitary Pad line in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Always Ultra first began in attempt to meet the sanitary need of young women in January 1983. At that time the pads were introduced: Maxi pads, Mini pads and Pant Liners. The product and marketing strategy targets were women from ages 12-49. As at that time awareness of the product was low and few consumers who tried it liked it, except for the size the of the pad incompatibility due to variety of human body which led to the introduction of more types. In 1984 always had gone into national distribution in four kinds: max pads, mini pads, thin mini pads and panty liners. The national distribution position of always could not have been sustained without adequate advertising. This was what prompted adverts with artistic elements that created the unforgettable appeal in the advert of always for effective competition and ideal capture of the right market size.

Literature Review

Bearing in mind that an artist provides entertainment, information and education services to the audience, the audience becomes emotionally attached to the artist for objectivity, satisfaction and The artist is a very important creative professional, whose creativity is required to entertain, inform and educate depending on the area of practice of the artist. The artist has been defined in various ways by different scholars. According to Osedebamen Oamen “an artist is anyone who creates, performs, or provides any form of artistic goods or service that has value, objective and satisfy human needs within the visual and audio visual creative industries”. (2) However, by United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO);

‘Artist’ is taken to mean any person who creates or gives creative expression to, or re-creates works of art, who considers his artistic creation to be an essential part of his life, who contributes in this way to the development of art and culture and who is or asks to be recognized as an artist, whether or not he is bound by any relations of employment or association. (2)

This study having examined the definition of artist it implies that anybody could be an artist. Within the contest of this study, the theatre artist is particularly concerned. Bearing in mind that the theatre or performance artist provides entertainment, information and education services to the audience, hence the audience becomes emotionally attached to the artist for entertainment, information and education with value depiction in the cause of performance. The artist to a large extent constitutes the making of an advert because he has the artistic skill with which he interprets dramatic plot which the artist could deploy to interpret advertisement plot. Without the artist the commercial message the advert intends to

convey may not be commercially inducing enough to bait potential customer for the product so advertised. This is the meeting point of the artist and advertising. The emotional dependence of the audience on the artist is the medium through which the commercial message goes through to the audience. Hence the audience is often convinced to accept the commercial message passed through the artist to them through advertising of product and service which are objectively presented by the artist for consumers' demand and consumption. However, the intent of this study is to examine the theatre artist, in particularly artistic elements that enable the artist to function as a factor in advertising.

Theoretical Framework

The importance of the artist and artistic elements are not new to advertising, they have been from the inception of advertising and in recent time they are gaining more relevance. This relevance has been acknowledged by scholars in the field of mass communication, media arts, cultural management and theatre arts, etc. It is on this ground that Delecia Forbes defines advertising thus;

Advertising: The activity of attracting public attention to a product or business, by paid announcements in the print, broadcast or electronic media, or on transport, infrastructure and billboards. The production of advertising requires artistic knowledge and skill in the form of film, music, writing, drawing and graphic design. (7)

Forbe's definition acknowledged that advertising requires artistic knowledge and skill in the form of film, music, writing, drawing and graphic design. However, it omitted drama and theatre arts and their relevant elements which supports

advertising. It is at this critical junction that Ekeanyanwu, Nnamdi Tobeckukwu, Igwe Chigemezu, Angela Osarieme Igbinoba opined that;

As artful imitations of life, advertising messages typically use one or a blend of three literary forms: autobiography, narrative, or drama. In autobiographical messages, “I” tell a story about myself to “you”, the imaginary audience eavesdropping on my private personal experience. Other ads use narrative messages in which a third-person persona tells a story about others to an imagined audience. Finally, in the drama message, the characters act out events directly in front of an imagined empathetic audience. The drama form presents a series of events whose information and sequencing combine to imply a message and require the viewer to connect the sequences, thereby experiencing the message rather than having been told. (87)

Ekeanyan et al’s view is a departure from the view of Forbes, this is because they acknowledged the role of drama and its elements in advertising. The views of Ekeanyan et al filled the vacuum created by Forbes in the area of the importance of drama in advertising, hence the views of both authors have build the theoretical framework which this study shall thrive upon to achieve its objective.

Statement of the Problem

One of the major challenges faced in advertising is ineffective persuasion of customer to patronize the goods and services so advertised. Therefore, the study discussed how artistic elements help persuade potential customers. It will help explain how it appealed to the customer to make them buy the product. Another

major problem that is been encountered in advertising is the cost of advert. In respective of the quality of an advert and the quality of the artistic elements imputed into it the high cost of projecting the advert through the chosen television station in airing the commercial often chase advertisers out of the market. They tend to look for other means such as billboard and website to advertise their product. Those who sometimes go for short television commercials has little or no impact on a product because the audience hardly gets the message that is being passed across in spite of the quality of artistic elements. It leaves the viewer with little or nothing to examine or consider. Commercials that last for only 30seconds or less pass no messages across. The high cost of commercials has constrained advertisers to go for a cheaper one to save money since a 15 seconds spots now sells for the price of a 30 seconds spot.

Selectivity is another issue encountered in advertising in the sense that some products are advertised to the wrong market. An advertiser who wants to advertise their products to a specific target audience finds the coverage of television often extended beyond their market, reducing its cost effectiveness. Clutter is another problem faced in advertising. When too much advert is infuse into one commercial break the audience may not notice the product .During commercial, breaks multiple adverts and non-programming materials are seen during a commercial break, one of which is the advertiser's message that may have trouble being noticed no matter the quality of artistic elements used. Getting consumers to pay attention to commercials is a big challenge and the advent of television remote control has made it even worse which has led to the problem of zapping, which means changing channels to avoid commercial. All these problems undermined the

impact of artistic elements influencing potential consumers' or customers' preference and as a result tend to under-employ these elements in their advert.

Artist and Creative Skills

The artist is a person who is gifted, trained or has a combination of both gift and training in the discharge of his artistic duties. Artistic skills are the gifted or acquired skills of the artist which enables him to do his job. These are acting, singing, dancing and any other innate or imputed ability that enables him to do his artistic job. The areas where the artist is expected to exhibit his or her skills could be either written or unwritten, but there must be an idea or a storyline on which the artist must exhibit his or her skills. Belch, George E. and Michael A. Belch described artist skills thus:

The educational background of creative personnel is often in non-business areas such as art, literature, music, humanities, or journalism, so their interests and perspectives tend to differ from those of managers with a business education or background. Creative people tend to become abstract and less structure, organized, or conventional in their approach to a problem, relying on intuition more than logic (247).

The above mentioned authors has given a good background of artist skills, in addition to other skills inherent or learned in the artist which are products of the arts for those who are educated, and that they are abstract and less structured relying on intuition more than logic. Intuition enables the artist to be creative in ways that can create appeal for product and services. An artist can be mono or

multi talented, these the artist could bring into his or her creative appeal construct in advertising depending on the type of appeal to be initiated.

Artistic Elements and Advertising

The identification of artistic element is very important because they form the building blocks on which an artist does his job even as it relates to advertising. These elements must be present to enable an artist do his or her job. These elements are seemingly laid down and had constituted a process. For instance, there must be a storyline which the artist must interpret. The theatre artist is central to the use of artistic elements in achieving advertising objectives. These artistic elements are the plot, setting, songs and characterization, costume, metaphorical language, the shots, quality of pictures and photography and dramatic actions. These artistic elements are used to draw the attention of the potential consumer to the advert. Therefore the identification of these elements is the beginning of a successful advert.

Artistic elements constitute two aspects in advertising. These are the performance aspect which include drama, dance, music and all their elements and the visual aspect which include drawings, graphics, carving, photography and all their elements, which are often referred to as fine arts Both performance and fine arts are visual, which means they could be seen or are visible. However, this study shall deal more on performance elements and include any other aspect of art when the need arises. Art is the base on which advertising thrives. In fact art, “advertising has been acknowledged as an art” (Borghini, Stefania. Luca Massimiliano Visconti, Laurel Anderson, and John F. Sherry, Jr. (1) As advertising is an art,

artistic elements are therefore its major baits with which it realize its objectives of advert appeal drawing influence from Borghini et al's assertion that:

In the same way art influences and gives meaning to our life, advertising shapes contemporary consumer culture... As art mirrors the shared truths, ideals, and metaphors of a given society, advertising reflects our popular culture. As art embodies universal fantasies, feelings, and thoughts, advertising expresses the rational and emotional experiences and moods of consumers (1).

The above assertion has demonstrated that advertising is an art which makes use of artistic elements and by so doing it captures the feelings and thoughts of the consumer with a view to influence his or her power of patronage to favour the product or service so advertised. Artistic elements are the storyline, setting, songs, characterization, costume, metaphorical language, the shots, quality of pictures and photography, and any other form of dramatics used in the advert. Artistic elements have been used in advertising. According to Patrick, Vanessa M. and Henrik Hagtvædt art in modern advertising dates back to 1820 and 1887 (9). They also revealed that:

Advertising Performance Studies which find that 98% of the top scoring ads in advertising effectiveness contain some ... element, this visual element occupies between 25% and 63% of the layout space. Of the top-scoring ads in this study, 65% had a visual that occupied between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the advertisement. (5)

Therefore, artistic element in advertising is not a recent phenomenon in advertising, it has been and from the above finding it has its usefulness in top scoring advertisements up to 98%, this indicates its effectiveness.

Aesthetical Role of Artistic Elements in Advertising

Advertising is a branch of marketing, often referred to as marketing communication. It has several uses to marketing in deferent forms. It has been defined by several scholars and researchers in different ways. The definition that is most useful to this work is by Marina M, Shilovskaya; Advertising in business can be defined as a form of marketing communication used to encourage, persuade, or manipulate an audience (viewers, readers or listeners; sometimes a specific group) to take or continue to take some action (8). The action the viewer, reader or listener is expected to take is the action someone in the advert, referred to as artist, who is the interpreter of the message has taken. That was why Baker noted that: “picture communication functions on the subconscious level. It happens fast in such a way that we comprehend messages without much effort”(34). Thereafter, before the viewer, listener or reader knew it he or she would begin to comprehend the message and behave the way he or she has been instructed by the advert to do, which is an indication that he or she got the message passed to him or her. Advertising is an entity of the four components of product promotion. It is so important because it covers a wider range of the populace with specific information for the targeted audience.

The major role of artistic elements in advertising is to enhance emotional campaign. Interesting storyline form the base of appeal provoking advertising. Borghini, Stefania. Luca Massimiliano Visconti, Laurel Anderson, and John F. Sherry, Jr opined that “Here we observe a parallel with commercial advertising practice, as far as beauty and pleasant aesthetic impact of communication is concerned” (4). In this regard, artistic elements will be meaningless if it does not

enable adverts to achieve the purpose for which they were applied. For instance, good storylines are often created and interpreted by artists. The right language, music, dance, sound, scene must be used to ensure effective appeal for the product or service is achieved. Therefore, the aesthetical role of any artistic element is to arrest the attention of the would be customer, sustain him or her to get the message and make it retentive in him or her with a view to find value in the product or service so advertised and purchase it. The basic role of aesthetic elements is to strengthen appeal in advertisement so as to achieve its objectives.

Artistic Elements in Always Ultra and Soklin Adverts

The choice of Always Ultra and Soklin arose from the fact that they are both sanitary products. While *Always Ultra* is restricted to a particular sex, Soklin is used by everybody. Also they are products of foreign companies that have come to compete with local, regional and cultural products. Hence, their adverts are aggressive so as to compete effectively. The peculiarity of their adverts in pursuant of their objectives which make use of artistic elements encouraged the choice of these products for this research.

Soklin

Soklin is a powder detergent used for washing. It is a product of Eko Supreme Resources Agbara Ogun State. It is jointly owned by a Nigerian and Asian investors and was introduced into the market in 1995. The manufacturers spotted a gap in the market since prior to this time, those similar existing products like Omo and other detergents did not come in economy packs and were beyond the reach of a high percentage of the population of the low income earners in Nigeria.



Soklin Products

In attempt to bridge this affordability gap, they introduced sachets of 15 grams and 30 grams to cater for the low income earners which caused them to take over much of the competitors' market shares who did not consider the low income earner segment of the Nigerian market. According to Niyi Adekanye:

At the end of 2008, So klin has different categories which range from 13 to 35kg segments but still undisputedly remain the first in the sachet (15 to 30 grams) segment, which accounts for 50% of the powder detergent business in Nigeria. Soklin a low priced detergent brand over the past six years has gained a significant market share in the Nigerian market (28).

Over the past two years, Soklin has lunched aggressive market campaigns to further grow its market share. Its new television commercial takes the same direction as most other detergent adverts. The advert is an affirmative of the efficacy of the brand product that it cleans better than other detergents.

Always Ultra

Always Ultra is a product of Procter and Gamble Company (P&G), it is an American multinational Consumer Goods Company headquartered in Cincinnati. The company commenced production in Nigeria in 1992 and since then it has grown and expanded its market size tremendously. Thereby, contributing to the development of the Nigerian economy through provision of jobs and enhancing personal hygiene. The company started the production of Always Sanitary pads in 1993 and in 2004 they commissioned an ultra-modern unique Always Sanitary Pad production line in Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria.



Always Products

The marketability test of *Always Ultra* began in January 1983. At that time 3 pads had been introduced: Maxi pads, Mini pads and Pant Liners. Awareness of the product was low and consumers who tried it liked it, except for the size of the pad which led to the introduction of more types. By 1984, always was in national distribution, as at that time the types were of four kinds: max pads, mini pads, thin mini pads and pant liners. The targets were women from ages 12-49. Furthermore, awareness among pad using women was 82% compared to test market at 89%.

Television advertising started 7th of February 1984 and it has been consistent on informing its target market that the product is the most appropriate for their needs.



Always Products

Soklin and Always Ultra products have evolved over time in terms of product quality, packaging, presentation, and are still evolving with the aim to meet customers' needs. The major channel of presenting the various stages of this evolution and the importance to the user of these products to their prospective buyers is through the television. This is what makes television advertisement of

these products important in this regard as a choice of presentation and of study at this time

Always Ultra and Soklin Advertisement in Television

The advert of Always Ultra and Soklin on television is deliberate. The choice of television is because it has the right ability to do what the potential customers require to change their minds for patronage either because of its sound or image. Television is an electrical device with the ability to receive sound and images through electronic signal and project them for the viewing and listening of a person. According to Olayinka, Peter Awofadeju, Taiwo, Tobiloba Florence, Idowu, Akinrosaye Abiodun, Ewola, O. Philip, Aderemu, Adeagbo S.

Television advert offers the greatest possibility for creative advertising. With a camera, you can take your audience anywhere and show them almost anything.

Television reaches very large audiences – usually much larger than the audience your local newspaper reaches, and it does so during a short period of time.

It has the ability to convey your message with sight, sound and motion (11).

The market quest for Always Ultra and Soklin is to the largest audience possible in Nigeria within a very short period of time. This is one of the reasons why television was chosen by the advertiser of these products. Television has the largest audience of all the media, this is because it has the power of sight, sound and motion and these constitute the foundation for the artist and artistic elements, particularly for the creation of appeal. Stanley J. Baran submits that “Television commercials, by virtue of the fact that consumers could see and hear the product in

action, were different from the advertising of all other media” (287). This is the extent of the importance of the television in advertising. To an extent, television on its own, apart from enhancing the creativity of advertising it has also been viewed by Richard Campbell that “Given the public’s increasing sophistication regarding visual culture, companies have to work especially hard to get our attention. The ads industry’s annual ... awards recognize the best television commercials as form of contemporary art”(385). Though television is an electrical device, its contribution to the projection of its creative materials in advertising entangled it as a contemporary art. This means that the persuasive ability of television advertising is value aided by television itself. Televisions as a means of advertising influences it to enable it achieve its objective.

Artistic Element Function in Soklin and Always Ultra Advertisement

The opening of Soklin advert ushered in a woman with dark native costumes with red scarf around her neck. She came in with hand basket full of Soklin, knocks at the door and a man wearing coloured native opens the door and took the basket of Soklin from her and led her into the sitting room to meet his wife who was seated. As she came in they exchanged pleasantries and she took the baby wrapped with a sparkling piece of cloth from the mother and listed the baby up. The basket of the Soklin is emptied with the women’s eyes deeply into it the basket as Soklin in different packs are seen. As the woman sits with the baby her glaring eyes are closed, indicating discovery.



Soklin Product Advertisement

A flash back of thirteen years ago was revealed in a passage where a young girl was bringing out dirty clothes in a basket. Another lady with black and sparkling white shirt meets her as girl looks up another lady showed her a pack of Soklin in an aside manner and the girl stretched her hand requesting for the Soklin and the woman brings it closer and showed it to her face. Thereafter, the impact of Soklin was demonstrated in a bowl amidst three while others were empty. The bubble sport of Soklin foam was displayed. The spread out of Soklin washed dresses and the ironing was seen by a woman with black skirt and striped shirt and a young girl with sparkling white sleeveless short. The girl threw up the washed cloth as she meets the women face to face with a smile as the girl had a row of Soklin around her neck. She moves with the folded clothes, displayed her sparkling white dress as the actors come together as a family. It ended with “Soklin is now a family use so little, gain so much” with stark washed clothes and packs of Soklin and available grams mentioned. The above plot was accompanied by this music:

Life itself is so beautiful

Though surviving is a daily struggle

But in our hand lie the answer

That washed away the stains we bear

Soklin Soklin

Discover the power it gives

In fabric of life it lives

Soklin Soklin

We keep our family in touch

Soklin Soklin

So little will always give you so much 2x

The advertisement lasted for about forty five seconds.

The advertisement of Always ultra had a class room setting. The teacher wore brown long sleeve shirt folded to the wrist, stood akimbo while the students who are all girls wore sky-blue short sleeve shirts with neck tie on deep blue skirts. As the teacher enters the class, one of the students among nine others got up and the teacher asked “where u going” and the student replied “check check on the bus check, check” “I check, check, check” as she continues her fellow students stood up and begin to turn with hands raised up in choreographic movement. “In class, I check” as they turn to rest their ass and hands on their tables. Every hour, I check” They checked their back and go below. As they do “I check” they rose and held their skirt and check their back. As they rose the teacher came with a pack of Always Ultra on the right hand and pointed one finger on left hand at it with “check that Always Ultra”. Thereafter, the teacher poured ink on one Always Ultra placed on white platform on the table with “pour it in the blue zone.” The teacher fastened one piece of Always Ultra on a white board that is big note like and closes it, after which it was opened to demonstrate that Always Ultra does not stain. The

students are back to their seats with arms folded to the chest and rested on the table as they look agape at the teacher. “Up to 8 hours” As the teacher opens the big note “no stain no check” as the teacher opens the big note and showed the students. The class scene closes as the students move to the veranda at upstairs throwing white ribbon, thereafter, they move down to dance. “Eight, eight” as they continue dancing. As they continue their well choreographed dance “no check, no check, eight hours” At the end they all had a pack of Always Ultra on their right hands with the left on their waist as the dance ends. This advertisement lasted for thirty minutes as scheduled.



Female Artists demonstrating artistic element through advertisement of always ultra

The function of artistic element started with the plot which is the story that determines how other artistic element shall be used to deliver the message of the two adverts, which were interpreted by the characters who were hired artists for this job, that every other thing is added so as to achieve objective. The scene which is also another artistic element enables the plot to be properly situated so as to give it a stint of reality. Music, a prominent artistic element played a major role in the adverts to call attention of the prospective customer as well as sustain it. This is accompanied with dance another vital artistic element which is also used to call and sustain attention, and most importantly to entertain. Movement was also an important artistic element that dominates the two advertisements. Dramatic language was used so as to sustain the potential customer's attention. A good view of the advertisement indicated effective use of scenes. This is an artistic style of enhancing messaging effect in a plot. The advertised products were used as props which could be said to be artistic element of a sort. However, other hand and fixed props were used. The use of language and paralanguage in the adverts indicated the use of another artistic element that is of immense importance. While the language was English, which communicated marketing as well as beacon on the potential customer for patronage, paralanguage language which constitutes body movement and gestures sustains the viewing pleasure of the customer so as to enable him or her to get the message. In the two adverts, costumes were used as artistic elements to help the actors and actresses perform their roles so as to realize the essence of the advert.

Obviously, artistic elements functions in advertising, particularly Always Ultra and Soklin helped in the baiting of the customers attention, sustenance and feeding him or her with the message intended for patronage. The theme of the two adverts,

which constitutes artistic element, is marketing or selling, which implies “come and buy.” The functionality of artistic elements tallies with David A. Aaker’s views which states:

Artwork is equally if not more important than writing copy, particularly where the goals of the advertising are attention getting or building awareness. As in writing copy pictorials should be developed that are tied into the self-interest and understanding of the audience. “tell the story” at a glance, are relevant to the product and copy theme and accurate and plausible in the context of the selling message (377).

In respect of the magnitude and the eloquence of the message an advert has its success is dependent on artistic elements if the audience must fully understand the message in its selling context. It is the application of the artistic elements that enables the advertiser to tell a story that sells. Without artistic elements the advertiser may not be able to tell a story that will create awareness or build attention in a manner that will attract potential buyers. The enabling of artistic elements in enhancing advertising to achieve its objective lies in its aesthetics.

Aesthetic Value of Artistic Elements in Always Ultra and Soklin Advertisement

There is no doubt that artistic elements have aesthetic value, otherwise it would not have enabled advertising to achieve its objectives. Aesthetics in this context of advertising has been viewed by Sandra Virginia Contreras Romero as “a context that could play a role in the way images are decided on during the production of a new advertising campaign” It could also be thought of as an attractor of thoughts in aesthetic decision-making (123). Romero quoting Schmitt and Simonson sees “aesthetic as the new marketing paradigm” that “combines notions of aesthetics with the commercial imperatives of marketing (112).” She further states that

“corporate expressions are manifested through two major concepts of aesthetics: Style and themes” (112). It is obvious that the way images are decided on in advertising campaign constitutes aesthetics. This has to do with what should be seen and what should not be seen. More so, how should what should be seen been arranged in a manner that it will give the right message required for effective advertising. The images often seen in advertising are human and non-human images. The two must be viewed differently and collectively with the aim to ascertain what they stand for individually and what they can collectively achieve in an advertising campaign with a view to its ability to attract potential customers. In other words, idea, plot, music, dance, character, scene, costume, props and every other thing that constitutes artistic element must work together so as to achieve the objective of aesthetic value in new marketing paradigm that combines aesthetics with the imperative of marketing. In essence, when people see and hear like it is in Always ultra and Soklin advert on television, what will be the resultant effect in their thinking. Will the advert campaign motivate them to buy the product advertised?

The aesthetic elements value in Always Ultra and Soklin stands the advertisements out in the effective combination of human and non-human images. The plots, characters, costumes, dances, music, props, scene, language and all others elements are aesthetically classified into theme and style which constitute the aesthetic value. The theme of Always Ultra indicates personal sanitary assurance in a particular sex and age group. The advertiser deployed aesthetic dance music and uniform costume, change of scenes as a style that will project this sanitary assurance within the chosen group. The theme and style used in this advert presents a departure from the era of “check, check” to the era of safety and

assurance. This is the motivation which comes from the effect of artistic elements aesthetic value. This assurance is the objective which has been achieved and it exactly what the potential customer expects to hear and see and eventually pay for. The theme and style of Soklin detergent also deployed artistic element aesthetic to achieve its objectives. The theme dwells on the ability of little of the detergent to do more and in family setting and on the economic sizes that are available. The theme ensure availability of different sizes and the ability of little application of the detergent to do so much washing of clothes for different ages within the family group with any negative effect of the detergent on the soap. It also indicates a departure from the days of in ability afford detergent for washing to affordability of detergents, which has moved families from the day of heaped dirty clothing to clean stacked washed cloths. The human and non-human elements were well harmonized in the advert so as to achieve the objective of the advert which is the baiting of potential customers to patronize the product. From the above discussion and analysis, what Mohammad Ferdous Khan Shawon said that “artistic and aesthetic elements play a vital role to popularize the advertising, as well as to promote the service or goods”. (1410) came to bear.

Findings

Always Ultra and Soklin are two adverts that have used artistic elements to the height of advantage in other to achieve the set objective in their adverts. Therefore the findings of this research revealed that:

- (a) Always Ultra and Soklin have effectively used artistic elements in the adverts of their products. This implies those artistic elements are braces that strengthen advertising to realize essence.

- (b) It also reveals that artistic elements are very important in advertising because it helps to enhance the process through which the marketing message passes through to the customer with a view to bait his interest and induce it for patronage of the products.
- (c) It further reveals that artistic elements are also aesthetical, which means it adds its own beauty in form of creative, imaginative and inventive inducement to the advert to enable it achieve its objective.
- (d) It goes further to deepen the belief that advertising is art as earlier argued because artistic element has made it to be so. Hence, the survival of advertising is dependent on arts and its elements.
- (e) It also revealed that the success of artistic elements in advertising is dependent on its application and unity. This means that the elements must be applied in manner that it will unite with other elements to achieve its purpose.
- (f) The study found that there are two forms of artistic element: they are human and material. The human artistic elements enable the non-human artistic elements to achieve the objective of the advertisement of the product or services.
- (g) It was also revealed that artistic elements in advertising are universally important and used because of the role they play in advertising.
- (h) It was also noted that artistic elements synergized better in television advertising to achieve its objectives.

Recommendations

This study has examined artistic elements in Always Ultra and Soklin adverts and arrived at the following recommendations:

- (a) Hence, artistic elements are important in the persuasive message of advertising, they should be fully utilized in advertising, particularly television advertising.
- (b) Those artistic elements are better used in television where the elements synergized better because of its audio-visual capabilities.
- (c) That the two forms of artistic elements are very important if the persuasive objective of the advert must be achieved.
- (d) That the artistic elements often utilized in advertising are basically of the performance arts, hence research along this area should be encourage.
- (e) Because artistic elements aesthetic strengthens television advertising it should be utilized to its fullest so as to gain the best of advantage.
- (f) The artistic elements in advertising advances the persuasion for patronage, knowledge of the product and its advantage, product economy and advantages and the reality of its existence.

Conclusion

This project concluded that artistic elements in advertising, particularly television encourage the desired persuasiveness that it is expected to generate so as to bait the potential customer. This aligns with the view of Aaker that “Artwork is equally if not more important than writing copy, particularly where the goals of the advertising are attention getting or building awareness” (377). Artwork which included artistic elements is particularly important in advertising for potential

customer attention getting and awareness creation. That means, artworks enable advertising to fulfill its purpose. Kofoworaola, Ariyo Eniola quoting Fill opined that “Due to the fact that a television commercial combines sight, sound, and motion, they are more dramatic than any other form of advertising and they lend excitement and appeal to ordinary products” (23). What makes television commercial an appeal lender to ordinary products is the combination of artistic elements which also constitute dramatic forms on drama stage. This is another indicator of the importance of arts and artistic elements which are its components to advertising. Besides, Aliahabad is of the view that “the acceptance of a message is a function of the extent to which the source is perceived as being trustworthy, expert, authoritative” (34). The excitement that is generated through dramatic and artistic elements for an ordinary product does not only generate excitement as indicated but trustworthiness, expert and authoritative value for the product. This according to Belch and Belch “... are designed to appeal to the rational, logical of the consumer’s decision-making process; others appeal to feelings in an attempt to evoke some emotional reaction. Many believed that effective advertising combines the practical reasons for purchasing a product with emotional value” (199).

It is obvious that artistic elements contribute outstandingly to the success of advertising appeal through dramatic process which influences rational or logical as well combines practical reasoning which redirect the decision making by a potential customer and impact on his emotional value for the advertised product purchase. This is an indication of the importance of artistic elements in advertising.

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Television as a Carrier of Culture and its Stimulus on Viewers' Behavior: A Study on Kannada Channels during Festival Seasons

Rajeshwari R.

Abstract

Today media is disseminating lot of information to the vast number of receivers. While achieving this task media not only propagates, but it generates, constructs or destroys some notion. Like any other mass media Television has cultural effect on its viewers. Festivals are part of Indian's life. Here every festival associated with cultural emotions. As part of its business media is taking advantage of these emotions. Television is also in front line in this mission. All television shows correlate the celebration during festivals. In this background the present study investigates how Kannada television shows are representing the festivities and its impact on its viewers. This is a quantitative study based on survey with questionnaire. Some qualitative data also gathered through observation and content analysis. The study found the festival celebrations on the television channels had considerable impact on the viewers at various levels. The study identified the positive and negative impact of the television programs on the culture.

Keywords: television impact, belief system, religious practices, behavioral change.

Introduction

Television is an integral part of every Indian's life today. It is said that television reflects our society. That means the events which are happening in the society will replicate in television programmes. Arrival of satellite channels have provided bundle of opportunities to viewers, thus viewers are witnessing variety of content. The emerging globalized, competitive television industry in India with the expanding audience, regional television channels are competing to grab the audience with whatever strategy possible; emotional appeals, mythical appeal, even fear psychosis. The channels be it national or regional are coming up with new ideas and program formats to reach the audience to serve their expectation and create new expectations. In this process television started utilizing anything and everything which is part of cultural and geographical specialties.

Festivals and celebrations are part of India culture irrespective of geographical differences, caste, religion and other demographical variations. As media is popularly known as mirror of the society the media is reflecting the very minute activities in the society and manufacturing the consent to deliver the content as media wishes. In this process popular culture is established and fostered. All television shows correlate the celebration during festivals.

Literature Review

The study conducted in Karnataka on Cultural Impact of Television on Urban Youth found that television has an impact on cultural norms of the youth. The

youth are influenced by fashion of Television characters and various cultural events like Valentine's Day, Mother's day, Akshya Tritiya etc. Youth in urban Karnataka are influenced by the life style shown in Television programmes, and celebrating certain festivals such as Holi (which is not a native festival). Urban youth in Karnataka are increasingly aware of western, Hindi and other language music because of Television (Devadas M. B & B K Ravi, 2013).

TV channels, over the years, have been a reflection of the type of content the audiences can relate to. From the popular Saas-bahu on Hindi general entertainment channels (GECs) to your cartoon characters, all have celebrated festivals in tandem with Indian audiences.

Watching Indian programmes on cable access channels was another way for Asian Indians to feel connected to India and find out about the news in their community. Asian Indians did not just try to stay connected to India through media; they also tried to maintain their culture through Indian food, clothing, religious festivals and more. As a result, their "Indianness" stayed with them, creating a diasporic community. Their Indian media helped to sustain their diasporic community (Mooney & Evans, 2007).

Ever since bollywood films became virtual wedding videos, the observance of Karva Chauth has been glamorized so much, that women of all communities and regions in India have taken fancy to it and celebrate it in a filmi manner, dressed in the typical Punjabi red and gold chandris worn over bridal ghagra cholis or sarees. In more recent times, popular TV serials like Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi, Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki and Kasautii Zindagi Kay have also popularized Karva Chauth celebrations (Munshi, 2010).

Television reflects cultural values, and it also influences culture. One example of this is the polarization of cable television news, which is no longer centrist but caters to individual political tastes. Critics argue that this influences cable news viewers' opinions and makes them less open to opposing political viewpoints. Entertainment programs also play an influential role within society. By portraying controversial relationships such as single parents or gay couples as acceptable, television shows have the power to shape viewers' attitudes. In recent years, broadcasters have created the concept of the instant celebrity through the genre of reality television. Contestants on reality television shows now permeate every aspect of culture and the media, from the music charts to popular magazines and newspapers (Jack Lule, 2012).

As programming head of Zee TV pointed out "Showcasing the various styles in which Holi is celebrated across India, we'll have beautiful acts that represent the country's vibrant cultural canvas. We will also captivate audiences with various romantic acts of their favorite onscreen couples" (Namit Sharma, 2015).

Theoretical perspective

The "hypodermic needle theory" implied mass media had a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audiences. The theory suggests that the mass media could influence a very large group of people directly and uniformly. The theory suggests that audience is powerless to resist the impact of the message. There is no escape from the effect of the message. The media shape public opinion and persuade the masses toward nearly any point of view desired by the author of that particular text (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

Media dependency theory states that the more dependent an individual is on the media for having his or her needs fulfilled, the more important the media will be to that person. As theoreticians mentioned, "greater the media dependency in connection with a particular message, the greater the likelihood that the message will alter audience cognitions, feelings, and behaviors" (Ball-Rokeach, & DeFleur, 1976).

Cultivation theorists argue that television has long-term effects which are small, gradual, indirect but cumulative and significant. Gerbner defines cultivation as the creation and maintenance of stable images about life and society (and driven by everyday means of communication) (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

Scope of the study

The study would contribute to the deeper understanding of media's cultural impact. Further it would guide the media professionals in preparing program contents and format. It would also benefit the social scientists and media educators to track the development of media roles and responsibilities.

Objectives

Television has been reflecting the cultural values from its inception in India. It is been catalyst in bringing many socio economic issues awareness among viewers. Sometimes television jogs the memory of the people about their customs and traditions. In this background the present study investigates how Kannada television channels are giving information about the festivals and in turn how that message is perceived by the viewers. The specific objectives of the study include:

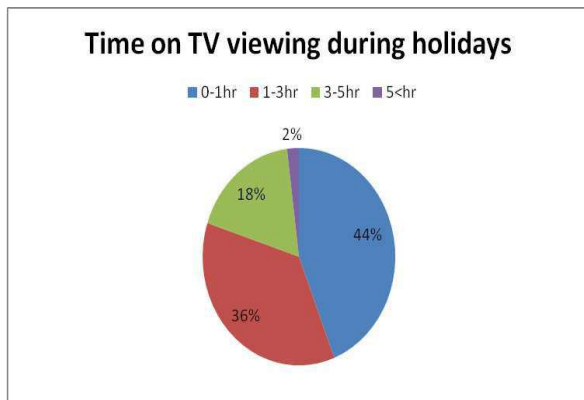
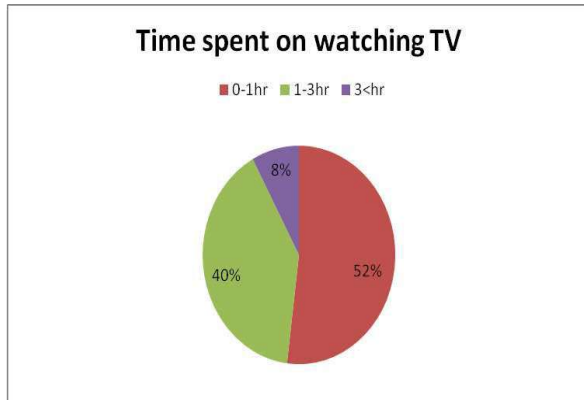
- To know the representation of festivities on Kannada television shows
- To Study reception of representation by the Kannada viewers
- To explore the impact of this representation on viewers

Research design

Based on the research problem the survey research method is selected to collect necessary data. This is a quantitative study based on survey with questionnaire. The survey is conducted through structured questionnaire. The primary data is gathered through accidental sampling method from the active viewers of television programmes on festival days. 100 samples are taken for study. Samples are spread across rural and urban area in and around Bangalore. The data also gathered through the qualitative analysis of television contents on the major festival days. Thus collected data is analyzed to draw conclusions to the set objectives.

Data analysis and discussion

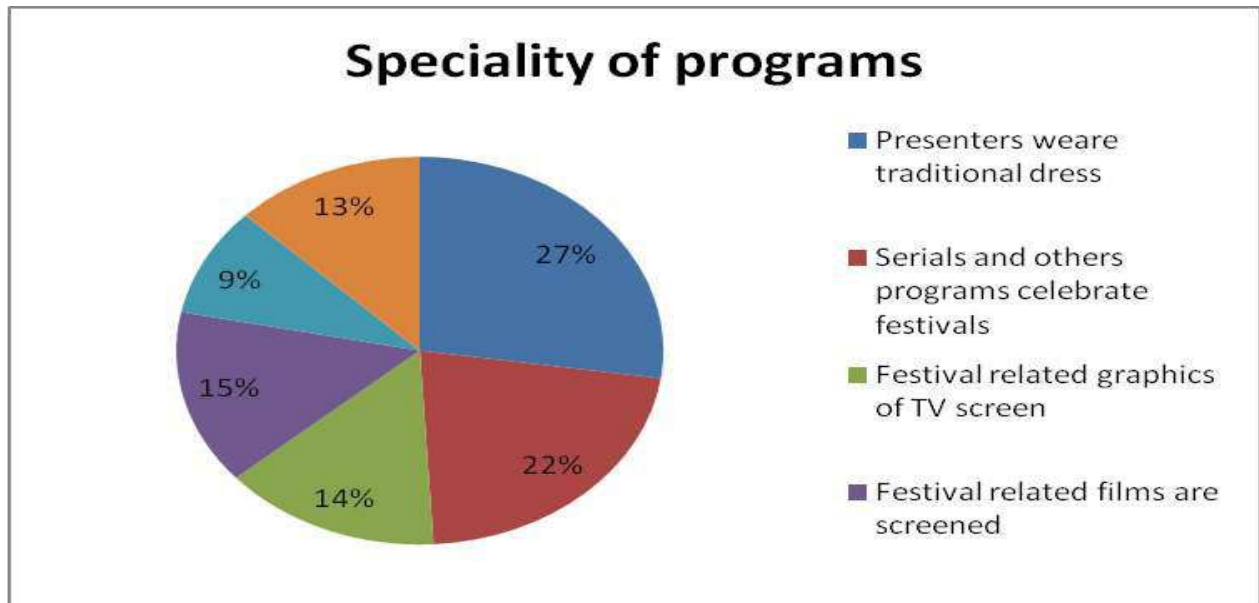
The data gathered through questionnaire and interviews are analyzed with the help of excel and SPSS. Among 100 respondents 52% of the respondents were from urban area and 48% of the respondents were from rural areas. Majority of the respondents were educated. The respondents were students, professors, house wives, bank employees etc.



The data found that there is difference between time spent of television viewing during holidays and other working days. Majority of the respondents spend more time with television on holidays that includes Sundays and other festival days. As there is more time at the disposal and special program on television audience spend increased time for watching TV.

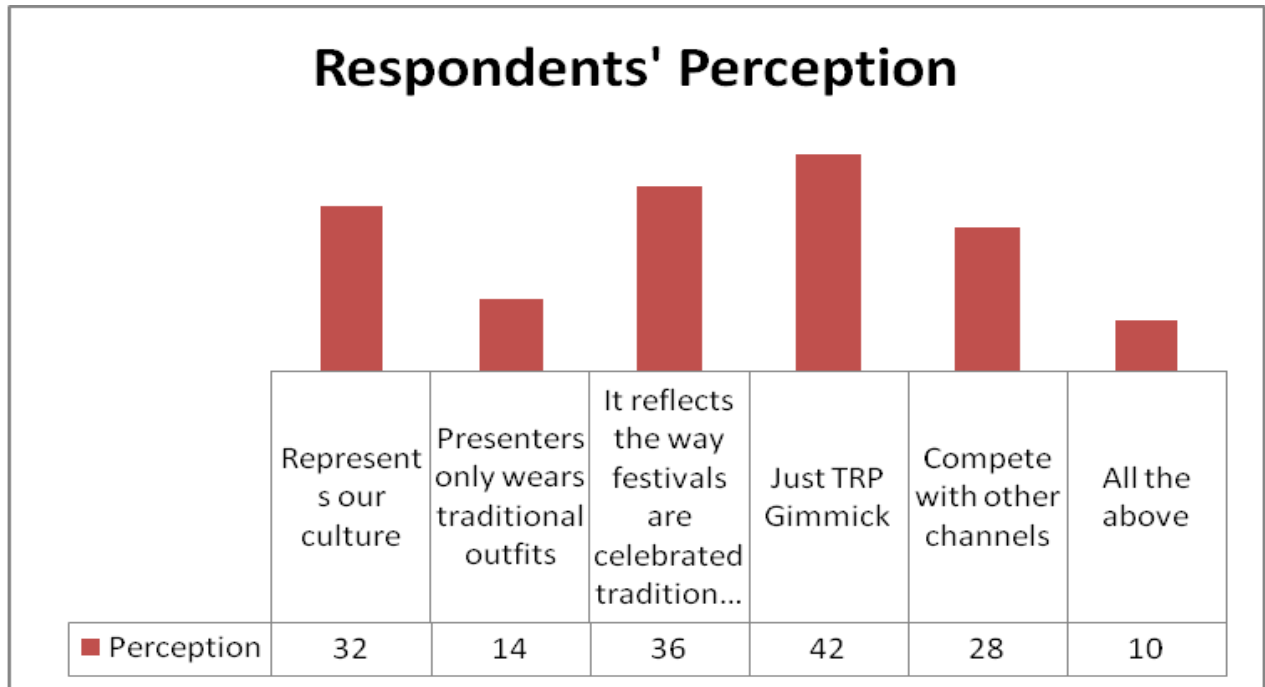
Accept 10% of the respondents rest 90% of the respondents said yes for watching television more time during holidays.

The data found that 100% of the respondents have identified that he programmes had special features during festivals.

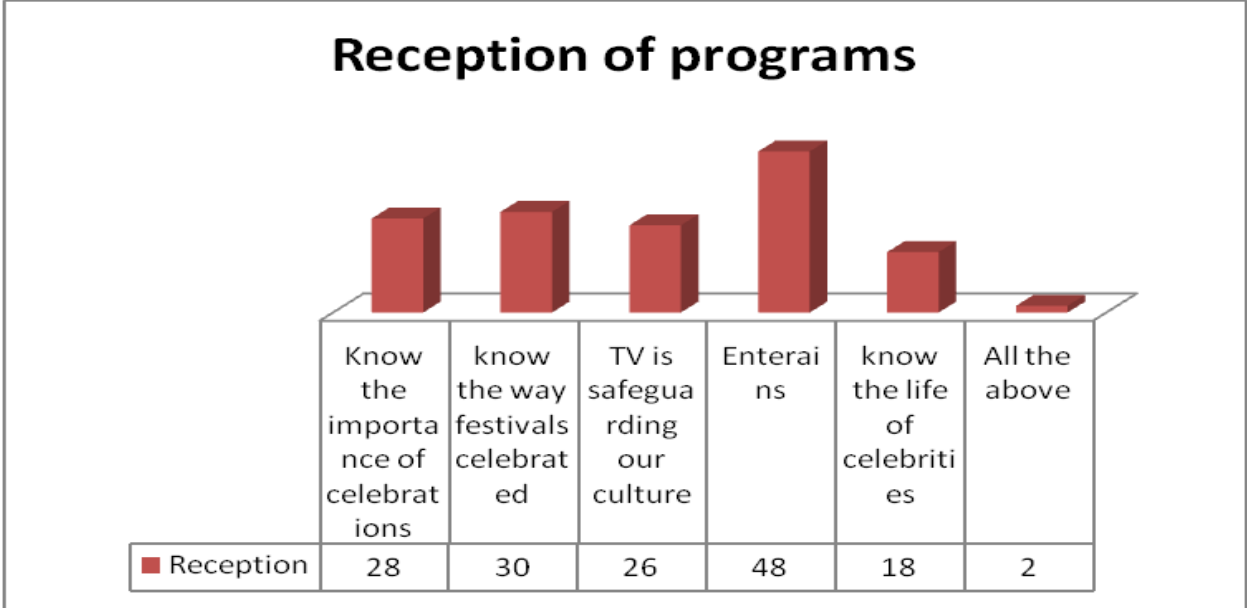


Respondents were asked to identify the specialties of programs. Majority of the respondents found that presenters wear traditional costumes during the festival days. Female presenters wear traditional saris and half-saris and men wear dhoti and shawl. About 22% of the respondent also found that serials and other programs celebrate the festivals. For example on the eve of Ganesh Chaturthi serials keep idols at home and perform pooja. Similarly respective serials celebrate holy, raksh bandhan, Sankranti and Diwali etc. Other than this celebrities and serial actors gather to celebrate the festivals with special programs. The special programs also include religious programs such as astrology and instructions to perform pooja etc. On the eve of Varamahalakshmi pooja ETV Kannada now colors Kannada had performed mass pooja in the ground with television audience. Special cookery programs also telecasted to guide the viewers to prepare special food on the eve of different festivals. 14% of the respondents found that they have observed the festival related graphics on the screen. On Christmas Santa's graphics are put on the screen, on Ramzan the graphic of crescent moon and star with wishes are displayed on the screen. 15% of the respondents have enjoyed the

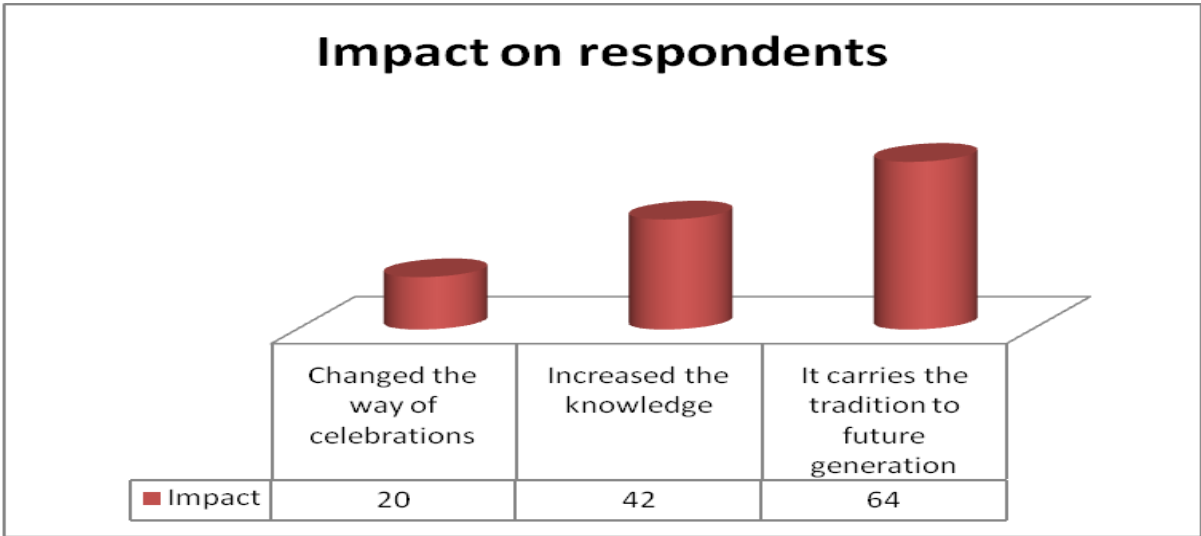
programs of celebrities and their family life. Rest 13% said all the above reasons make festival programs special for them.



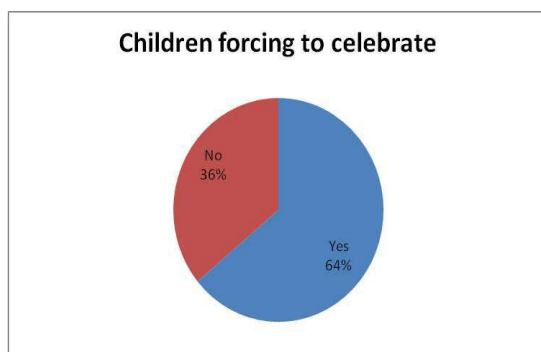
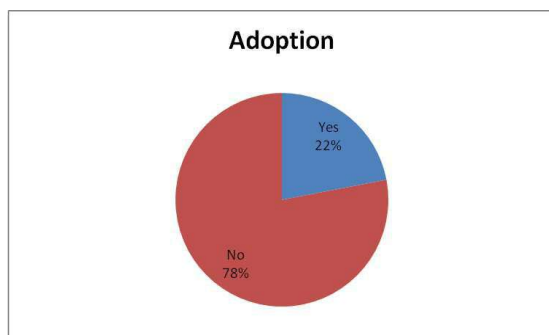
The respondents' perception of the program is gathered and analyzed. According to data analysis 32 respondents felt the festivity programs are required as they represent our culture. 14 respondents felt it just a show where presenters come with traditional outfit and there is no much significance for it. About 36 respondents found it as very useful activity as it reflects the way the festivals are celebrated traditionally as most of the migrated people would not know how to celebrate it. Majority of the respondents felt that it is TRP gimmick. About 28 respondents felt that it is done to compete with other channels. Respondents also cited the reason the similar type of program with same guests sometimes telecasted even at same time. Some (10) of the respondents perceived all the above cites reasons.



The respondents' opinion on how they have received the program was sought. The analysis of the data found that 28 respondents would know the importance of celebration due to TV programs. About 30 respondents understood the way the festivals are celebrated. 26 respondents think that TV safeguards the culture and it is very much required in the age of cultural transformation. Majority (48) of the respondents found it as entertainment and did not want to take any other guidance from the programs.

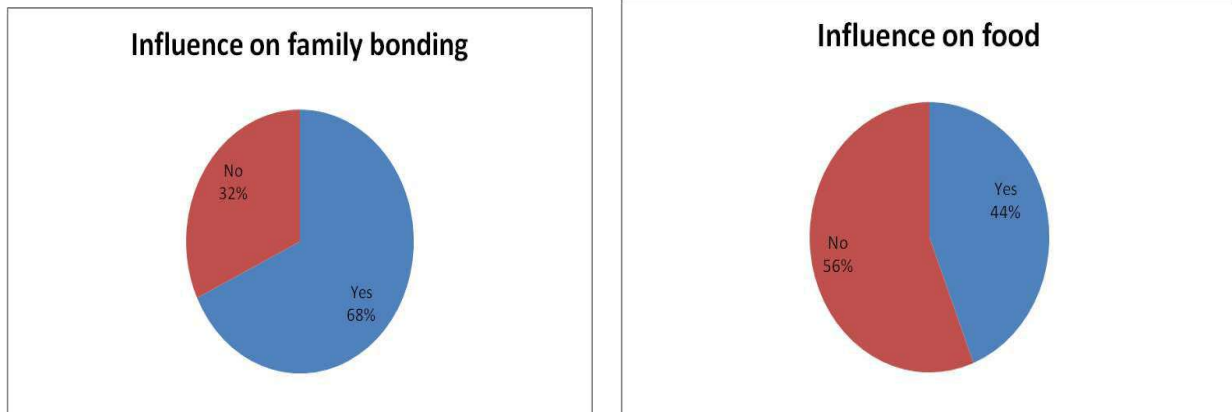


The impact of festival related programs on the respondents found the about 20 respondent changed the way the festivals are celebrated after watching such programs on the television. About 42 respondents felt the it had increased the knowledge about the festivals. On festival days channels telecasts special programs on the significance of the celebrations. Knowing the significance would lead to adoption or rejection. Majority of the respondents found that such programs are very beneficial as it carries the tradition to future generation and it is very significant.



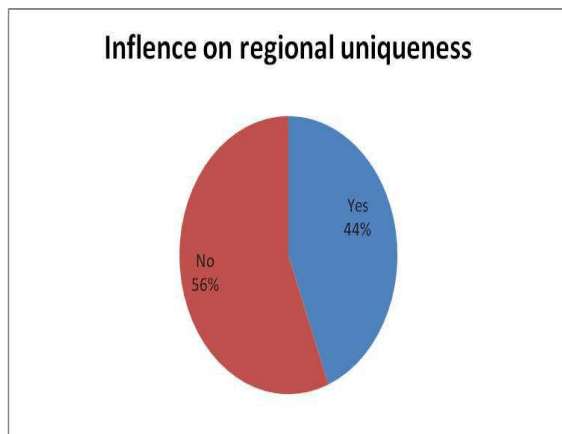
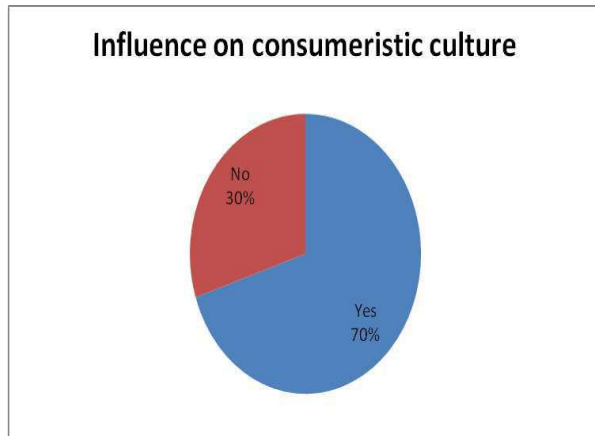
The respondents were asked whether they have adopted any practices after watching it on the televisio. Considerable number of respondents (22%) expressed that they do celebrate different festivals after watching it on the television. Some of the festivals they strated celebrating with the influence of television are Varamahalakshmi, Gouri Habba, Sankranthi, Ugadi, Raksha Bandhan, Holi, Tulsi Pooja, and Akshaya Thrithiya etc.

The new festivals are celebrated mostly because children at home force the parents to celebrate by watching television. Majority 64% of the respondents said yes to the question whether children at home compel them to celebrate the festivals differently.



Majority of the respondents felt that as the celebration of festivals increased the family bonding also increased. During festivals friends and family members were invited to have special food and people also visit the houses of family members and friends. In this process they will get the reasons to meet them and maintain good will amongst them.

The study found that there is influence on the preparation of feast on the day of festivals. About 44% of the respondents said they do prepare special food by watching television shows. On the day of celebrations or throughout the week of the festivals the special cookery programs were telecasted in the channels which guide the audience to prepare for the festivals with special food. Those who said no gave the reasons that they follow their traditional food patterns therefore the television programs do not have significance in that aspect.



Festival celebrations will have the related effects on the society. Mostly festivals are celebrated by purchasing new dresses and new items for the house. Majority of the the respondent (70%) thought that such celebrations related programs on the television is leading to consumeristic culture. Most of such programs would be promoting the some commodities. Examples cites by the respondents were, valentines day, mothers day, fathers day, raksha bandham etc. Children st home expects new dress on the eve of every celebrations and television attracts them to buy some commodities.

The respondents also felt that regional distinctive nature of celebrations are disappeared due to television's programs. Television presents the celebrations of class of society and makes it mass tradition thus laeding to the establishment of

popular culture. About 44% of the respondents felt that television is influencing in making the festival celebration uniform.

Discussion

Television is contributing to build up an everlasting relationship between society and tradition in turn building the bond amongst channels and younger generations. The study found that media had influenced the practice of traditions and rituals. Respondents opined that the food culture had greatly impacted to television programmes especially during festivals. The geographic specific food system has been incorporated across the boundary. The traditional strangeness has been disappeared. However this is the cause of worry for some of the respondents as they think geographical uniqueness had strong bondage with local culture and practices.

The way people decorate during the festival had changed drastically and television guides them to do so. The items shown on television are readily available in the market. Through which they are fostering the consumerist culture. Ready rangoli, artificial festoon leave, ready to eat food etc. are making the festival uniform. The local color and odor has disappeared.

Another opinion most of the respondents expressed was TRP and competition among the channels. Due to TRP the programs were telecasted. The programs either promoting certain products or emotionally binding the viewers to establish certain pre conceived ideology. They had also pointed out that the advertisements on the day of festivals are promoting certain product.

Some of the respondents opined that television is promoting the culture of one dominating community. Respondents also observed the lot of changes in celebration after television started telecasting such programs.

Conclusion

The study found the festival celebrations on the television channels had considerable impact on the viewers at various levels. The study identified the positive and negative impact of the television programs on the culture.

The research found that all the channels in Karnataka give special importance to festivals, be it national, regional or cultural, religion. Special programmes such as the way of celebrating the festivals, ritualistic procedures, festival related films, celebrity programs and game shows etc. are important among them. It is also found that on the day of festivals all the channels are getting more number of advertisements. Those programs are produced and publicized well in advance through attractive promos. The graphics are displayed on the screen related to respective festivals and sometimes logo also altered according to theme of the festivals. Advertisers use this opportunity to reach the customers by wishing on the television and channels also wish its audience repeatedly. The audience is allowed to interact with the channels through phone-in programmes to share the celebration at their respective places. There is new trend created where in celebrities visit the houses of selected audience and join the celebrations.

Now festivals are not limited to particular community or region. People are celebrating every major festival around the country. Now festivals are marked by

warmth of participation. One can say the reason behind this milieu is media. Even local fairs have become large celebrations.

The analysis of data found that majority of the respondents identified the specialties of festival day programs. It had been received by them in various ways such as some of the audience understood the significance of the festivals. Many of them came to know about the procedure of performing the festival related activities. They do felt that television channels safeguard the cultural values and practices. The data showcased the considerable impact on the respondents related to festival celebrations. Considerable number of respondents expressed that television festival related programs are heling the sustainability of culture and carries it to the future generations. The research revealed that some of the respondents started celebrating the new festivals which are not part of their ancestral practices.

Television had impacted the feast patterns and costumes as younger generation is inclined towards the traditional outfits. It had increased the family bondage as in the fast moving world people are busy in their own works. After watching television, they felt the need of visiting the relatives using the festival occasions.

Thus the study concludes representation of festivities in television had significant impact on the viewer's perception and practice.

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*Tribal Folk Cultures and Performativity: A Study of JaniShikar and
MurmaJatra*

Shyam Babu

&

Akinchan Xaxa

Abstract

Folk theatres in India have been extremely rich and diverse in their artistic and ideological reach. Folk theatres such as *Jatra, Chau, Nautanki, Nacha, Yakshgana, Ramlila, Raslial* among several others have proved viable forums for the pedagogic, and cultural reawakening in Indian post-independence scenario. And they have also played a pivotal role not only in the configuration of nation but also in de-colonizing the Indian theatre from the European theatrical modalities. Of late Tribal theatres too have been seriously considered for their ethnographic and cultural significance in the theatrical genres. Tribal theatres of central India, especially of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra and Telangana etc. have a rich heritage in terms of subject matter and also in artistic nuances. In Jharkhand, tribal festivals are based on nature, agriculture, village gods and in practice of paying homage to the spirits of the ancestors. They are full of exuberance. The festivals of community employ the symbols of myths for their

proliferation and entertainment and are deeply rooted in the people's belief system. Sarhul, Sohrai, Karam, TusuParab, BahaParab, Jawa, etc. are a few tribal festivals celebrated in Jharkhand by the majority tribes. These performances require our intellectual engagement not only to see their performative dimensions but also to attest the changes they have incorporated over the year from the point of view of communication and transformation.

We shall be looking at the two popular tribal cultural practices of Jharkhand namely, *JaniShikar* and *Murmajatra* from Richard Schechner conceptions of 'efficacy' and 'entertainment' in performances.

Keywords: gender, performance, ritual, transformation, ethnic, marginality, subjection, power, everydayness, culture.

Introduction

The festivals of a community employ symbols of its myths and tales. They are also deeply embedded in people's conviction of life and society. In Jharkhand, tribal communities' festivals are likewise based on nature, agriculture, village gods, and the spirits of the ancestors. They are full of exuberance in cultural messages and rituals. Sarhul, Sohrai, Karam, TusuParab, BahaParab, Jawa, etc. are a few tribal festivals celebrated widely in Jharkhand by the tribal community. The

tribal population of the state has kept Nature and its scenic beauty intact because they have developed their arts, tradition and culture in proper synchronization with Nature. It can well be seen through the lives of tribal men or women whose routine is according to the movement of nature. These tribes have their own ecology of a society (Schechner, 1974).

Our focus is to spotlight the performative dimensions in the two popular tribal rituals namely *Jani Shikar* and *Murma Jatra* from Richard Schechner's theory of 'efficacy' and 'entertainment' (Schechner, 1974). In the evolution of theatre he has highlighted, these two entities are decisive factors. The theatre, he implicates must be judged and jettison against efficacy and entertainment for the better understanding of performance. Rituals he considers as the primordial modes of performance. He categorically states that, "no performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment" (1974, p. 15). Along his argument of thought, we consider *Jani Shikar* and *Murma Jatra* not only the sites for ritualism and but also performance in their own rights.

Jharkhand state is geographically located in central part India and has got its statehood in the year 2000. It can boast of as the habitat of heterogeneous tribe groups among which 32 groups are most well-known, and they are *Munda*, *Santhal*, *Oraon (Kurukh)*, *Kharia*, *Gond*, *Kol*, *Kanwar*, *Savar*, *Asur*, *Baiga*, *Banjara*, *Bathudi*, *Bedia*, *Binjhia*, *Birhor*, *Birjia*, *Chero*, *Chick-Baraik*, *Gorait*, *Ho*, *Karmali*, *Kharwar*, *Khond*, *Kisan*, *Kora*, *Korwa*, *Lohra*, *Mahli*, *Mal-Paharia*, *Parhaiya*, *Sauria-Paharia* and *Bhumij*. Each of these tribes has their own cultural and linguistic background. They even have separate food habits and cuisines. Amongst these tribes, *Munda*, *Oraon*, *Kharia*, *Ho*, and *Santhal* are the major tribes of Jharkhand. *Oraon*, *Munda*, *Kharia*, and *Ho* tribes are found in the Chhotanagpur region of present-day Jharkhand and the *Santhal* tribe is found mainly in the *Santhal Pargana* region of Jharkhand. The religion that these Tribes follow is called

the *Sarna* religion. It is misconstrued as ‘animistic’ religion nonetheless; it stipulates that the plants, trees, and all other natural phenomena have a ‘soul’. The followers of Sarnaism believe in, worship and revere Dharmes¹ who is also invariably called Marang Buru, Singbonga and so many other names by different tribes. Followers of this cult also believe in and worship Chala Pachho², which is identified as the mother earth or nature. It is symbolized by the *sal* tree. Dharmesh deity is believed to have manifested himself in sal trees. In this way ideologically tribes have an indigenous, primordial belief system of their own which is partly naturalistic and partly pagan. This should also be noted that all the tribal festivals of Jharkhand are more or less dependent on seasons and nature’s cycle. Dr. Robin D. Tribhuwan, a renowned author on tribal studies states that, “On festive occasions they feel free and relaxed from several tensions from their hard life. They participate in the festivals with a sense of solidarity. They participate hastily in feasting, drinking and dancing to celebrate the festivals along with propitiations of both benevolent and malevolent spirits to get a good harvest, plenty of rainfall and to be protected from diseases and natural calamities. A type of gratitude is expressed to the supernatural forces and the cosmic beings for helping them in the times of adversity” (Tribhuwan, 2003, p.9).

Jani Shikari is one of the main tribal festivals of the Oraon which must be read as the site of cultural pride and women power. *Jani Shikar* is made up of two words-“Jani” meaning female and “Shikar” meaning hunting. Hence, it is a festival of hunting by the women. In this festival, the tribal women clad themselves in men’s attire such as jeans, trousers, shirts, dhotis, etc., and go out for hunting armed with traditional weapons. The story behind the celebration of *Jani Shikar* is

¹In Sarnaism, Dharmes is considered to be the Supreme God, who is the creator of the universe.

²She is the mother goddess, identified as earth or nature. She is symbolized by a *sal* tree.

preserved into historical memory. It is believed that when the Oraons were living in the Rohtasgarh Fort, now in present-day Bihar, was attacked by the Turks, the European invaders. The Oraons fought back and defeated them. This is well mentioned and often sung in the folk songs and stories of the Oraon tribe that unfolds their glorious past.

Namhaepurkharrahechar re

Rohtas Patna nu rahechar-2

(Koonathan 1999, 107)

(Our forefathers once lived there

They lived in Rohtas and Patna) (Toppo, 2018)

The Turks were never able to defeat the Oraons in open combat. So, they hired a spy, a milkmaid named Lundari into the fort to get the secret information about the tribes and their war skills. She advised them to attack the fort in the morning just after the *Xaddi* (Sarhul) festival. In this festival men generally drink the country liquor. They drink and sleep till quite late in the morning. The drink is rice beer called *Hadiya*. Oraons folk songs mention the Turkish designs a plan to capture the Oraon territory, with the help of a local spy, an Ahir milkmaid named Lundari (Roy 1915, p. 26) as follow:

Ahirin (Gwalin) bhaiyakobadidagadela

Rohtasgarhbainilutiyongela,

'Baini' kamure Raja pagdibandhai

Janikamure Raja pagdibandhai.

(Ahirin (milkmaid) has cheated our brothers

Rohtasgarh has been plundered sister

King ties turban on 'sister's' head

King ties turban on the head of a woman) (Toppo, 2018).

As per the spy's inputs they attacked and found to their surprise that all the Oraon men were under intoxication and were asleep. The womenfolk got a tip-off of the secret strategy of the Turks. The women, led by Princess Singi Dai and her friends Champai and Kaili Dai (Bhagat 2013, 93-94) dressed up as men fought the invaders twice. The rendering of this has been so poignantly captured in the lines:

O Dekha,

Aye gelain raja beti Sinagi Dai

Sathe-Sathe Champa, Kaili

Aur sobhe Janana Man

Mude Feta, Hathe Chinyari

Mardana Bain Ke

(O see,

the king's daughter Sinagi Dai has come

and along with Champa and Kaili

and all the ladies,

with turban tied on their head and bows and arrows in their hand,

becoming like men.) (Topp, 2018)

On their way back, few Mughal soldiers saw Lundari the milkmaid and got hold of her. They accused her of giving them the wrong information about the Oraon men getting drunk and intoxicated during the *Xaddi* festival. They were questioning Lundari about the wrong information, who was standing quietly and listening to all the allegations. She then revealed to the Turks that they were not fighting the men but they fought and were defeated by the women dressed up as men. They could not believe that they were defeated by *Oraon* women. Hence, to

check the veracity of the information they decided to employ some troops on the other side of the Son River. Turk soldiers hid behind the bushes on the bank and acted as watchdogs from a distant place (Bhagat, 2013). The weary and tired champions who were in fact women came near the bank; they sat down comfortably and started cleaning their face off and drinking water (97). They employed both hands for splashing water on the face or for drinking (Kiro31). The Turks were completely disillusioned and shocked to find that all warriors were women folk. They could also see how all soldiers prepare their face for the decoration at the bank and how their gestures were quite womanly. They felt ashamed of having suffered two consecutive defeats from these brave women, whom they had considered delicate, fragile and powerless. They then began drawing out plans for the third attack on the same day of the festival with firm determination (Bhagat, 2013).

The very next time they did not wish to bring shame to their male and their power/hegemony. When the attack was launched again, ladies were perfectly normal neither shocked or surprised. Like the brave soldiers, they were ready to defend the fort against the attacks. They defended their bastions valiantly. The commander of the Turkish army now understood the reasons behind the resistance and boosted up the morale of his soldiers. He started off shouting continuously to revealing the true identity of challengers (women soldiers), in order to arouse their male ego (Bhagat, 2013). He was successful in his mission. The women could not resist the fierce onslaught of the Turks for long. The Turks stormed into the fort and began killing men and women ruthlessly. The women, however, lost the third battle against the Turks but with a sense of guilt that they were fighting with women, not men. As a result of which, the Oraons had to leave the castle and they had to flee to different parts of the city and migrated to Chotanagpur.

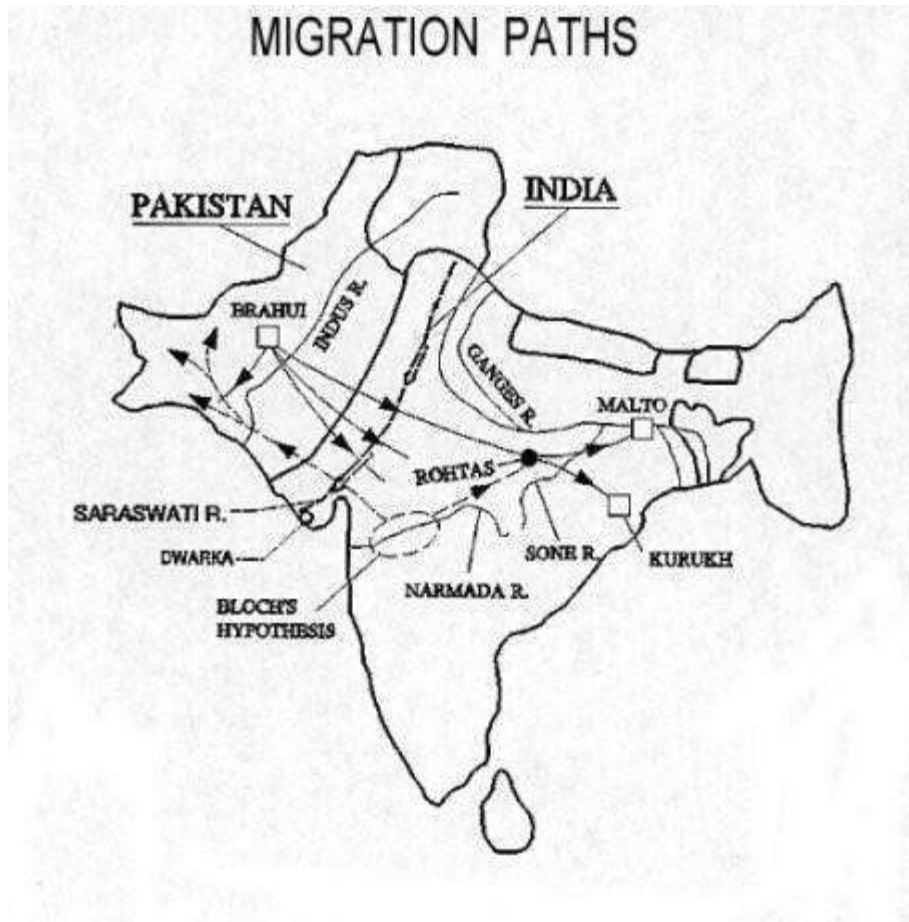


Image 1: Bloch's hypothesis

Nevertheless, the brave leaders of the women's army such as Sinagi Dai, Champu Dai, and Kaili Dai managed to save the life of many tribal men and women by safely rescuing them through a secret passage (Bhagat, 2013). Some of them who fell in the hands of the enemies were brutally tortured and subjected to corporeal punishment and even death. The captive women were forcefully branded with three dots with a hot iron rod in a straight line on their forehead as a reminder of the three battles fought and also for the realization of the fact that they had lost the third battle. These dots were intended to defame them. But they are now considered the symbol of victory of the Adivasi women (Kujur, 2010). Though

tribal women wedged a fierce battle against the intruders and consequently lost the third battle, it has been recorded in history that the princess Sinagi and her friends fought against the intruders. It was also narrated they were the epitome of courage and honor. But the fact is quite different from the history. It is needless to say that the Oraon women were valiant and chose death to dishonor or slavery. The historical tale of valor and masculinity of the Oraon ladies led to the concept of *JaniShikar*. This festival thus has a political and as well ethnic value attached to it.

This festival is not only a site of culture practices and ritual but also has enshrined a lot of performative dynamism. Therefore, women of the Oraon tribe have been commemorating women's power through *JaniShikar* to perform their power and collective identity by engaging in hunting animals. The womenfolk wear men's dress; leave homes to hunt for animals, mostly goat and hen. As the night approaches, they arrange for a feast to celebrate the day.

Panchopaharbicheshikarkhelegeli

koinahilage sang saath- 2

(we went around five mountains and hills for hunting
some people (women) came, some didn't.) (Bhagat, 2017)

The tradition of celebration of this festival has changed due course of time. Earlier this festival was observed for eleven days. The women folk used to march forward to the East from their villages and walk and hunt for eleven days and return back to their villages on the twelfth day where they started from. On returning back to their respective villages they used to cook the hunted animals and distributed the cooked meat as *prasad* (offerings to god) to the whole village and this feast continued accompanied by dancing the whole night. In contemporary times, this tradition of hunting for eleven days has been reduced to

three to seven days. The women folk gather in the *Akhra* or the worship place of the village, where the *Pahan* or the village priest blesses them and wishes them luck for the hunt. Then the group of women dressed as men go on the hunting spree. They go from one village to other hunting animals without their husband or male partners. When they enter a village, they go to the *Akhra* of the village to get the blessings of the *Pahan* of that village. Thereafter, they move to another village preferably in a group. The crowd watches the procession pass by in jubilant mood. And some of them also join the procession of women. As the sun starts to set in, the women folk return to their villages where the hunted meat is cooked and distributed among the villagers as *prasad*.

Gaove re Chaitrabujhegeli, bandookke deli othangaye
Ranchi tohsaharbulegeli, bandookkechorahaeerlel ho,
chora-chorinipoichialaye re, Budha- budhideikhaalaye.

(when we knew a deer came out in the village, we pulled our trigger but when we went to Ranchi city, our guns were stolen when we returned from hunting, girls and boys did not come to receive us, but the elders saw and came to welcome us.) (Bhagat, 2017)

However, there has been encountered a lot of change in recent times. Earlier the festival was celebrated in the forests but now the women involved in the public hunting also go hunting in the streets of the city and also victimize domestic animals that make the situation very uncouth for the modern audience. Under the forest law enacted by the Indian Government, poaching deer is unlawful and forbidden in forests. However, the community sometimes hunts deer. There have also been some strange incidents in *JaniShikar* rituals very recently where women

dressed in men's garb would stop the vehicles near Ambedkar Chowk, Pithoria Kanke and asked for the donations which are actually not a part of *JaniShikar* (Bhagat, 2017). Other changes occurred in the recent past is physical assault and abuse to the practicing women who go for the *shikar*. "Earlier, womenfolk used to wear traditional dhoti and pagris. Now, they wear jeans and t-shirts. Besides, taking donations forcefully was also not part of the tradition," said Sadhulal Munda, general secretary of Maharaja Madra Munda Kendriya Parha Samiti, Pithoria. (Dey, 2017)



Image 2: "Oraon Women walking and carrying chicken-roosters during *JaniShikar* at Kanke near Ranchi" Lal, Ratan.

MurmaJatra is an annual tribal festival of the tribal communities in Jharkhand. It is celebrated in Murma, about 23 kilometers away from the capital of the state, Ranchi. It is a two-day festival celebrated by the Oraon and the Munda tribes. According to historians the fair was first celebrated 200-300 years back after the arrival of Oraon tribe from Rohtasgarh and their victory over the local inhabitants (Tribhuwan, 2003, p. 195). It is believed that the *MurmaJatra* is celebrated in the commemoration of meeting of these two tribes, Oraon and Munda. “Munda and Oraon are two main agricultural tribes of the plateau who have been organizing and actively participating in the *Jatra* since the time immemorial (Tribhuwan, 2003). There are several legends related to this festival. One of them is that after the Oraons were defeated by the Turks, they had to flee to the Chotanagpur region which was the place of the Munda tribe. The fleeing Oraons came to the Mundas to ask for shelter. It was Murmawhere the Oraons and Mundas met. They had a dance war for the land. The losing tribe had to leave the land and move to the South, now Khunti region. The Mundas lost to the Oraons and had to leave the land and move to the South. This was the place of social and cultural accord between Oraons and Mundas.

There is another hypothesis by Sarat Chandra Roy about the meeting of fleeing Oraons and the Mundas. He writes “... before the Oraons migrated to what is now Chota-Nagpur, the tribe had been living in comparative affluence and ease under a king of their own in Rohtas plateau further to the north-west, but that, in an evil hour, on the day of the annual Khaddi or Sarhul festival in honor of ChalaPachcho, when all their adult male population lay almost senseless with drink, some hardier tribe styled in the tradition as the Mlechchhas surprised them from the Rohtas plateau and chased them beyond the river Son into what is now Chota- Nagpur. The Oraons of those days, it is asserted, knew no *bhuts* or spirits nor did they eat beef or other unclean food. They had a great

sense of hygiene and maintained cleanliness in their habits. They even wore the *janeu* or sacred thread commonly worn by the Brahmans and other upper caste Hindus. To elude the pursuit of the enemy, the Oraons, it is said, took shelter in the houses of the Mundas whom they found in occupation of the country, and concealed their own identity by discarding their sacred threads and taking to the unclean food and the habits of the Mundas and adopting as their own the deities and spirits of the Munda pantheon” (Tribhuvan, 2003).

Regardless of the different narratives of the Oraon tribes prevalent in the history and popular belief system even today *Murma Jatra* is a huge cultural event of dancing, worshipping and meeting for the Oraons and Mundas. People from different pockets and areas of the villages or *parhas* meet together through this. They worship, meet and dance collectively. The ritual begins from the house of *Pahan* or the village priest, where people gather and a woman carries the *kharsa*³ or the sacred earthen pots on their heads and walk towards the *Jatra* place. Women strike a balance while making a movement. The *kharsa* which is covered with a net-like structure woven by the raw paddy straws signifies the earth. A lighted earthen lamp is placed on top of it which synecdochically represents the sun.

³Holy earthen pot



Image 3: *Kharsa*. Kuiry, Hare Krishna.

People follow them playing drums- *mandar and nagda*, dancing in joy. The people from the village carry their *parha* flag to the Jatra and dance around the *Shakti Khuta* which means the pole of power or strength. The *Shakti Khuta* is the most sacred place of the *MurmaJatra*. Only the *Pahans* enter the area for rituals. The *MurmaJatra* takes place around the *Shakti Khuta*. It is believed that *Dharmesh* resides in the *Shakti Khuta* and the success of the *Jatra* depends upon the relation of *Dharmesh* residing in *Shakti Khuta*. The *Shakti Khuta* becomes the “heated center” of the “eruption” and the rest of the *Jatra* becomes the “cool rim with spectators coming and going” (Schechner, 1994). The ceremonial centers become a place to “maintain good relations. To exchange goods, mates, trophies, techniques. To show and exchange dances, songs and stories” (1994).

MurmaJatra thus becomes a place where different communities meet, buy goods, sing and dance. The tribes are performers of their dance and music and also the spectator of them. Schecher's view is quite relevant here that the rituals are theaters in their own context.



Image 4: Women carrying *kharsa*.Kuiry, Hare Krishna.

People from three parhas' forty villages take part in the annual *MurmaJatra*. *Murma'sPahan*, *BandhanTigga* maintains, holds a huge significance. It has core social and cultural values in the Oraon community. In the Oraon community, the Parha system acquires the main place amongst various popular social institutions. Parha signifies that the Oraons living in different villages have to be united so that they can compete effectively with the natural and supernatural forces as well as protect themselves. Thus parha can also be called a large tribal organization of the Oraons, which is based on mutual understating and shared value of clan groups.

The Oraons from forty Parha villages bring their special parha symbols and parha flag with them. Dressed up in their traditional attire, they enter the jatra place dancing and singing and making circles around the *Shakti Khuta* and then move towards their assigned *khod'ha*⁴ where they dance in groups. Some traditions and rules are followed for entering the jatra place. For instance, first, the members of Pungiparha village will enter then followed by other parha villages. This village has more importance and respect than other villages because it has the right to change the *Shakti Khuta*. Only after the people from Pungiparha village have entered then the people from other parha villages enter in queue traditional way. The forty villages which take part in *MurmaJatra* are classified respectively: seven, twelve, and twenty-one. On the basis of this classification, the present tower which is constructed over the *Shakti Khuta* is divided into seven, twelve and twenty-one feet which represent these forty parha villages.



⁴Assigned place

Image- 5

People entering with the *parha* flag. Kuiry, Hare Krishna.

Villages under seven Parha	Uchri, KorambiSakra, Pipartoli, Tatkondo, Jhijhri, Khatanga and Totambi.
Villages under twelve Parha	Murma (big), Murma (small), Sursa, Nagda, Kanbhittha, Gore, Naro, BudhaKhukhra, Karkara, Pungi, Mesal, and Meral.
Villages under twenty one Parha	Chund, Bargadi, Jaher, Kiskani, DhayodhaToli, KaranjToli, Tiko, Sevadi, Murumgada, PatraToli, Kanaud, Mahanpur, PhutkalToli, MudiyaToli, Dedhiya, Sidrau, Nauj, Matwayi, Geswayi, MandanaToli and Chapa Toli.

Table 1: villages under the three parhas(Mishra 1996)

In this way, *MurmaJatra* is the Jatra of forty villages of three parhas. One folksong related to this is as follow:

Murmatonka nu, mhaipurukharbarechar

isanoomJatrakhutagadecharbhaiya.

JaterakhutabhaiyaDharmesgahiedpa

isanoomsaatbilliurukhabhaiya

*saatbilliurukha, saatodharmkamechar.
Jaterakhutantibarahbilliurukhabhaiya
barahbilliurukhabarahparhakamechar
narahparhabarha, barhokoraukiyar
barhokora nu ukiya, dharmsevaNajjar
Jaterakhutantiykkisbilliurukha
ekkisbilliurukha, ekkisparhakamechar
ekkisparhakamechar, ekkisdhauda nu kudiyar
goteraajiinjormanjabhaiya.*

(our ancestors came to Murmatan
at this place they embedded the Jatrakhuta brother
God dwells in the Jatrakhuta brother
seven lights came out of here
these seven lights made seven religion.
Twelve more lights came out of the Jatrakhuta
twelve lights came out, twelve parha were formed
twelveparha brothers, sat in twelve directions (corner)
sat in twelve directions, performed religious services.
Twenty-one more lights came out of the Jatrakhuta
twenty-one lights came out, twenty-one parhas were formed
twenty-oneparhas were formed and toured twenty-one organizations
(parha)
the entire state was illuminated.) (Mishra 1996)



Image 6: Shakti Khuta. Kuiry, Hare Krishna.

BandhanTigga further explains the socio-cultural significance of the *MurmaJatra*. He maintains that *MurmaJatra* is the meeting place of the Oraon and the Munda tribe. He emphasizes this as an important cultural moment in

consolidation of tribes and elucidates that earlier the Chotanagpur region was ruled by Madra Munda and his ancestors. When Oraons reached the Chotanagpur area, they met the Mundas in Murma and there was a cultural conflict between the two tribes. The Oraons won the battle and there was an agreement between both the tribes. Members of both the tribes established the *Shakti Khuta* here. He further states that the Mundas who are in the Eastern part can speak Kurukh and the Oraons who are in the western part can speak Mundari. There has been a cultural confluence between these two tribes. He further added or expressed his opinion about the religious emblems or symbols. He says that *Murma Jatra* is the place where all the religious symbols that includes flags or parhas, special symbols of each parha, etc. meet. This signifies the meeting of village gods and goddesses of various parhas. These symbols signify that the village deities are brought in a procession of dance and songs accompanied with musical instruments and are circled around the *Shakti Khuta*.

Murma Jatra, as stated earlier, is also a place of pilgrimage for the Oraon community. The below is the list of symbols associated with *jatra* prevalent in different sub groups of the tribes:

S. no.	Parha Village	Religious symbols
1	Nagra	Tiger
2	Karkara	Horse
3	Chund	A pair of oxen
4	Uchri	Rampa Champa (wooden

		horse)
5	Kanbhittha	Umbrella
6	Khatanga	Elephant
7	Mesal	Trident
8	Murma	Symbol of cock on a white flag
9	Pungi	Red and white duriya (rope) flag
10	Sursa	Horse

Table 2: Few parha villages and their religious symbols. (Mishra, 1996)



Image 7: Parha villages and their religious symbols. Kuiry, Hare Krishna.

PahanBandhanTiggacategorically states thatMurmaJatra is essential for the purpose of marriage. He says that the trend of marriage starts from here. The voluntary selection of a suitable couple for marriage was a key task of this jatra. We can now conspicuously understand that the MurmaJatra is the site of inter-Parha meeting or interaction. In this the young men and women of different parha villages gather in one place, where they get an opportunity to sing and dance, to see each other and talk, and chose a young man or a young woman for themselves who are later married by the consensus of their parents. It is purely a tribal method in to the match making. It should also be noted that this process of

nuptial arrangement for man and woman has adversely affected the artistic and performative values of *Jatra*. Art here has a deep sociological relevance which seems now dwindling rather fast in neo-liberal capitalist society.

With the passage of time, there has occurred various socio-cultural changes in *MurmaJatra*. It is *not* free from the adverse impact of modernization and urbanization. As modern capitalism has tendency to reduce the value of arts and culture merely to a 'price' without even looking into the originality of them, the efficacy of art is in severe danger. Earlier the space or place of *Jatra* performance was free from any kind of commercial or mercantile impact. Generally the space/site would be surrounded by huge trees, and there was no permanent construction at that place. Now there are permanent constructions or structures have come up to enact the *jatra*. The area of *Jatra* has shrunk but strangely the number of people has increased. The *MurmaJatra* has spread across the adjacent areas. It has also witnessed the negative impact of development and modernity on various dance groups performed by the people of various parhas. As a result of which the traditional vesture, dance style, and the nature of instruments used have also changed.

PahanTigg clearly states that yesteryear *Jatra* wasn't like the usual fairs with all its rides and circus but it was a place of worship and meeting of all the forty parha villagers. Earlier the rides which only included the giant wheel would only start after the worship of *Shakti Khuta* is over. Now they all start even before the worship starts ignoring the primitive traditions. Even the forty parha villages do not participate with full enthusiasm with a group dance and religious symbols. The number of parha villages has been reduced to more than half of it. One of the reasons behind this is that the *Pahans*, *Kotwars* and the *Mahtos* have lost their societal importance. Earlier all the forty parhas used to perform the ritual sacrifice and religious works but now only the *Murma* village performs these rites. The

traditional dress which included *karyaor dhoti* and *pachori*, has also been discarded by the present-day Oraon youths. Despite such periodic interferences and modern allurements, the importance of this festival is still intact. This is being practiced regularly as the social and cultural heritage of the Oraon community. It needs to be preserved and sustained for the ethnic identity of the tribes.

The paper thus has tried to establish that the Oraon and the Mundas share rich cultural rituals in terms of *MurmaJatra* and *JaniShikar*. These just two are very popular cultural forms and more visible among numerous other tribal forms which are prone to die out. These forms are the treat of music, dance, and singing, and more importantly have a unique contribution in the tribal social formation, and not merely sites of entertainment. Our effort is in making and we sincerely hope that we can develop it not only as an inclusive approach towards their rituals but also would underline it as a document of rare tribal culture and art pedagogy.



Image 8: Young tribal girls in *MurmaJatra*.Kuiry, Hare Krishna.

Note

In the paper Turks and Mughal are coterminous term and must be considered alternative. It is also pertinent to note that the Mughal is ethnically Turks and hail from middle- east.

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Performing 'The Difference' in Contemporary India: Women going solo

Gagandeep

Abstract

Marginalizing women is not a recent trend in Indian theatre, which is a certainly the manifestation of the society from where it gets its performers as well as audience. Though the entry of woman on stage dates long back but most of the times, she has been succumbed to the politics of (mis) representation and the 'Scophilic' approach of the performance makers. It really has taken long to reach to a position where her actual presence with 'her own body and mind' can be seen and felt.

The recent sprouting of the solo performances made/performed by women has surely created ripples in Indian Theatre. The present paper tries to underline the instances in contemporary Indian theatre where women have made 'the difference', which has been marginalizing them for centuries; their strength. The (solo) performances being done independently by women about the gender issues where the personal juxtaposes the social marginality have been made the bases of the present study.

The specific form and content of the text created by such performances is the creation of important contemporary literature which not

only needs documentation but an honest analysis too. The present paper is an effort to underline the making of this literature and performances and understanding the source of the strength of these women artists to perform not only their personal dilemmas but the conflicts of the society along with holding to the complications which they have to face being women artists.

Keywords: Women performers, solo, gender, marginality, theatre

Solo performances are thought to have originated through the act of tribal storytelling and narration to convey a message or incident, hundreds of years ago. This has evolved and been honed to what we call a solo act on stage today. In India too, solo performances have a long history. Women solo performers too are not recent phenomena in India. From Akka Mahadevi (c.1130-1160) to Lalleshwari (1320–1392)), locally known as Lal Ded; there have been many who crossed the thresholds. Not undermining the feminist interventions happened in Indian theatre, a strong feminine point of view is, unfortunately, still a rarity; in the texts, in the directorial point of views and in the actors' self on stage. So, the performances where the text comes from the narratives of the intimate experiences of women, where the performances are created and performed with the consciousness of countering the patriarchal perceptions, where the women's struggle of their

personal and social identities along with their identities as an artist being portrayed courageously; call for not just acknowledgement but a deeper analysis.

In Indian theatre, which is no less patriarchal than the Indian society; for a woman, it takes a long voyage to firstly enter the field, and then struggle for creating one's identity as an artist and then reaching to the reality of being a woman artist. Creating the kind of performances advocating a strong woman point of view is a rarity; for while being pushed to the margins not everybody affords to get through this long journey. Valuing the ones who have travelled that far, the present study limits its scope to the three woman performers who have created and performed solo performances in the recent past. Juxtaposing self has always been one of the acting techniques but taking this latent character to the forefront is easier said than done, which makes these performances an important intervention in the present scenario of performing arts.

Marginalizing women in Indian theatre, that is, denying their share of privilege, firstly from performing and then from performing the self; is the direct manifestation of the society. Women, firstly being late-comers and then being there, minus their own self have been succumbed to the mis- representation for a very long period. 'This reluctance to allow women on stage is paralleled only by the control that has been traditionally exercised over female viewers. Arthshastra, for instance, stipulates fines for women who watch plays without permission and

the fine is greater if they watch it at night. This has meant that the convention of female impersonation appealed to and was consumed by a largely male audience.’¹

It has taken Indian society quite long to accept the image of a performing woman, even when she was performing divinity. How the society made its efforts to push the performing women to the margins can be seen from the contradictions and struggling lives of the performing women at different times. Centuries ago, during the Bhakti Movement, out of all the poets and singers, it was the woman performer Meera Bai from whom the society got intimidated with and it let no stone unturned to stop her from performing. She was the one who was persecuted for her devotion.

Centuries later, Teejan Bai, an exponent of Pandavani, a traditional performing art form, from Chhattisgarh, awarded the Padma Shri in 1988, and Padma Bhushan in 2003 by Government of India, besides Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1995; struggled in her personal life to the extent that being expelled from the community the 'Pardhi' tribe, for singing Pandavani, being a woman, built herself a small hut living on her own, borrowing utensils and food from neighbors. There can be many more but here these two examples are enough to understand that this is the kind of differences have been made through the centuries gone.

¹ Mangai A. "Female Impersonation", Acting Up by, LeftWord Publications 2015, p. 103

The objective of this study is to accentuate the moments where women took this marginalization their strength. They got their power to perform from ‘the difference’; recognizing the marginalization and inverting it towards themselves; creating their strength out of that very situation. The performances which have been chosen for the study for the said reason are - ‘Notes on Chai’ by Jyoti Dogra, ‘RIP by Savita Rani’, ‘Zara bach ke’ by Mallika Taneja. All these performances have made an effort to bring the realities of being a woman in contemporary India on stage. The elements of all these performances give these a common ground discussed further.

One common thing of all these performances is that these all are one-woman show. So, understanding the concept of solo in this context is important. ‘Individuals experience solo status when they are the only members of their social category (e.g., gender or race) present in an otherwise homogenous group. A considerable body of field and laboratory research demonstrates that women’s performance is negatively affected by solo status. During a public performance, the attention of group members is focused on the individual performer. This focus may emphasize social categorizations, thereby triggering concerns about being evaluated in terms of one’s gender.’²

² Kiefer, Amy, et al. “When Appearance Concerns Make Women Look Bad: Solo Status and Body Image Concerns Diminish Women Academic Performance.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2006, pp. 78–86., doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2004.12.004.

In performing arts, women being the late-comers have often faced the situation of being alone in the bigger groups or teams of male members performing theatre and definitely the effects of that on your performance are usually not very positive if not too adverse though. For having that solo status, women have always faced the status of being marginalized, the status of being the odd-one out on which every eye gets fixed to check whether she is performing in the right manner or not as in a way she is always being posed by this question whether she is worth being the part of team or not.

So, rather than finding means to avoid the gaze on her, preferring to be on stage and facing the gaze and saying their own reality; is the foremost element where the cause of being pushed to margins is actually turned into her strength for the performance where the solo performer looks direct into the eyes, interacts with the audience. Being an audience of these performances, one cannot just sit passively; listen to the story and go back home. These performers have made it a point to have dialogue; something otherwise avoided. From being the solo member of the team to be the solo performer on stage, from the gaze to the dialogue – that's where women have made 'the difference' their strength.

Body of the woman has been the biggest weapon of the patriarchy for pushing them to the margins of the society. Woman body has either been a matter of curiosity or a sin to be. Because 'slavery of women cannot be ensured without

complete control over their body and sexuality'³; so their emancipation too cannot be ensured without resolving this very issue; not for others but for their own selves. The present day ambiguity has again been created with the same weapon, the body; where very conscious choices are being made regarding what and how of the woman body and to portray it as the image of an emancipated woman.

In performing arts, entry of the woman on stage was only the entry of the woman body, which still represented the male point of view. Woman on stage started performing not their own self but following the image created by the men who were performing women roles before their entry on stage. She began not with her own self but by almost copying the image presented earlier by the male actors performing female roles. Coming of a woman on stage did make the water ripple but still the rules followed were made by the onlookers who were men wanting pleasure by looking at woman's body. It really has taken long to reach to a position where her actual presence with 'her own body and mind' can be seen and felt. 'Scopophilic' approach of the people running the show, mostly male; has been a constant phenomena right from the time women entered the stage to the contemporary times. Though some of them are now challenging the same and coming up on stage with their 'real character'. Women came quite late in most of

³ Shubha, "Gender Politics of Sexual Oppression and Rape." Rathee Manjeet, AIDWA, 2015, p.44

the performing arts leaving few exceptions like Lavani of Maharashtra or Rai dance, etc. For stage, men always played their character.

Historically, there has been an effort of projecting woman's body and its natural processes as a hindrance to performing arts. The kind of objections made were "if women take to theatre as career, then during the menstruating period, is the company going to stop the shows? Even the spoiled actors of the theatre trade would not dare touch this actress in her impure days."⁴

In the contemporary scenario, there have been efforts where women are on stage for themselves, saying what they really wish to say; not just 'acting' or 'directing' but taking the reins in their own hands and taking up their very own issues and playing it themselves. Though, even in the present scenario, the market pressures are such that for women taking up her problems on stage or off stage is either not welcomed or is stamped with some label which results in undermined scope of growth of the same as an issue as well as art form. But with more and more women choosing stage to express themselves, this undermining does not seem to be dampening their enthusiasm.

And all these woman performers have been doing this very important thing of addressing the queries related to their own bodies. This is what makes these

⁴ Adarkar Neera "In Search of Women in History of Marathi Theatre, 1843-1933", A Reader Modern Indian Theatre, Ed. Nandi Bhatia, Oxford University Press 2009, p.224

performances of great importance because these are the questions which are always pushed under the carpet while raising the so called women issues in the performing arts or even if asked the chances are that these are represented by men as per their own comfort. But these performances actually take everyone out of their comfort zone and pose the difficult questions in the most difficult manner. No wonder, Savita Rani after her performance of RIP gets a man from the audience coming to her and say, ‘You made us uncomfortable.’

How the body culture is fed to the girls and how it affects their being for all their lives is the concern of almost all of these performances. Actress Mallika Taneja articulates the same thing while talking about the performance created and performed by her, “‘The thing about experience is that it sits in our bodies and we don’t forget it,” she says, alluding to all that she’s been through. “It sits in ways we don’t even know, and it comes out in ways we can’t even imagine.⁵”. On the similar lines actress Savita Rani points out, “If physically I am looked as other (inferior) in society it will definitely affect my emotional being (body & mind).”

All these performances are in a way, the struggle of the actress first to accept her own self as a woman completely, with all the inhibitions engraved in her by the society and in spite of all these limitations accepting her as a physical, cultural, social and artistic being in the space she stays. In RIP when the performer Savita

⁵ Cornelious, Deborah. “Clothes Can’t Maketh a Woman.” *The Hindu*, 30 Sept. 2016.

Rani changes her clothes during the performance, she struggled first with herself to reach to a position where the act becomes comfortable to her and then that comfort reaches the audience. She shares one of the woman audience's responses on the act of changing during the performance who says, "It is the most personal thing but you did it with so much ease and grace that it became my favorite moment of your performance."

Similarly, when actress Mallika Taneja talks about her first entry on stage in her solo performance 'Thoda Dhyan Se' where she is standing naked in front of the audience for a couple of minutes, the act surely reclaims the space and value of woman self as whole, as an individual with body and mind. Though, neither she nor this study wishes to limit the whole act to the body but then the truth is that the woman body in these performances become the initiating point of conversation with the audience. The audience, which usually takes pleasure in staring the female body, confronts the discomfort created by the performer; through body. Again, the patriarchal weapon used against women for so long has been used by these women to create counter arguments.

In all these performances, the triggering point was their own struggle to be. There are always various reasons involved but undoubtedly, self-struggle of these actresses was one of the pivotal bases of the performances. About the performance 'Thoda Dhyan Se' 'It was born in response to the gang-rape of a photojournalist in

Mumbai in 2013. “It also happened because of December 16. It happened because, when I used to go to theatre workshops by bus, some man thought it was okay to keep his hand on my crotch. It happened because, when I was going home from college, some guy fondled my breasts. I am not separate from my art. Everything in my life has led to this,” says Taneja⁶

Savita Rani, while talking about the beginning of the process of RIP states ‘Parallel in this process my social and cultural being was also involved as intensely as personal being. Suddenly I started analyzing and inquiring the mythologies, past, present, current situations, events, happening around me. Shifting point from personal to social and cultural rather than saying shifting I must say my embodied self which includes physical, emotional, social and cultural being and cannot be separated from each other clearly.’⁷ This intense juxtaposition of the self with the performance is what leads all the performances towards creating a unique experience for their own selves as well as the audience.

Because the process of such works always require the artist to befriend one’s own self first, accept one’s own character and then reach to the point of performance. So, in a way, all these performances started with the existential struggle of the artist and proceeded by taking this crisis to the audience then.

⁶ LAKHE, AMRUTA. “Jyoti Dogra Sticks to Her Minimalist and Experimental Style of Production with ‘Notes on Chai.’” *The Indian Express*, 19 Feb. 2015.

⁷ Savita Rani. “RIP”. 20 Oct. 2017.

Extending one's own experience to the larger audience takes one to the most vulnerable position where these women decided to be.

Responding to the contemporary times and creating their performances out of the happenings around is another common base of these performances. In 'Notes on Chai', 'To illustrate her point, Dogra transforms into a shy newly-wed from Mathura, who doesn't like "dip-dip chai" and prefers making her own tea with adrak. She confesses slyly that she enjoys this cuppa in the morning, before waking her husband up. "Not that I didn't like his company," she hastens to add, "but I like this time to myself." The newly-wed then goes on to reveal that she wanted audition for Indian Idol. "But my husband thought a government job is more suitable for someone simple like me," she says. These seemingly simple admissions of the character complete with the tone in which they are said, allow a glimpse into her life, where marriage hasn't turned out to be what she had expected. Over the course of the play, Dogra's characters return to resume the conversation. The newly-wed, for instance, speaks about her secret fondness for whiskey, her sexual desires and how awkward her husband makes her feel in bed.'⁸

Almost all these performers have got the audience response where the audience, especially women, have told them that they felt that 'it was like talking

⁸ LAKHE, AMRUTA. "Jyoti Dogra Sticks to Her Minimalist and Experimental Style of Production with 'Notes on Chai.'" *The Indian Express*, 19 Feb. 2015.

to a friend in her room'. This kind of intimacy cannot be achieved without taking up the challenge of taking your naked self to the audience, which these women did.

All of these narratives, being post-dramatic in nature, following the pattern of the solo performances, breaking the fourth wall and talking directly to the audience; are in fact trying to fill the abyss in the present literature regarding the feminine realities. These narratives, documented appropriately, are the authentic contemporary literature which can become the guiding light for the paths ahead.

'Ethnography, broadly defined means the writing of culture. It follows that auto-ethnography consists of the writing of one's own culture. I distinguish this from autobiography in the sense that culture consists of built, shared and assumed narratives. The process requires not merely the telling of one story, but a look at the way stories have patterns and an underlying logic to them. Auto-ethnography, therefore, is the examination of the narratives that have built the way I understand myself and my culture.'⁹

While these performances take the artist's true self to the audience, the intimacy created poses the challenge of vulnerability. While all these times, women issues either take a back seat or not represented appropriately, these women have taken up the challenge, accepting the vulnerability involved to write

⁹ PORTER, LAURELANN. "Why Won't You Help Me ... Shave My Head?' Critical Autoethnography and Understanding Affective Response to an Act of Critical Vulnerability in Solo Performance." 2015.

down their own culture by building and sharing their own narratives and intervening through their communication to the audience.

The entry of women on stage was very much ‘requirement’ of the art of theatre and women entering theatre at that time were not performing but being ‘used’. Accepting the restlessness coming from the personal and social being as a woman; sometimes for your own self, as confrontation seems to be the only option for smoothening one’s relationship with one’s surroundings; and sometimes for others; choosing your own self to be portrayed without layering it into stories, is what it takes to make such performance. The strength of such acceptance comes by understanding ‘the difference’; confronting and then countering it through its own tools.

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*A process of Performative Conscientization: Beyond the generalised
connotation of Tfd (Theatre for Development)*

Monalisa Chatterjee

Abstract

In order to initiate a process of emancipatory and transformative pedagogical performance, it is necessary to look critically at some watertight binaries, generalization procedure and become more specific regarding the issues to be handled at specific contexts. Rather than affiliating under the umbrella term of Tfd(Theatre For Development) , a more specific issue based approach can be taken to enhance critical thinking and a proper evaluation of the condition we are living in. The space we inhabit as human being (including socio-political economic and other diversified terrains) can become a space for performance with diversified issues as elements to be interacted with. The learning can be omnidirectional. It can lead to a two flow communication with feedbacks serving as the next source of learning, critical thinking and evaluation. It can create dialogue rather than being didactic with a tinge of absolutism. It can create performers from spectators. It can create learners from performers. Hence it can lead to conscientization against any infallible absolute banking concept of knowledge, against culture of silence. This commentary, through practice based research approach, has tried to communicate such a hypothetical perspective through a particular case study of a workshop based performance ‘KTHA BLTE CHI6I’- I want to speak in social media linguistic culture- by a Kolkata based Theatre Group Shyambazar Natyacharcha Kendra.

Keywords: Conscientization, Transformative learning, emancipatory learning, Communication, Theatre for Development, Android Culture, Social media

Introduction

Will it be highly unethical to start my communication of practice based research by reflecting on a scholar's view? I like to enter into any praxis through enquiring the whole process I design to follow. Academically it provides new sources for a discursive analysis (obviously Freirian dialogue is carried out with all the performers and later with the Boal's concept of 'spec-actor'.) As a performer it always challenges every level of perception that waits to be structured. In a sense it discards any stagnancy and complacency, and always irritates the mind and body relation to delve into several perspectives. So let me start with Ann –Marie MacDonald and her perception of theatre as a pedagogical tool.

[...]It is interesting because both those areas—theatre and education—are very forgiving at one level, but they are the most rigorous at another. Yet there is also something very humane about both pursuits. The fact that they can tolerate a multitude of ineptitude doesn't take away from the fact that they are driven by excellence, like anything else. It is human activity with a very, very wide embrace. (Ann Marie Macdonald and Kathleen Gallagher, 2018,p 249)

However whenever we perceive theatre from a pedagogical point of view, we run certain risks. Among one of them is the risk of being didactic. This commentary does not provide enough space to delve into the several subterfuges that my opinion refers to. Hence I would decently cease here by referring the case of Virgilio, and the experience of Augusto Boal regarding the negative impact of didactic nature of Theatre. Another risk of connoting with a

proper term as TFD or Theatre For Development can be easily noted through the negation of Syed Jamil Ahmed of the Department of Theatre and Music, University of Dhaka. "I wish there could be a world without Theatre for Development." (Ahmed, *Wishing for a World without 'Theatre for Development': Demystifying the case of Bangladesh, Research in Drama Education*, 2002, p.207). Syed Jamil Ahmed is of the opinion that generally in Third World Countries TFD is quite a tricky concept. Being sponsored by International Donor Organisation, the NGOs working with TFD compliment the basic underpinnings of global capitalism. Hereby let me shortly introduce my paradigm of research on which my performance was based on.

The word "performance" is used to indicate a wide range of cultural events, such as drama, theatre, ritual, popular entertainment, and ceremonies, while its theoretical partner "performativity" is used to theorize the social construction of identity. Social theorists like Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, for example, have used the performative to theorize the complex and iterative construction of identity. (Gallagher, 2007, p. 107)

In my practice based research I have to go through the interdisciplinary praxis of 'performance' and 'performativity'. I consciously practiced to discard didactic approach. Somehow I wished like Ahmed, to deal with the tricky layers under the umbrella term of TFD in a more constructive way. My hypothesis was to initiate conscientization rather than being a propagandist. The underpinnings of capitalism, the system of globalization, and the neoliberal mentality. Under the current perspective individuality is mentioned by profit, loss, personal talent and self-interest. People have become commodity, projecting consumerist essence. In his book Jarvis points to the information technology and the power and hegemony it exercises.

[...]the information technology revolution took off, with one development leading to another[...]the availability of new technologies constituted as a system in the 1970s was a fundamental basis for the process of socio-economic restructuring[...] the world-wide infrastructural driving force of social change is information technology empowered by those who control capital (Jarvis, 2000, p. 344)

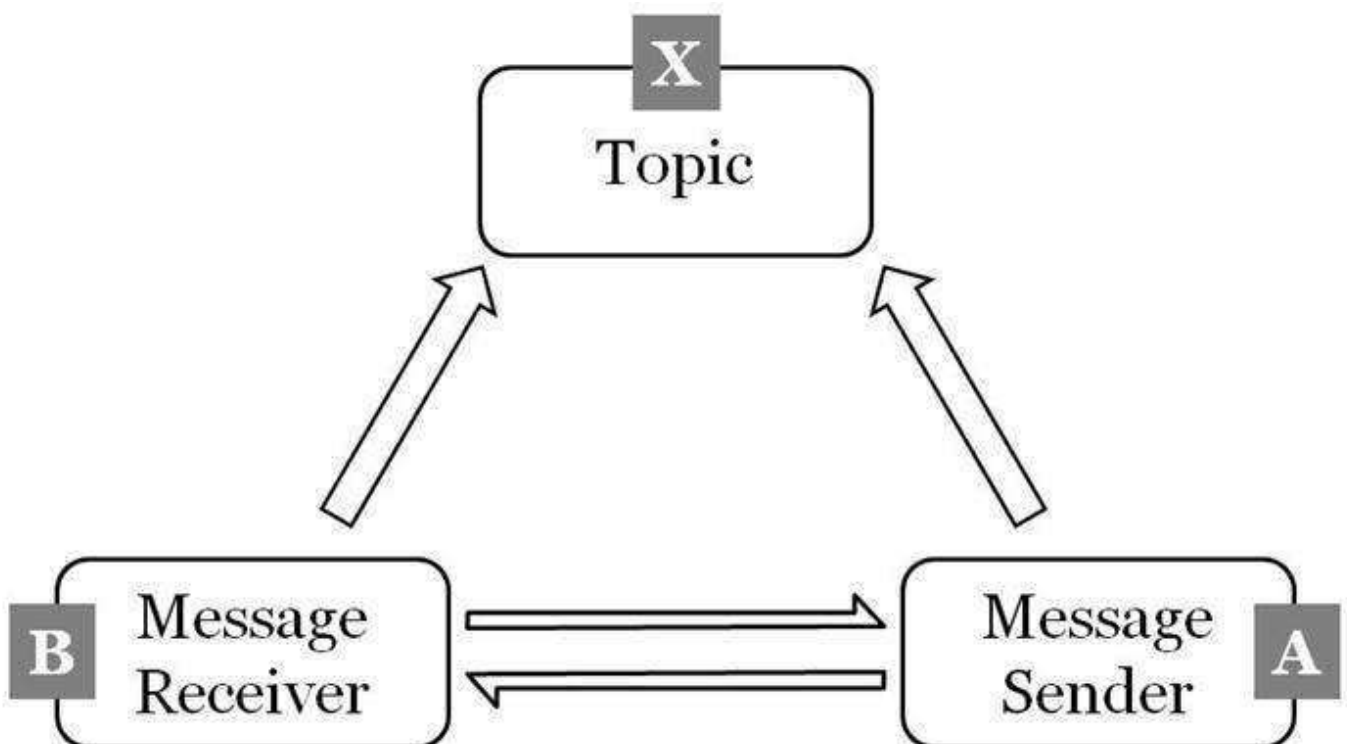
Within such a global structure knowledge functions as information access, technology, socioeconomic disparities, job skills, formal education and similar others. Hence a mechanized education structure is fostering the ‘banking concept of education’, perceived by Paulo Freire. Paulo Freire’s concept of ‘Transformative Learning’ emphasized Conscientization for critical thinking, observation and perception to deal with three distortions of learning. In epistemic distortion, knowledge of any form is misconceptualized as absolute and infallible. Socio-cultural distortions leads to put faith in beliefs in the socio-cultural labyrinth (economic, political, social, health, religion and other perspectives) as proposed by institutional hegemony. It somewhat reminds of Gramsci’s Ideological State Apparatus. These beliefs are reinforced by social media and platforms through internet. The distorted beliefs pass on to discriminatory racial, sexual, ethnical, class based violence and perverted thought system. This dehumanizing effect leads to psychic distortion, propounding anxiety, stress and impeding critical thought process, proper evaluation and required action. (Dawson and Avoseh, 2018). Hence rather than connoting a praxis as development with a generalised approach, Praxis of Conscientization enhancing transformative or emancipatory knowledge is a better option. The constructive process has been curbed out in search of a better praxis according to Syed Ahmed Jamil.

Conceptual Framework

I will state about my praxis based research to highlight how my hypothesis has been constructed all through the way through logistics. For that I have to refer to models of communication to minutely clarify my objective of designing such a praxis.

Figure 1

The Newcomb's Model of Communication

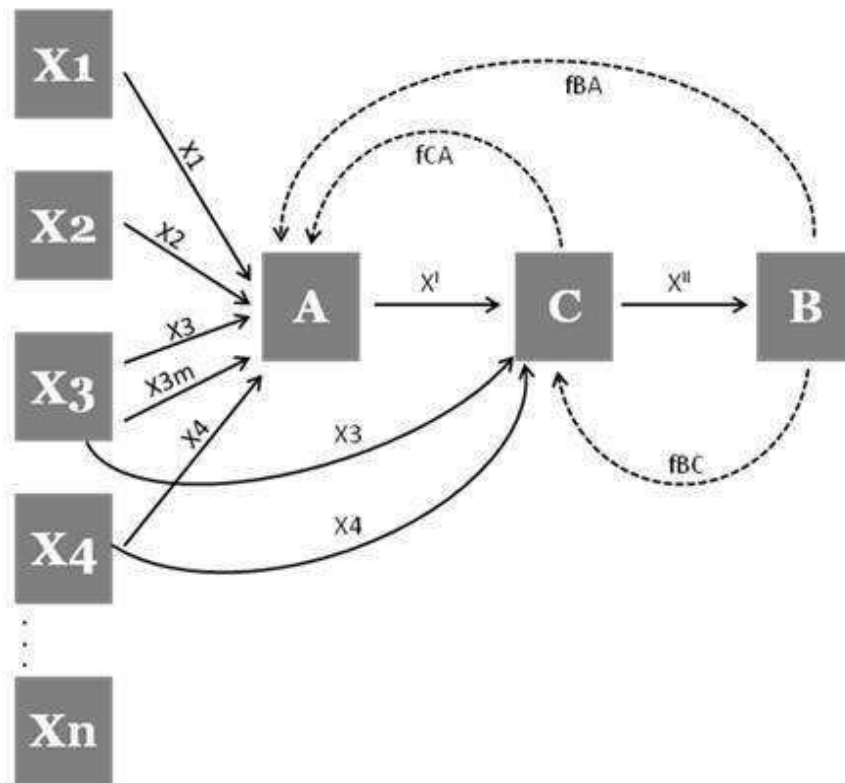


(The Newcomb's Model in Communication Model, n.d.)

The above diagram refers to New Comb's model of communication that was introduced by Theodore M Newcomb of the University of Michigan in 1953. This diagram of communication emphasises the concept of social communication and its importance to maintain social to maintain an equilibrium within the social relationships. In the above ABX model of communication A is sender, B is message receiver and X is the issue to be communicated. Here the

flow of message indicated by the arrow may get affected due to the X or the issue.

Figure 2



Westley and Maclean's Model of Communication

(Westley and Maclean's Model of Communication, n.d.)

Westley and MacLean's model of communication was introduced in 1957 by Bruce Westley (1915-1990) and Malcolm S. MacLean Jr. (1913-2001). Here communication has been viewed in both interpersonal and mass context. The difference of communication in different contexts has been reflected in nature of feedback. The feedback is direct and fast in interpersonal context whereas it

is slow and indirect in the case of mass communication. According to this theory when individuals responds to her/his physical surroundings in a selective manner, communication becomes effective. According to the subjective perspective of the receiver, s/he responds to the surroundings, leading to an effective communication. Clients (A), Reader or Audience (B) and Gate Keeper (c), X1, X2, X3 and X4....—are news articles or information, Feedback (f),

1. Feedback loop between Reader (B) and Client (A) - fBA.
2. Feedback Loop between Reader (B) and News Paper (C) – fBC.
3. Feedback Loop between News Paper(C) and Client (A)- fCA.

Case Study

Let us now enter into the realm of our case study

I want to speak (Kotha Bolte Chaichi)

In Bengali, we say ‘Kotha Bolte Chaichi’ (I want to speak). But the poster of the play is designed as ‘KTHA BLTE CHI6I’. This particular semiotics is very familiar in android or smart phone culture. We contract the full spelling and use short hand to communicate our message quickly. But what does it communicate? This arrangement of alphabets are selectively chosen by individuals according to their own orientation to communicate (Westley and MacLean’s model of communication). When A sends such a message to B, the feedback of B(fBA) has a lot of importance. Either it can be in proper language or it can also come as a selective arrangement of different alphabets. It is creating a whole new paradigm of communication somewhere adhering to the underpinnings of android culture, where in certain cases happens a youth finds difficulty in writing his own language and uses this abbreviations in English to

write Bengali, even out of the Android context. According to Newcomb's model of communication, it is creating new social relationships where the concept of equilibrium is getting disturbed. When a girl of urban context is communication with a boy in suburban context even the pronunciation of that particular Bengali word is getting affected. It is creating new relationships, where the girl from suburban context may be deemed somewhat inferior based on her mastery over choice of English alphabets. The most important issue that I did connect while designing my praxis was how this new culture and its feedback is affecting the 'performativity' as a social man. What are the topics that are being highlighted in place of others? How the digital binaries and the concept of social platform popularity and acceptance is affecting individual existence? According to Newcomb's model of communication the issues affect communication. And according to the Westley and MacLean's model of communication the subjective orientation of the individuals to their environment creates a multi-layered communication and affects the society structurally and functionally

The Performative Narrative

It starts with the basic disturbances caused by individual absorption of android culture that leads to continuous habit of interacting with phones. It is disturbing the basic communication through direct touch, sight, smell, taste and natural sounds. The audience are included in the performance when they are consciously asked to get involved in a game which is based on decoding this android linguistic or semiotics. It becomes a puzzle game. And there on the performance proceeds with the popularity of a mechanized culture where apps like 'Hussap', 'Facebook', 'Instagram', 'Twitter' and many more are becoming determinants to decide which issues are important in present scenario. The popularity and acceptance of a particular existence is being measured by the number of likes, reactions, comments and followers. Even the basic human

emotions like love is dealt through android smart culture with a globalised model of generalisation where individuality is basically oppressed. The concept of ideal femininity and masculinity is affecting a fake communication under fake identity of fake profiles. Hence the technology is creating two classes of ‘information – haves’ and ‘information- have nots’. It is not only creating a stiff binary between elder and younger generation, but also among the contemporary generation.

The practice based research

By applying Newcomb’s model of communication I wanted to highlight the issues that are basically affecting the ‘performativity’ of social man. By selecting various predominant channels of information like various social platforms (X1, X2, X3 and X4 according to Westley and MacLean’s model of communication) I wished to survey the difference of communication in different contexts that has been reflected in nature of feedback and how does it affect social equilibrium. I conceptualised the whole performance from a process of workshop. The young participants, (specifically the youths in their 20s) were led to practices that would develop their concept of space, its elements, the dimension. They were asked to find out the different modes of communication through performance and their interaction with their space and surroundings. Initially they were led to interact with the vibes they are receiving from their workshop space along with all its elements and dimensions. Later they were asked to collectively choose certain issues that are rendered with high value and importance by the youth. 8 people were divided into two groups. They interacted within their own groups and communicated some issues through performance. Among them I observed that the importance of smart android culture, the popularity of social platforms are being addressed by highlighting certain problems like ‘body-shaming’, ‘the intellectual division between urban and suburban regarding technology and the economic capacity to use it’, ‘the

different dimension of communication which is corrupted to fulfil the crisis of existence', 'the android smart linguistic, which is becoming a powerful determinant of intellectual class division of society' and so on. I discarded any concept of scripting the narrative. Rather an organic process was followed where the narrative was contributed collectively by all performers. At the first phase of the process the feedbacks from the performers became the main objective. I did not keep any guard of gatekeepers which would affect their direct communication and feedback. It was restricted only for the spec-actors in final performance. As practice based research I have interviewed the performers after three performances about their experience of the whole process and received feedbacks which I put in the dialogue form as it happened

Interview

Mrittika Basu -Recently my theater group 'Shyambazar Natya Charcha Kendra' organized a drama workshop. It was a "Production Based Drama Workshop". It provided a scope of learning. It was coached by Monalisa Chatterjee. Since the first day some elements were given to us.

Rajbir Ghosh - Since the very first day she taught us about the space utilisation, collective coordination, communication in totality through some physical activities, vocal and verbal exercises. Our rehearsals began with these exercises and ended with the song "Haal Chero na Bondhu Borong Kontho Charo Jore Dekha Hobe Tomar Amar Onyo Ganer Bhore" of Kabir Suman (Do not leave hope rather speak out loud. Let a new morning shine bright.)

Atindra Mondal - We played a lot of games. These games were fun but not ordinary. From here we learned 'communication', 'use of space elements', 'collective coordination'. Such a process influenced us a lot.

Suman Karmakar- Meanwhile she raised some issues of our time and created a dialogue with us. One day she came up with the issue of virtual social platform, android smart culture, gadget freakiness, digi-dependence and so on. We related

well. One of such issue was "A fix in Facebook" (.Facebook e Fyasaad She divided us in two groups. We have improvise a story on this issue and enact it.

Jitaditya Chakraborty - We have become gadget freaks. We tend to forget how the pages of a book smell like. We are more into Ebooks and PDFs. All the necessary amenities of life are transacted online. Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, online games has cast its influence on outdoor games, group chatting. Rather we have stopped communicating with each other humanely. Throughout the process I felt that such an alienation has taken its toll on me and my generation especially since pandemic. But it spread its tentacles well before and after its time.

Rajbir G. - She prepared a play with all our thoughts and ideas which was named as 'Kotha Bolte Chaichi.'(I want to talk).But the most interesting fact, which created an innovative approach for me was that there are no such written dialogues or no fixed texts.

Mrittika B. - She wove together the thoughts and problems that we communicated through our improvisation acts into our drama .At times it seemed that the dialogues are very organic and we delivered spontaneously. I would like to mention an incident that happened during our performance at Natya Kojagari organised by Shantipur Sanskritik at Shantipur. The audience consisted of people of all ages. To address proverbially it consisted from 8 to 80. Our performance is a type of promenade theatre. We initiate our performance from outside the performance space and escort the audience inside. While such process was being performed an old woman in the crowd suddenly came up to me and said, "We are enjoying a lot."

Jitaditya C. - The audience sing with us. We play some interesting games with the audience which involves the android practice of abbreviating the Bengali language in peculiar digital binaries. The audience reacts and enjoy

spontaneously when they communicate that they are entangled in the same vicious web. For me these are spine tingling moments.

Mrittika B. – A girl in the audience at Shantipur sang with us. As soon as I approached her, she grabbed my hand and started dancing with us. That's when some of the words mentioned in the workshop process struck a note. “Communication and connection.”

Tanaya Adhikary - Aristotle said “The aim of art is not to represent the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance”. I was fortunate enough to find myself through a play that edified me Inside Out. The play is ‘Kotha Bolte Chaichi’. We are now highly dependent on ‘Digital Conversation’, ‘Social Platform approved means of life’. ‘Social Media’ claims to ‘bring society together’ but in reality make us more unsocial and intolerant to the opposite views and ideology. We as a society often forget that we should embody diverse identities and their ideas and fall in the trap of ‘Generalisation’. We invest on faceless people with incomprehensible thoughts which send us negative vibes, creating existence vulnerabilities. We trading our own-self for a fake profile. On Our first show at ‘Girish Mancha’ a senior audience asked us that “Do we feel the importance of message that we are trying to communicate through the performance?” Most of us faltered and ultimately replied that ‘We’re trying’.

Jitaditya C. – Throughout the process I re-learned about life and its essence, the importance of real people, real conversation, touch, smell. It made me crave for a life out of ‘digi-freakiness.’ (Shyambazar Natyacharcha Kendra (members), personal communication, April 10,2022).

Conclusion

I put up the whole interview as taken to emphasise that the hypothesis of my research – conscientization through Theatre enhancing transformative or emancipatory knowledge. ‘KTHA BLTE CHI6I’ – itself embodies the distorted

linguistic and communication style and satires the whole epistemic distortion, where generalised digi-culture is misconceptualized as absolute and infallible (add filter to photos and make to ideal according to set values). It leads to Socio-cultural distortions, to put faith in beliefs and ideals that are highly inhumane (femininity is ideal when measured as 26-24-26 inches). This enhances discriminatory attitude based on identities that are not up to the mark to be qualified as ideal (Masculinity based on the ideal of 6 packs and date to 'Starbucks'. People named as Charandas Kole are rejected instantly). Hence the dehumanizing effect leads to psychic distortion (fake profile, fake news, too much dependence on social media). The problems related to anxiety, stress, depression, psychic disorder has surpassed the other clinical disorders and concerns.

There are far more pressing issues that can be addressed in similar context. But I wanted to affect the basic cognition of people before involving them in the labyrinth of our existential mess catalysed by an unstable violent time that deems any alternative as a practice of absurd. Let Sisyphus start pushing his rock up the mountain and watch it to roll down. Let him get the taste or consciousness of absurdity he is used to live with at a basic cognitive level. Let us start from 'A'. Hence let me prove my hypothesis of Theatre of Conscientization leading to emancipatory and transformative learning through dialogue and communication. Let theatre come out from its generalised connotation of TFD and provide specific pedagogical process for specific given circumstances to enhance critical thought process, proper evaluation and required action. Let the journey begin in its own specific context- 'Performer, Space, Spec-actor.'

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Street Theatre: Much beyond Amusement, a Movement

Ashwini

&

Sapna MS

Introduction

Without an element of protest,
Theatre loses its value,
Theatre loses its meaning,
Theatre loses its purpose.

Can theatre be a medium of protest or is it just amusement? Theatre across the globe has proved that it can be a very effective medium of protest. Every theatre has an iota of protest in a subtle way if not loud and straight. Be it Greek theatre – Sophocles, English theatre – Shakespeare, Indian Theatre – Hindi, Kannada, Bengali or Tamil; every language theatre has from time to time protested against the social atrocities.

Indian theatre has been very successfully used as a medium of protest. Professional (Company) theatre strongly fought against the British and tried it's best to sow the seeds of freedom struggle among Indians. Bengali, Marathi and Kannada theatre strongly voiced the need of independence. But it has to be remembered that these messages were not presented directly. They invented subtle ways of expression, be it in words, costume or theatrical presentation.

'Kempu kothi' was a word that was first introduced by Kannada theatre to refer to the Britishers, when the word 'Parangi' became familiar to them. Harikatha,

was well utilised to pass on messages of freedom struggle without drawing the attention of Britishers. So it is evident that since the days of freedom struggle, theatre was used as a medium of communication to pass on the spirit of freedom struggle. It was used as a medium of protesting the British administration in India.

Theatre cannot be looked at merely as a medium of entertainment. It has a deeper potential. It can be considered as one of the most successful mediums of education and creating awareness. This medium can be more apt to a developing nation like India; where the economic factors become a major concern both for performers and viewers. In India where literacy rate is very low street theatre provides an immediate connect. It was widely used to bring about social change during 1970s, 1980s 1990s. Social activists and NGOs widely used street theatre to bring a change in the socio-economic and political scenario of the nation.

Street Theatre

If street theatre has any definite tradition in India; it is the anti-imperialist tradition of our people forged during the freedom movement. In other parts of the world it is the peoples' struggle for a just social and economic order –
Safdar Hashmi

Street theatre falls under the category of traditional communication. It takes place on streets. People gather around the artists who perform on streets. Various socio-political themes can be effectively communicated through this medium. It can raise awareness among the public. (*Explained*, 2021).

Freedom of expression in theatre was never absolute. Restrictions were imposed to control the messages of freedom struggle and independence that were communicated through plays. Concept of censorship was introduced even for

the plays. Police would monitor the concept of the play, script and dialogues. Permission to perform the play was granted only after confirming that the play did not involve any matter against East India Company. But the troupes found subtle ways of expression and continued to protest through this medium.

Post-Independence, the need for protest was strongly felt during Emergency declared in 1975. It is said that Street theatre got introduced during II world war by Bertolt Brecht, who is also considered as father of street theatre. Also called as Poster plays, street theatre found a new meaning and shape during emergency. Several troupes across the nation performed street plays and made their contribution in creating awareness about emergency. After independence, Government realised the need of traditional media in creating awareness among the rural audience. NGOs as well as government used this medium to create social awareness. (Seetha P.N, 2021). This has to be comprehended in the background of the condition that existed in India during that time. Just after Independence, India was a bundle of problems. Extreme poverty, unemployment, religious clashes, political problems, riots etc., were a part of India. In such a state of chaos and political confusion, street theatre could definitely be used as an effective medium of communication. Television was not popular and theatre remained a strong source of entertainment for sure.

Street plays gained a lot of momentum during emergency. When political satires were performed by troupes, when messages criticizing political leaders were inculcated in plays, it was not an easy task to perform. Plays were stopped by goons and political groups. Theatre troupes found it difficult to find auditoriums to stage their performance; especially when the play criticized the political happenings. Proscenium theatre was left behind and the troupes took to the streets to perform. This is the best instance of theatre used as a medium of protest. Theatre troupes made it clear that they cannot be silenced. IPTA (Indian

Peoples Theatre Association) staged plays from time to time criticizing the political decisions

Samudaya, a theatre organisation from Karnataka supported progressive artists to design a campaign to challenge Indira Gandhi's election plan. As the emergency started, Prasanna(founder of Samudaya) convinced somehow five theatres of liberation groups. He encouraged these groups to develop a street show of skits mixed with political songs. R.P Prasanna asked for the support of the political opposition parties and he got it too. He also organized a month-long mobile theatre of liberation festival in Chikmagalur district. The five Samudaya Theatre Company units travelled from village to village by bicycle. Wherever they went, they were provided food and shelter by the political organisers of the opposition, who also took care of publicity. These performers also needed to sell postcards and books to finance their next tour. Even the market places would often turn into a spontaneous venue for the political discussions. During the 'Jatha', the different Samudaya units performed several hundreds of times.(*Samudaya Theatre Company, Karnataka, n.d.*)

The idea of performing in a circle, with the audience around was developed by Safdar Hashmi in Delhi and by C.G.Krishnaswamy (CGK)in Karnataka. Without quite knowing it was called that, Safdar and his comrades had “invented” street theatre. Of course, they hadn’t really invented it – street theatre had an older history, one which they were not aware of and, remarkably, at the very moment that Jana Natya Manch (IPTA) was creating *Machine*, Samudaya, a theatre group in Karnataka, was also creating a play called *Belchi*, using very similar techniques and form.It was nearly three years before the groups realised, they were both doing the same thing at the same time. Street theatre, in its modern Indian avatar, was born in reaction to the Emergency, as a form of resistance to authoritarianism.

The murder of Safdar Hashmi, a theatre activist very clearly throws light on the fact that attempts were made to silence theatre and the artists. In 1989 Safdar Hashmi was performing a street play at 'Jhandapur' in Sahibabad. He was performing a play demanding wages for labourers that was unmet since long. Hashmi raised his voice in their favour. Goons attacking the troupe as the play was being staged shows that the impact of the play on society was feared

On the fourth of January 1989, Jana Natya Manch delivered the single most important street theatre performance in the history of India. The troupe had been attacked on the morning of Sunday, January 1, while performing in a labour colony at Jhandapur in Sahibabad. Minutes after Janam began their play, goons from the Indian National Congress arrived, and demanded to be allowed to pass through the performance area. Safdar asked them to wait or take another route. The goons assaulted the troupe and the audience with iron rods and firearms. A Nepali migrant worker who was a resident of the area, Ram Bahadur, was killed on the spot. Safdar was grievously injured. He finally succumbed to his injuries on the night of January 2. He was cremated the next day and his funeral procession was accompanied by 15,000 people. Less than 48 hours after his death, Janam, led by Moloyashree, returned to the spot and completed the performance. It was a stirring act of courage, commitment and defiance. (Deshpande, n.d.)

Badal Sircar (Sudhindra Sarkar), was an Indian dramatist and theatre director from Kolkata. He was known for his anti-establishment plays during the Naxalite movement in the 1970s. He found street theatre to be the most flexible and comfortable theatre form. To reduce the cost of theatre, make theatre a form of art which gives opportunity for discussions with the audience and provides answers to the limitations of proscenium theatre. He popularised street theatre in Kolkata. ("Changing Face of Street Theatre," 2017)

Price rise, atrocities against women, superstitions were all condemned by street theatre from time to time. The success of street theatre lies in the fact that they reach the grassroots on a face to face level and enables them to think, question and raise their voice. It in fact, becomes the voice of the voiceless. It voices the problems and issues of the downtrodden and neglected segments of the society. Street theatre would immediately respond to the social, economic and political issues of the nation.

Street theatre got introduced in Karnataka by A.S. Murthy. But street theatre in its true sense was taken up by 'Samudaya' a theatre organisation in Karnataka. It was converted into a movement; a people's movement by Samudaya. Raising voice against the system when necessary, immediately responding to the societal happenings and being successful in delivering justice to the suffering class has been the greatest success of Samudaya.

'Belchi' is one such play performed by Samudaya. In August 1977, 11 landless Dalits were burnt alive in Belchi village in Raghapur district of Bihar. It was then theatre was used as a protest medium. Late C.G.Krishnaswamy (popularly known as CGK) expressed his protest through theatre. He decided to adapt the incident to theatre in form of street play. Belchi created history not only in Kannada theatre, but also in other parts of the country. When the play was staged, former Chief Minister of West Bengal, the late Jyothi Basu and noted journalist Kuldeep Nayar had words of appreciation for his effort. He selected artists from slums and Dalit poet Siddalingaiah penned heart-wrenching songs for the play. Shashidhar Adapa, C.K. Gundanna, Nijaguna, Lalitha, Janardhan (popularly known as Jenni in theatre) supported CGK in his endeavour. It was performed across the city in various slums. It is important to note here that Belchi became a huge movement in itself. Intellectual discussions around the form, content and success of the play became common.

Another success story is the play 'Panchataara' staged by Samudaya. The uncertainty of labourers in hotels was taken up in this play. The labourers were terminated without any prior notice and financial compensation rules were also violated. This issue was taken up through street theatre and the issue was made public. Pressure was built up and the demands of the labourers got settled.

'Kesari Bili Hasiru' is one of the most successful plays by Samudaya. Play directed by Shashidhar Barighat focusses on Hindu-Muslim unity. It also discusses how communal forces break the society. The play directly criticizes the fundamentalists and their ideologies and it required great courage to stage this play. When the play was being performed at Anekal, artists were attacked by fundamentalists. Several artists were severely injured and C.K. Gundanna was stabbed by one of them. The success lies in the fact that artists further protested the act of the fundamentalists and went on a procession the next day at the same place. The play was also staged at the same place.

Bhanwari Devi, an Indian social-worker from Bhatner Rajasthan, was gang raped in 1992 by higher-caste men angered by her efforts to prevent a child marriage in their family. Her subsequent treatment by the police, and court acquittal of the accused, attracted widespread national and international media attention, and became a landmark episode in India's women's rights movement.

Samudaya immediately protested against this atrocity committed. They took to street theatre and performed hundreds of street plays across the state creating awareness about the incident and indirectly building pressure on the judicial system and the government.

When Babri Masjid was demolished several theatre troupes in Karnataka came together and protested on the steps of Kalakshetra there by exhibiting their anger and disagreement. Similar protest was also staged demanding the implementation of Gokak report.

But currently street theatre has to find its way and purpose. Though it is active in Kerala and Bengal, street plays in Kannada have taken a downward slide. Reaching out the grassroots and voicing their issues should be the true essence of street theatre. To remind, a Dalit was burnt alive for having an affair with a girl from upper caste, thousands of girls are still being raped, child labour and harassment still continues, caste and gender inequalities continue to haunt the society, superstitions are still prevalent, and media continues to mislead the society. Having social movements, students' movements is need of the hour. Theatre can be successfully used to mobilize the masses and create awareness. Sadly, this is not happening at a considerable rate.

Street play lent voice to voiceless communities once, it has now become a tool of the multi-national companies to market their products. According to Shashidhar Adapa, a pesticide company recently used the street play format to sell its product. "Street play concept which was a platform for protest once, has transformed over the years, it is being exploited for commercial purposes," he says. Interestingly, it is BJP which used street play during the last Lok Sabha elections to project its prime-ministerial candidate and his model of development. Now the street has changed, it resonates with voices from the market, he says. Street theatre today touches upon issues as diverse as ecological consciousness, awareness about HIV and AIDS to family planning. (Khajane, 2014)

Need of Street Theatre in current scenario

Several sections of the society have been suppressed for centuries. It can be on the basis of caste, creed, language, gender or culture. The bias has existed and tormented millions for ages. These voiceless people were forced to suffer. They could not raise their voice or stand for themselves due to lack of education and

awareness about their own rights. Another major factor is the fear that existed among them. They were scared of the further torment or consequences they had to face if they ever raised their voice or revolted against the oppression. One has to appreciate and understand the importance of street theatre in providing a voice to these voiceless communities. Through street theatre, various NGOs and social activist groups performed on the street across the villages and cities. It is interesting that their target audience was both urban and rural population. They wanted to create awareness among both the educated class and the uneducated. They wanted to reach out to the oppressors as well as the oppressed. They wanted to create awareness among the oppressed class about the need to fight for their rights; the provisions available for them as per law; the rights as provided by the constitution of the nation; the disasters they have to continue to face in case of silence. On the other hand they wanted to create awareness among the oppressors about the need to change their attitude and behaviour; need to stop the autocratic behaviour; need to treat every individual as equal and stop exploiting them of their rights. Both of these could be achieved simultaneously, as the audience of street theatre could include both the oppressed and the oppressors.

The strength of the medium lies in the fact that street theatre is the most economic medium. The expenses on the part of street theatre troupe remains low. The audience mostly watch street plays for free. It has the capacity to attract the audience instantaneously. The duration of the plays also remain short which makes the audience stick to watching the play. It mostly draws the attention of the crowd on the streets. One need not plan to attend a street play which makes it the most flexible medium. One can watch a street play while waiting for a bus, at the market, on the way to the office, just opposite the house or on the way back home. This offers entertainment and food for thought at the same time. It familiarises the audience to issues they should be pondering over.

It puts the audience to thinking and might even result in a changed behaviour amongst the public. Creating awareness about the need to vote, maintaining religious solidarity, eliminating superstitious beliefs, need of girls' education, women rights, need of gender equality are few of the issues performed in street theatre. Badal Sircar analysed the possibilities of both sophisticated theatre and street theatre. He said that the street theatre has its roots in the rural society. Sophisticated urban theatre provided the audience with progressive ideas while street theatre remained backward in the ideas propagated. Hence there arose a need for a medium of communication that broke the barriers of stage and ticketed entries. (*Street Theatre India, Social and Political Messages for Awareness*, n.d.)

What is the change that street theatre brings among public? It cannot be said that this theatre form changes the attitude of every individual watching the play. It might not have a uniform impact on the entire audience. One must also be aware of the fact that it might not make any difference in the mind set or attitude of the public. It is also true that some of the people in the crowd may not watch the play till the end. But at times it cannot be the reverse of this too. Badal sircar says how an audience of 3000 in Bengal sat through their performance through the rain and were hesitant to leave when the shower got heavy. He says that he had to beg the audience to leave and this too can be the impact of street theatre on people. (*Street Theatre India, Social and Political Messages for Awareness*, n.d.)

The current day scenario of the nation can benefit a lot from street theatre. The nation is facing a subtle threat on the freedom of expression. It cannot be comprehended unless seen with keen eyes. There is also a need to create awareness among the public about the political scenario of the nation and the propaganda mechanisms in use today. Street theatre can create awareness across villages and cities about the need of freedom of expression. When there are

instances of arrest happening just for commenting on a political party; or for sharing a post written by someone on a political party; there is a need to introspect about the need of freedom of speech and expression. If the same situation continues in future, it can have a devastating effect on the society at large. There is a greater need to wake up the people and put them into thinking. The former issues, bills passed by the government and the effect it can have on the lives of a common man can be communicated efficiently through street plays.

At a time when student movements have taken a back seat, street theatre too is losing its glory. It is not an exaggeration to say that street theatre is mostly restricted to inter college competitions or performed by students at college level. Street Theatre, in current times, is more important than ever before because it will help us protect, nurture and push the idea of democracy ~ the essence of India's being.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that exists about the potentials of this medium – street theatre. It is one medium that can have an immediate connect with the audience. It is also true that many times the audience will have a one on one interaction with the artists at the end of the play. Questions might be posed; discussions can be held which all are suggestive of the fact that the medium is reaching out to the audience and having an impact. It reflects the truth that they have started to think and ponder over issues. This is also a medium that can react instantaneously to the issues. When an issue or incident demands immediate reaction, it is almost impossible for rest of the medium to reach out to the audience immediately. The newspapers might write about it and the TV channels might report. But actual reach might be low. Analysis of the issues and interpretation might not reach the public that easily. But street plays can provide

an immediate reaction. The duration required to prepare a play; the costumes, set and other requirements are not at all heavy and that is one of the strengths of the medium. Performances can be held across villages and towns and successfully awaken the thoughts of the public. This is the need of the hour where silence is more dangerous and there is a need to raise a voice against all atrocities committed in the society. Be it against farmers, students, women, marginal or any other oppressed section of the society.

To conclude, street theatre should have a purpose. A social message or an urge to change the society should be the driving force of street theatre. This theatre is definitely beyond amusement. Plays performed without a purpose or social cause is no play. It has to voice out protest; stand for the people; fight for justice; protest oppression; question the oppressors. If it fails to do this; it cannot be called theatre.

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The Style of Contemporary Odia Drama

Sarat Kumar Jena

Today's plays are different from the previous generation. This difference and uniqueness is the result of post modernity. In fact, post modernity is the analysis of a cultural return. While these plays, based on the earlier modern perspective, are ideologically oriented to Western thought, the plays based on the post modern perspectives are free from the Western influence and consciously try to stand on the ground of its own faith and culture.

The playwright always stands on the contemporary situation. He looks to the past and the future to make the present a success. Therefore, in order to make the play more communicative, it has to be changed frequently, both physically and spiritually. From the early playwright Jagmohan Lala of Odia literature to the present day, playwrights have reflected the voices of their time. Playwrights like Ramshankar Ray, Ashwini kumar, Kalicharan, Bhanjakishore, Gopal Chhotray, etc. have written the same traditional romantic drama, while Manoranjan Das has for the first time created a new voice in the play. The change in the structure and staging of the play has been hailed by critics as the voice of the new drama movement. During this time many plays have been tested to make the story more truth and realistic. Many Western styles, such as epic theaters, third theaters, symbolism and expressionism have been applied. However, the play has been misunderstood and misrepresented through a variety of applications and examinations. Hence the play is distorted and distanced from the audience.

The playwright Manoranjan Das equated the world drama with the world's new drama movement in favor of the amateur theater, freeing Odia drama from the norm and disregarding the rule of the commercial theater. His later playwrights, following the footsteps of Manoranjan provided much of the experimental and psychological replications in the play. However, in the aftermath of 1980, Ramesh Prasad Panigrahi's "emergence of the 'Maha Natak' gave a new horizon to the Odia theater world." The use of folk dramas in this way has inspired Oriya playwrights so far. At a time when the play was burdened with the application of various Westerners and alienated from the general public, Oriya playwrights were able to pay homage to the people by applying folk-drama style in the plays.

Many playwrights have started writing plays in Odisha at this time. In Bengal, Badal Sarkar has already implemented the "Third theatre" and Brekshet's Epic theater was popularized. Since then, the demand for stage plays in rural Odisha has been steadily declining, only drama competitions were taking place. Modern-day dramas are no longer served as entertainment platforms, but are transformed into competitive-based drama movements.

So from that time, there is no fixed perception in the play that is being performed, rather, there is a mix of perceptions. It has Sanskrit plays, traditional folk plays and colonial theatrical influences. In addition, popular plays like Pala, Daskathia, Ras, Tamsa, as well as the styles of popular plays by Vaishnav Pani, Jagannath Pani, Gopal Das, etc. have also been used in recent plays.

As you can see, there are more realistic voices in contemporary drama. The plays use fantasy, allegory, traditional folk dances with myth, folk elements, etc. to bring the play to the people.

The audience is made aware of the society and its problems with entertainment and respecting the history, traditions and social life. In order to reflect the current consciousness of the modern world, the playwrights have been influenced and raised their voices, especially in the social, political, cultural, economic, and religious spheres. The long and unique tradition of the Indian stage and popular folk dramas are alived even after British rule and Indian independence. Attempts are being made to revive in the post 80's plays. Through it, the traditional and eternal Indian culture can be revived. Since the beginning of the 21st century, under the influence of "globalization", our culture has been trying to be part of the world culture.

The current play is free from fun amateur(Soukeen) dramas. This is because of the fact that social media platforms such as television, Internet, and so on have become so popular. So the play is no longer sustain as a play, but now it is a competition platform. Such a play is about how to maintain the values and ideals of the play in less time, less cost, less costume. Currently, there is no specific principle of the play. These are free dramas. Playwrights those who are able to raise the voice of the contemporary situation, they are Rati Mishra, Shankar Tripathi, Narayan Sahu, Subodh Patnaik, Bijay Kumar Shatapathi, Ranjit Patnaik, Pramod Tripathi, Dillishwar Maharana, Harihar Mishra, Prasanna Kumar Mishra, Niladri Bhusan Harichandan, Manmath Shatapathi, Purnachandra Mallick, Mihir Kumar Meher, Hemendra Mohapatra, Brajendra Nayak, and Sanjay Kumar Hati among the prominents.

In the early days of Oriya drama, the story of the play was based on myths, histories, and legends. For the first time in Kalicharan's play, we get a picture of social problems. He portrayed the food problems of the time, the land problems and the unemployment problems of the time through the plays 'Bhata' ̣Fatabhuin'

and 'Bekar'. Later in the fifties, playwrights Manoranjan Das, Vijay Mishra, Biswajit Das, Praful Kumar Rath, Pranabandhu Kar, Karthik Chandra Rath, Ramesh Chandra Panigrahi have performed the intellects in the play through the application of various Western plays. Here the story of the play is not the main event, but the psychology was the prominent. In post 80s the drama has been changed in both physically and spiritually.

Ramesh Prasad Panigrahi's 'Mahanatak' is the first to express his voice. Surprisingly, it has enriched the liberal parallel tradition and away from the contemporary rigidity style. (Ganeshwar Mishra, Istahar, January 19, page-187) The satirical jokes that the "Mahanataka" has embodied in the descriptions of mythological and historical styles are nowhere to be found in the entire Oriya literature. Mahanataka was the epitome of revolutionary change in the narrative and presentation style of the free-flowing drama, which was born after the ubiquitous drama and epic drama. Its story is like the story of an Oriya folk tale. The theme of the play is to see the rule and rituals of the king, Bajrabahu by two Daskathias(Actor of folk theatre). It is a picture of the society, the politics of any country in recent times. In the fortunes of the country, emperors like Bajrabahu are always found. This socio-political picture of the story of 'Mahanataka' can be seen in many plays in recent times. Biswajit Das's 'Samrat', Bijay Mishra's "Jane Raja Thile, Ratnakar Chaini's "Athacha Chanakya' Kunj Rai's "Biday Bajraditya" and others. Rati Mishra's' "Dekh Barsha Aasuchi" Bijay Kumar Shatapathi's "Ae je Surya Uyen ', Narayan Sahu's "Muka"(Mute), 'Punashcha Sangram' are reflections of political deterioration.

Rati Mishra's play 'Dekh Barsha Aasuchi' depicts the current political and economic crisis. It features a variety of folk songs and traditional folk performances. It also contains a heart barking picture of the class struggle, as well

as the turmoil of government employees. There is also a clear picture of the volatile political situation in India in the 1980s has been portrayed.

The emergency situation has made the play even more realistic and dignified. Another such type of drama is Narayan Sahu's "Punascha Sangram" Baguli Das and Galmadhab two politicians demolished the shop of a homeless person namely Bharati and set up a foreign liquor store at Gandhi Chowk on Gandhi Jayanti. An oldman and freedom fighter 'Nitai' claimed that "the country needs a revolution to free this country from the clutches of corruption," We need a total revolution. " (Punascha Sangram, p. 7) So most of the plays on the political background of the time revolt against the status quo. The playwrights have spoken out against mass liberation. But the the expected result of of the revolution is not expressed in the plays.

The playwright takes a look at the history to express the contemporary problems and situation. Recent playwrights have created new meanings and new values by freeing themselves from the narrow confines of that character or event by presenting speeches by selecting historical characters or events. It can also be called a re-evaluation of history. Through this, much of the history is illuminated out of darkness, and the culture and traditions are further illuminated. In this category, Shankar Prasad Tripathi's 'Sagar Sangam', 'Kabya Purush', Rati Mishra's 'Macha Kandanar Swara', Hrushikesh Panda's '1799', Harihar Mishra's 'Nindita Gajapati', Niladri Bhushan Harichandan's 'Kalamps', Manmath Shatapathi's "Mun Chakara Kahuchi", Diliswar Maharana's 'Bauns Thengare Swadhinata,(Freedom on a bamboo stick) was based on history.

Rati Mishra's play "Macha Kandanara Swara"(The Sound of Fish Crying) is based on a bloody chapter in history. The autobiography of Fakir Mohan and the history

of Kendujhar are the basis of this play. It also includes history, legends and myths. Dhanurjay, the king of Kendujhar, was an exploiter of people. He governs the people through the kingdom by his ill will. The playwright unveils his duality in the play. The cause of Bhuyan's dominance in Kendujhar is that their dissatisfaction has revived the history of the playwright through the description of the ruling world, the people uprising, and the rebellion. It has a magical touch to the playwright's playfulness and humanity. Today, with the breakup of a joint family, a single family with a single parent, a mother, and two children, no longer have faith and confidence in their family members. Shankar Prasad Tripathi's play "Nija tharu nijara durata" ('Your Distance from Yourself') is based on a reflection of a broken family life. The protagonist of the play 'Dusmant' goes cracked while researching the mischievous modern life. As a result, his wife Shakuntala leaves him and falls in love with a young man named Pranaya. After physical exploitation, Pranay rejects Shakuntala. Annoyed by the fact Shakuntala once again dreamed of being with her family but her dream was shattered. Her son is bitten by a snake. Dusmant try to remove poison by his mouth from the spot of snakebite and dies because of the spread of poison. Shakuntala eventually leaves home. In this story for self interest a person faced a lot misery, lost family happiness and breaked own home.

Ranjit Patnaik's 'Mana Tohar Nijguru', 'Butterfly', 'Monster', Vijay Mishra's 'Hungry Creature', Subodh Patnaik's 'Song', Rabindranath Das's 'ବିଚାର ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପୃଥ୍ବୀ' 'Bisarn Pruthibi', Ahat Swapna 'Injured Dreams', Jagannath 7 Prasad Das's 'Suryasta Purbaru' 'Before Sunset' plays are based on family stories.

The contemporary playwrights have sometimes resorted to fantasy and myth to present socially problematic realities. However, in most parts of the play, the playwrights used the form of the folk play. Sometimes the tune of revolution and

satirical expressions have been penned by the writers. Rati Mishra's plays 'Last Night', "Hansa Sikara"(Goose Hunting)', Sital huana Surya 'Aste Aste Amabasya' are the expression of the analysis of helpless mental state of the aimless youth. The playwright noted that Sixty percent of the country's population is young. Their problem is one of the biggest problem in the country. So in the play, he reflects the problems of youth, who are languishing in the midst of extreme problems and despair.

Ranjit Patnaik's 'Gaon', 'Goitha Baba', 'Uchcha Banam Padmanabh', 'Tito' and 'Kashi Piuci', Narayan Sahu's 'Kahani Saba shes Lok Lokar', 'Subarna Sakal', Pramod Kumar Tripathi's "Gotie Bula Kukurara Janma Brutanta"(The Story of the Birth of a Bull Dog), "There is no human being in the forest", "Listen to the trial convict", Hrishikesh Panda's "Vaskodagama", "Katha('wood), by Natya Chetana, Dilliswar Maharana's Uttar Purus, Subodh Pattnaik's "Abarudh Uddab" " Shankar Tripathi's" Suniba Heu E Kahani(Listen to this story) ", "Gopi Sahur Dokan" Vijay Kumar Shatapathi's plays "Ai je Surya Uyen", "Sonita Swakhara ", "Pralay Pare' and Sanjay Hati's "Brain Gain Dot com", "Dahamichh", "Mayasuravi" are well known as socially problematic plays.

The meaning of religion is also changing in recent times. Political leaders and religious leaders are busy for protecting their seats in the name of religion and taking advantage of them. Nation-building, war, communal riots in the name of religion are the epitome of this. Many plays have been written in our society over the past 30 years, such as terrorism, the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the conversion of tribals to Christianity in the name of Christ and the religious problems of Hinduism, the Church burnt, and the Station burnt. Narayan Sahu's "Asra khojuthiba Iswara", Shankar Tripathi's "Sarirup", Hrishikesh Panda's "Vaskodagama" are all based on religious themes. In the name of religion, and for

the satisfaction of the ego, leaders are armed with religion and play the game of blood, and the general public is sacrificed. In Shankar Tripathi's play "'Sarisrup', the Hindu Muslim couple, their husbands, wives and their families were blown up and turned into ash in a sudden explosion. This play also calls for communal harmony.

If we discuss the character in the development of Oriya drama, we can find that Kalicharan was the first to give a special character to the plays. However, some of Ashwini Kumar's characters are still alive and well. Manoranjan Das's characters have become self-evident and transcended limited personalities. The trend of character painting also changed in the aftermath of the Navanatya movement. However, Ramesh Chandra Panigrahi's 'Mahanatak' has a new way of portraying characters. The character was swayed by the actor and the character, and his personality changed over and over again throughout the play. This is called character transformation. Without any psychological that transformation occurred and it brought some new possibilities. Vijay Mishra later used his "Duiti Surya Dagdh Fulaku Nei" to portray the transformation through two characters in the play. Many years later, the application was seen in Manoranjan Das's play 'Nandikakesari'. However, later on in post 80s the playwright Subodh Patnaik, Ratiranjan Mishra, Pramod Tripathi, Shankar Prasad Tripathi, Ranjit Patnaik, etc., enriched the Oriya drama literature by adopting this style. In recent times, however, fantasies, myths, etc. have had an impact on everyday life. There are two types of characters in today's play. First of all, the status quo and anti-status quo. Most of the characters, however, are opposed to the status quo and sympathize the lower classes.

Rati Mishra's protagonist of the play 'Dekh Barsha Aasuchi' is Panua Mahakud. He has tried to oust the tyrannical king's representative, Jeevan Singh from the throne

of power. Young people have been given more prominence in drama because of the importance of youth in today's society. Rati Mishra's plays 'Rati Sesh (End of Night)', 'Hans Shikar(Swan Hunting)', Shital Huana Surya, "Aste Aste Amabasya", Karthik Chandra Rathak's 'Iswar Jane Jubak(God is a Young Man)', portray the dreams and frustrations of the youth. Shankar Tripathi's play "Prithivi Sharasajya" depicts the politics of campus youth and the mentality of the youth. The protagonist of the play, the protagonist Bhutanatha, has revolted against the status quo. From the beginning of the play, he portrays himself as a villain and eventually changes. Ranjit Patnaik's "Goithababa" has been a staple character from the beginning and has finally become stronger. Narayan Sahu's "Storyteller" does not have a specific hero. All the lower classes of society are depicted as the last people. Although he portrayed God in the play 'Asra khojuthiba Iswara(The God Who seek Shelter)', he is not the protagonist. God is a helpless character here. Prasanna Kumar Mishra's play 10 "Prem Khel" features twentieth-century, Kadamba tree and trees as one of the characters. Shankar Tripathi's play 'Prema pain kabita('Poetry for Love)' features three blind characters.

Similarly, in recent plays, female characters have been given special attention. However, drama does not reflect the role and importance of women in social life. Sita is portrayed as a symbol or consciousness in Rati Mishra's play 'Sita'. Lopamudra stands as the representative of motherhood in Subodh Patnaik's play 'Ho Bhagate'. Pramod Tripathi's play "Gotie Bulakukurar Janma Brutanta" the female character is helpless and under the wish of the writer. So the character portrayal in contemporary drama is quite diverse.

Since the play is a mixed art, it uses a variety of languages. In addition to the language used in the dialog, there are body language, phonetic, light language, spatial language, costume language, and so on. So the most emphasis was on the

language of the dialogue. It is noticed that the Social language was used in dialogues in the pre-independence plays. But in postindependence the language of daily life and psychological language is applied in drama. In recent plays, however, the playwrights have been observed to be using multiple languages without being loyal to a particular language. Not only do playwrights use romantic language, but they adopt language in their own way in dramatic new narrative methods. According to playwright Ramesh Panigrahi-'Chhati Fata Koha' also claims the application of language applicable to the all stages of odisha. " However, especially in recent plays, the real language of everyday life can be seen. Folk language in Rati Mishra's play 'Sita', poetic language in Shankar Tripathi's play 'Sagar Sangam', Katak language in Narayan Sahu's 'Kahani Saba shesh Lokar', Sanskrit language in Hrishikesh Panda's 'Brahmarakshas', Ganjami language in 'Ichha Banam Padmanav' appears. Ashok Kumar Tripathi's play 'Katha Kania' and 'Gaon Gatha' are written in complete Ganjami language.

Pramod Tripathi's "Gotie bula kukurara janma brutanta(The Story of the Birth of a Dula Dog) uses different languages according to character. Such as the language of the snakecharmer, the language of the Janughanta, the language of the feribala, the language of the Biscopewala are applied.

It is noticed that the recent playwrights are using languages very consciously. As a result, the combination of vernacular and social language tunes satire in presentation. Recently, playwrights have tried to show their originality by applying different styles to the play. The playwright composes the play in one style, but the director performs it in a different style. Brekhet's epic drama style, the United States' Arina Stage and the Badal Sarkars's third theatre are the examples. Especially the current Oriya drama style is influenced by the style of the epic theater. This is because of the fact that the character of the protagonist under

Brekhet's theory is adopted in our cultural and traditional folk dramas. Due to the use of folk dramas in recent plays, we are once again able to see and remember our traditions and cultural heritage.

Rati Mishra's play 'Hans Shikar'(Swan Hunting) is based on folk drama. The role of Sutradhar is important in most of his plays. In the play "DugdhJat", Situ and Mitu these two characters come to the stage talking together as Daskathiawala. His play does not need a stage door like a folk drama. The play is performed without the use of a chair, table or bench, or a set of sets. The playwright Bijay Shatapathi has used the traditional folk drama style and popular style in his play in "Ai je Surjya Uyen". Playwright Narayan Sahu's play 'Kahani sesha lokara(Story of the Last People) reflects the collage style. Nowadays, due to writing of competitive plays there are some of the specific cases styles and wonderful presentation are seen "In the post80s dynamic perspective on language, style and dialogue have also been tested. The language is mainly based on the vernacular folk culture, and from time to time it is full of poetic verses. During this time the literary beauty of the language dialogue in the play was largely hampered by the fact that the play strived to be a stage play rather than a literary play. The play has been simplified, mainly due to the limited scope of the stage." (Ramakant Samantaray, Post 80s Odia plays, Saraswati, Bhubaneswar, p190).

The artist's relationship with the play is very close. No specific platform has been given importance in the aftermath of the Nabanatya movement (New Play Movement). The play can also be played in the open, in the backyard, in the lawn, in the house, on the street and on the roof. When a good stage is found, the artist's emotions spontaneously overflow. (Narayan Sahu, Manchar Kumar Katha, Bishwamukti, October, 2000).

In the early days of Oriya drama, theatrical, sophisticated, and instrumental platforms were used. After independence and independence, the play was released on stage in the city of Manchanataka and on the stage in the open air in the rural area. In the aftermath of the Navanatya movement, there was an unprecedented change in the staging of Oriya drama. The stage was used to imitate the realities of the commercial theater of Odisha, such as the style of Western playwrights Ibsen, Stindberg and Bernad Shaw. Experimental playwrights in Odisha, however used symbolic stage instead of realistic stage. Attempts were then made to divide the stage into different zones to different places, different times. Badal Sarkar used the physique of actor-actress as stage craft to remove the fullstage in 'Third Theater'. Its effects are also influenced by contemporary plays.

As the plays are currently being staged for the competition, the stage resources are being used as much as required for the stage. So when performing a play, the directors perform the play without following any specific guiding rules or regulations. Shankar Tripathi, Ranjit Patnaik and Dilliswar Maharana have written and directed plays, so their plays do not have much information about the stage style. Other playwrights have information about the style of play stage. So Shankar Prasad Tripathi's play 'Prithvi Sharasajya' says about the following principles on stage art

A)The play begins and ends without any pause. The characters will be performed using the stage zone.

B) The stage will not be completely dark. The zone in which it is acting will be lightened and the other zone will be dark.

(C) The stage plan is designed in suggestive stage.

Similarly, the stage of Shankar Tripathi's play 'Sagar Sangam' is fourfaced. In the drama "Sarirup" the stage is like a stage art gallery. The play "Ravana Chhaya" is based on the traditional Ramlila style and has been used as an intimate theater style. Its platform is divided into four parts. The stage is open to musicians, directors, Viewers galleries and green rooms. Similarly, Rati Mishra, Ranjit Patnaik, Pramod Tripathi, Vijay Shatapathi, Dr Subodh Patnaik and Narayan Sahu have come up with different platforms. In Odisha, Subodh Patnaik's theatrical consciousness has 14 changed dramatically following the 'Third Theater'. They perform intimate plays, psycho theaters and street plays.

It is worth noting that modern Oriya dramas are based on social, political, family, cultural and religious events, but the playwrights have been directly or indirectly reacting. Rati Mishra, Subodh Patnaik, Vijay Shatapathi, Narayan Sahu, Ramesh Das, Shankar Tripathi have openly revolted in major plays. The playwrights of this time are quite skilled at portraying the grief, pain, and helplessness of ordinary people. Drama seems to be more of a stage play than a literary play. This means that more emphasis is placed on the style and technique of the play than on the content of the play. Here different scenes/visuals are the strength of the carrier of emotions. The use of folk drama style is one of the most notable aspects of this era. This style of performing modern problems has become quite influential in the entire indigenous drama style. Under the influence of postmodernity, the playwrights of this time have resorted to their own perspectives in the past and seek to find their identity within tradition. One of the hallmarks of the playwrights of the time was the exploration of the uniqueness of the main characters.

The current drama focuses on the search for new horizons, both figuratively/physically and spiritually. While applied drama has been an area of intellectual luxury, the current drama is educating the public by focusing on

education and entertainment with intellectual exploration. The evils and defects of personal, social life along with the evils of governance are portrayed in a satirical way. Therefore, the current drama is a public awareness drama. These are not imitations of any particular play. Rather, it is a combination of world drama, Indian drama and Oriya folk drama 15 tradition. However, the trend in following foreign styles is gradually weakening and the popularity of Indian theatre style is on the rise. Therefore, in the twenty-first century of the world of globalization, the present drama is capable and rich in analyzing the new problems facing man and expressing the inner-self within them.

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Ritual in Theatre: Varied Meanings

Deepak

Abstract

The present paper deals with the semiotic study of the rituals in Bharat Muni's *Natyasastra*. *Natyasastra* offers a plethora of rituals while constructing the *natyamandap* (theatre house). *Natyasastra* is the only ancient text that prescribes a scientific detail of the theatre architecture which stands authentic and meaningful in modern era as well when one considers its audio-visual aspect. The rituals are not merely the religious or seasonal ceremonies but an exploration of the hierarchical society prevalent in ancient India. The rituals are the signifiers referring to certain signified. These rituals are the social codes which highlight the place of theatre and its importance in ancient times in India. The rituals are the hallmarks that authenticates the religious nature of Indian drama. The Indian drama emphasises on the performance text mainly which is a modern phenomenon in contemporary theatrical studies. Through rituals one can decode the socio-cultural structure of ancient Hindu society.

Keywords: *Natyasastra*, Rituals, Semiotics, Social Hierarchy, *Natyamandap*, Actor.

Ritual in the Natyasastra: A Semiotic Study

Theatre in India and especially in the *Natyasastra* is ritualistic and rituals are integral part of the construction of the *natyamandapa* (theatre house). The English word “ritual” owes its derivation to Latin word “ritus”, means custom. Rituals are themselves performative and down the ages they have been embedded in theatre. It is well said, “Ritual, an integral component of Indian life, contains the seed of theatre. Ritual is sacred theatre and theatre is secular ritual” (Editor’s Note in Shivprakash).

Rituals are the root of theatre throughout the world. All primitive cultures were religious in nature and god fearing as man did not comprehend the logical aspect of natural calamities and to escape from the malevolent forces of nature people used to observe certain rituals. Such rituals were considered the direct offerings to the deity to whom they expected the protection from such disastrous acts.

In Indian theatre, especially depicted in *Natyasastra*, the rituals occur even before the construction of the playhouse, during the construction, prior to the performance, in the *nepthya* (tiring room) and during the performance as well. When an actor reaches the stage he/she touches the stage which signifies the respect towards the profession. It is common in India not only in theatre but even the players touch the playground when they enter the ground that signifies their faith towards the sports. According to Farley Richmond such rituals in the *Natyasastra* occur in the opening and ending mainly though the whole performance is replete with rituals. Frederique Max Muller was among the early theorists who attempted to unravel the nature of myths and rituals. For him the myths and the rituals were among the early poetic statements of ancient Indo-Europeans dedicated to sun and other gods later misunderstood as metaphysical events by people they conquered. Later Andrew Lang

Edward and B. Tyler challenged/resented this theory of Max Muller to establish that myths and rituals were not misunderstood but were deliberate attempts on behalf of these people to explain the mysteries of the world. Both above mentioned thinkers consider rituals and myths to be “an interesting product of human mind” and “and a ‘primitive’ way of reasoning.”

There may be a grain of truth in the analysis of Andrew Lang Edward and B. Tyler. Rituals seem to be a conscious attempt on behalf of ancient religions to convey certain messages to one generation to another. It seems plausible that rituals came into existence to unravel some mysteries of creation, to understand and reconcile with the forces of nature. Most rituals of the times were to propitiate the gods and goddesses to protect them from the fury of nature such as thunderstorms, hail, squalls, scorching sun, etc. at that time science had still not resolved all the mysteries of nature and neither could man understand or control these powerful natural elements. Farley et. al. rightly points out, “The occasion of a ritual performance may be either seasonal or yearly festival propitiating the deity, or a specially commissioned ritual performance fulfilling a vow or seeking a boon for a family or an individual” (Farley et. al. 121-122).

In such societies theatre and rituals were used by men to propitiate the forces of nature which in essence meant that they were trying to control the natural forces for material prosperity and security. In the primitive societies one particularly interesting use of theatre was to frighten the men, women and children, to promote reverence for gods as well. *Natyasastra* clearly warns man to be quite vigilant and careful as *Bharat* warns in chapter third *Pujavidhanam* (Puja to the Gods of the Stage), “But when the auditorium is not consecrated in proper manner it will be

indifferently helped by gods, and there will be an end of the dramatic spectacle, and it will likewise bring evil to the king” (NS 54-55). It is a good example to see how people were interpellated by religious ideologies through theatre.

Emile Durkheim exploits the function and the instant impression of rituals on the mind of an observer. He focuses on the pragmatic utility of rituals in the general social structures. Rituals are rules and conduct to instruct people how they should behave in the presence of sacred objects and these rules are not to be deviated. From a Foucauldian perspective, it can be said that rituals prepare a person to be obedient to society and its hierarchies to ensure its proper functioning. Foucault argues in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1975), that discipline creates ‘docile bodies’, ideal for the new economics, politics and warfare of the modern industrial age. But, to construct ‘docile bodies’ the disciplinary institutions have to observe and record the bodies they control constantly; and to ensure the internalisation of the disciplinary individuality within the bodies being controlled. Analysing from a different angle rituals are also a religious process creating ‘docile bodies’ though the socio-political and cultural conditions of modern industrial age are totally different that of from the primitive societies.

Redcliff Brown and Eliade exploit the structural analogy between rituals and language. For them, a linguistic morpheme (the smallest unit of meaningful word) is similar to the smallest unit of structural unit of meaning of a ritual like a set routine of action (like preparing the place of rituals). If conceived in wholeness, rituals have their own system and structure according to which a set or part of rituals communicate. Malinowski belongs to the segment of the scholars who are concerned the pragmatic aspects of rituals. He says that rituals are directed to an aim or

a desired object. For him, ritual work according to a structure in which texts contexts play a coordinate role.

Rituals in Hinduism mark the journey of a person from one phase of life to the other as Hinduism prescribes rituals, for every phase of life, from birth to childhood through marriage and finally death. It is also fascinating that the earliest ritual known to man is related to death. These rituals do not mark of different phases of life but attune one to play a particular role in the society. Thus rituals correspond to social structures because through them an individual is transformed and put into a web of relationship. The prescribed *ashram vayvastha* (this system demarcates the life of an individual into four *ashramas* – *Brahmcharya*, *Grahyasth*, *Vanprasth* and *Samnyas* respectively) in ancient Hindu society that declares the responsibility of an individual towards the society and the family is a clear indication of above mentioned point.

The *solahsamskaras* (sixteen *samskaras* of Hinduism) are a good example of how the realisation of change and growth happens through these rituals. It gives access to a Hindu to some special traditions and systems those are closed for him before a *samaskara*. Marriage is a ritual that allows you to have sensual pleasure as it is forbidden before marriage in ancient Hindu society. It is a journey from one state of life to another.

Rituals are performative in nature and they have an intrinsic element of action. In fact, the element of theatre might be first demonstrated by rituals. Rituals are a set of religious or mythical rules observed and performed publically to achieve certain objectives. The rituals, in ancient times, were performed where gods and humans understand the responsibility to maintain the order and harmony in the world and the

cosmos. Hence, there was an affinity of purpose between drama and rituals in ancient India as both were performed to either appease gods, supernatural powers and ancestral spirits or to impart cultural or spiritual values to generations.

The performance in ancient India were mainly festival based, but not mandatory as that of Greek tradition and some performances other than calendar based festivals, and these festivals were calendar based. Thus at the initial level it works as a substructure of a larger socio-religious structures. According to the *Natyasastra* itself the first play, *Amrtamanthana*, was performed by *Bharat* on the occasion of 'banner festival of *Indra*'. These festivals were most of the time religious in nature. Even the harvest festivals are addressed to a god or a natural phenomenon. The *Vedic* literature presents certain instances where certain events organized to appease gods, ancestors and seasons. *Yajnas* were performed to offer the gods a share of the crop, ghee and milk. Fire god *Agni* is considered the *purohit* (priest) who takes these offerings to the desired destination. Festival ritual is popular in India and has a close connection with performance too.

Rituals are the integral constitutive element of drama in Indian tradition and *Natyasastra* prescribes a very well ordered set pattern for these rituals. *Bharat's* emphasis on the method of *puja* and other offerings establishes the status of drama in Indian tradition besides it the semiotic analysis of these rituals unveil the cultural codes of Indian society in ancient times. The process of the construction of the playhouse itself is full of symbolic rituals which require careful observation. The sacredness and sanctity of the dramatic space and performance are the

topmost priorities. In the Indian thought system, dramatic performance connects the temporal and the spiritual; it is both human and divine. It, therefore, foregrounds an integration of the ritual, as a sign as well as an object, and its relationship with the human interpreter.

The theatre is consecrated like a temple and many rituals are performed which connects the profane space with the sacred one. The rituals performed while constructing the playhouse especially in second chapter foreground the hierarchical nature of Indian society. The first and most common ritual is to clean oneself before any ceremony. This cleanliness indicates that one should be free from all the impurities whether physical or mental. It is quite common to take a bath before any kind of puja (worship) in Hinduism. “Since they are most often performed within a religious context, they require ritual cleanliness and other devotional observances” (Richmond 124).

The sprinkling of holy water, highly symbolical, helps the doer to be mentally sound and concentrated on the project. *Ganga Jal* (holy water of Ganga) is sprinkled on such ritualistic occasions. *Ganga* is acknowledged as the most reverend river and it is hailed as mother. Its origin is divine and it has close association with *Lord Shiva*. There is a prescribed asterism for each architectural construction. The ground should be measured under the asterism *Pusya (Cancer)*, the foundation should take place under the asterism *Mula (Lambda-Scorpionis)*, and for construction of pillars *Rohini (Aldebaran)* and *Sravana (Aquillae)* are the auspicious asterism. It explicates the importance of the astrology in architecture in ancient India. One cannot build a pious structure without consulting the auspicious time and *tithi* (date).

Brahmins and cows are auspicious and sacred for the Hindus and their presence even before the commencement of the play house reflects the sacred character of the dramatic space. Cow is called *go-mata* (mother cow) by the Hindus and it is believed to be symbol of nurture. Cow is a symbol for divine energy and the feminine power. Cow represents non-violence and its milk is sacred and is considered to be purifying element. In the *Vedas* the word *go* has dual meanings; cow and light.

The offerings, food stuff, colours are cultural codes embodying the social structure. The food offering is significant to highlight the social hierarchy. The offerings at time of foundation exhibits the social order. The offering of food stuff tells the social status of the person. The dramatic master should observe three days fast. Fasting is a spiritual activity in Hindu culture and the number three has symbolic significance.

The construction of pillars is highly pregnant with cultural codes. Their very order verifies the *Varna* system prevalent in ancient times. *Brahmin* is at the top and the *Sudra* at bottom whereas *Kastriya* and *Vaisya* stand at number two and three respectively, so is the order of pillars. In case of *Brahmin* pillar a cow should be offered as *dakshina* (gift). The offering should be white, and white is symbol of purity and so is *Brahmin*. *Payasa*, the most acknowledged food is offered and a piece of gold is prescribed for the foundation pit. The nature of offering signifies the position of *Brahmins* in ancient Hindu society. The offerings prescribed for the *Kastriya* pillar are of second rank. Rice mixed with molasses is offered to twice born caste and a piece of copper should be put into the pit. During the *Vaisya* pillar *Brahmins* should be offered rice with ghee and piece of silver should be place in the pit. During the construction of *Sudra* pillar the twice born caste should be fed with *karsars*, the lowest in the order of mentioned food items. Hence, the

selection of offerings is a chart displaying the social hierarchy of ancient Indian society.

In the verses 1-8 of the third chapter in *Natyasastra*, *Bharat* asks to make *Brahmins* and cows dwell for seven days in the theatre house. *Bharat* asks these *Brahmins* to mutter *mantras* while being there in the theatre house. The word *mantra* comes from *man*, means ‘think’ and *tra* is related to instrumentality like *yantra*. Collectively, the word suggests ‘instrument to think’ as its meaning. It is clear that the *mantras* are a part of a speculative knowledge tradition. This speculative tradition has its roots in spirituality because the *mantras* are believed to be directly coming from god’s mouth. *Mantras* are thought as the combination of spiritual syllables and a source of energy. According to *Upnishads*, *mantras* were always there in the *pramaakasa*, (sky) primeval ether out of which the universe is created. These *mantras* were already perceived by the ancient *rishis*. Later they were transformed by the *rishis* into rhythms, forms and words. Another definition of the word *mantra* is that *man* means to think and *yantra* means ‘to protect or to liberate from the *samsara*’ (the world). It means *mantras* are the thoughts that protect and liberate an individual.

Even today people think that the chanting of *mantras* in proper way drives the forces away, that’s why on all auspicious occasions the *homais* performed. Still people go the temple for curing the diseases and get rid of the evil forces. Even such rituals are observed by the topmost scientific institute such as ISRO at the time of launching a new satellite. Hence chanting of *mantra* is an old tradition and has significance in this modern era as well.

The *natyamandapa* (playhouse) came into existence due to obstruction created by the *daityas* (evil spirits), hence it requires the

divine protection. The dramatic master invokes the gods to take their position to protect the art from evil.

The master of the dramatic art is supposed to be the main performer of the consecration rituals simply because the most experienced person in any clan or family usually performs rituals. The rest of the people automatically become obedient to the master of the dramatic art. This master of the dramatic art is never an ordinary person but someone who has subdued his senses and rich in the dramatic art. He is the main performer because the dramatic action and performativity are his main occupations. It is a kind of hegemonic process or the interpellation that makes the persons involved serious towards his occupation/duty.

Jarjara is the symbol of royal patronage, the protection of the art and the destroyer of the interceptors. *Indra* is the king of gods and the protector of the dramatic art against all the obstacles. The *Natyasastra* mentions him as the most powerful figure. But the dramatic art is not just about the other world or gods and *daityas*. It is meant for mortals, especially to teach them values and morals. The myth of the origin of *natya* (drama) makes it clear.

The next step in theatre consecration is the installation of gods in which the *achamana* is performed. *Achamana* is sipping water three times, repeating the names of the lord. This is for internal as well as external purity. While sipping water, some *mantras* are muttered touching the various parts of the body, viz., the eyes, the ears, the face, the navel, the head, etc. One becomes pure by doing *achamana* after he answers the calls of nature, after walking in the streets, just before taking food, and after a bath. This serves as a reminder of the deity one reveres.

During the installation of the gods, certain items are used like red bangles, red sandal, red flavours, red fruits, barley, white mustard,

shunned rice etc. As earlier mentioned in the first chapter of this work, red signifies courage and valour. Here red signifies the function of these gods in theatre house, and their function is to protect the art hence, valour and courage is required. The offerings to the gods in the third chapter are largely in the order *Brahma* describes them. Thus, even the gods are assigned function in theatre house. Once again spiritual and material needs of the human beings are combined to bring about stability and prosperity to men as well as to the dramatic art. Here the gods are present on the stage symbolically and no idol is used.

The above mentioned rituals are performed in the empty *nataymandap* (playhouse), means before the performance. In Indian tradition the *purvaranga* (preliminaries to the play) plays a significant role There are total nineteen *purvarangas*(preliminaries of play), nine are performed behind the *yavnika*(curtain) and ten after removing the *yavnika*. Dhruva songs are performed to please the gods. *Raksasas*, when hear the *dhruvas* for gods, become angry and are pacified and pleased with the performance of *Nirgita*. Here, the performance of *Dhruva* and *Nirgita* signifies the balance and democratic aspect of *natya* where all are welcomed irrespective to their all external identities. It is noteworthy here that the *Daityas* and *Raksasas* are doubtful towards their representation in *natya* from the beginning and they reported it to Lord *Brahma* blaming him for favouring the gods only. But Lord *Brahma* counselled them and instructed them about the objective of drama clearly, “I have prepared this *Natyaveda* which will determine the good luck or ill luck of you as well as of the gods, and which will take into accounts acts and ideas of you as well as of gods. In it (*natya*) there is no exclusive representation of you or the gods: for the drama is a representation of the States (*bhavanukirtana*) of the three worlds” (NS 17).

The ritualistic offerings to the gods are capable to explicate the nature of the concerned and his/her position in divine order. Like the society of profanes there is a hierarchy in celestial region as well. Hindu tradition does not approve any prejudice against the lower strata whether the profane or divine as the *natya*(drama) is concerned. The *Natyaveda* is available to all irrespective *varnas*. Here not only the *devas* (gods) are worshiped but the *Raksasas* as well. This *natya* is the symbol of wholeness and integrity. Verse 88 mentions the *homa*, an auspicious ceremony where the priests chant the holy mantras and offer the *ahuti* in the holy *agni* (fire). It is believed that these fire offerings reach to the gods one is invoking. The *Homa* is a common auspicious ceremony in Hindu religion which is observed at various occasions such as the *muharta*(inauguration), birth of a baby etc.

In verse 87-89, the breaking of the jar ceremony is described by *Bharat*. It is linked directly to the future of the king and the dramatic art. It seems to be a ritual influencing people's psyche. In this ritual, the jar used, is made of clay and most of the time and there are high possibilities of its breaking into pieces. When broken it satisfies the ego of the people involved in it. *Bharat* says that if it is broken, the enemies of the king will meet their destruction. "In case the jar remains unbroken the king (lit. the master) will have a cause of fear from enemies; but when it is broken his enemies will meet with their destruction" (NS 53-54). Here, it clearly is an ego satisfaction ritual. During the primitive age people used to perform ceremonies before wars. In these ceremonies they used to perform the motion of combat and act out the killing and torturing of their enemies in vivid details. The purpose of these performances cannot be terroisation because they are performed in the absence of their enemies. Clearly, they are for self-excitation or self-exhortation. Once again it is clearly an

attempt to overcome fear through imagination.

After breaking the jar he, noisily, covers the theatre house with a lamp or light, while jumping and running about, which is considered a pious activity in Hindu philosophy. Lamp is the symbol of purity and knowledge that removes the darkness of ignorance. When *Lord Rama* returns to *Ayodhya* after killing *Ravana* people light the lamps in the honour their king. In this perspective lamp is a symbol of reverence as well. Before the commencement of any stage performance, today also, the dignitaries light a holy lamp before *Ma Saraswati* who is the goddess of knowledge.

Theatre house is like a school wherein the mission to eradicate ignorance is carried out. In this ritual also, the master illuminates the stage with the light of knowledge. It creates a complete spectacle in which all people involved feel victorious over ignorance. Rituals provide a magical touch to them. The performers expect something magical in their favour. In such a situation, the person repeating the myth becomes a super figure. C.G. Jung comments about this close relationship between magic and ritual, “The idea absurd to us, that a ritual can magically affect the sun is, upon closer examination, no less than irrational but far more familiar to us than might at first be assumed” (Jung in Kurtiz 6).

Rituals in themselves are sacred theatre to invoke certain kinds of emotions or in the context of *Natyasastra* they prepare the spectator for a real theatrical performance. But whatever the performance is, the rituals before a performance and during the construction of the theatre house defines the nature of the dramatic art in Indian tradition. The rituals connects the playhouse with that of the temple. The sacredness of the place plays an important role in guiding the spectators’ cognition and perception. It remains in the mind as an impression to perceive a

performance in certain way and avoid other.

Significantly, in India, the dramatic art is a constructive action that brings about both explicit as well as implicit as well as moral changes. And these changes are purely ethical and at times aesthetic. DurgadasMukhopadhaya mentions that the objective of *natya* is not merely the entertainment but the amalgam of metaphysics and spiritual. “The pleasure of drama is not mere sensuous pleasure confined to the material world. It is a transcendental experience in its highest sense, which liberates rather than enslaves the body and the soul” (Mukopadhayay 243).

Thus to borrow an expression from Thomas Hardy, rituals are performed to assign roles in the general drama of life. They have their significance in the context of the theatre house where aesthetics, spirituality and delight meet. Rituals in India are a complete aesthetic experience. All the sense organs including the faculty of imagination are engaged in a spectacle during these rituals. The rituals performed in the *natyamandap* (playhouse) are cultural vehicles carrying the socio-cultural imprints directly associated with the life the Hindus in ancient times. These rituals, all, have not lost in oblivion but still practiced in modern Hindu society that helps one to decode the ritual codes prevalent in *Bharat Muni's Natyasastra*. There can be no better place than the theatre house to produce such multileveled structures of meaning through rituals.

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Origin of Shumang Leela, a traditional media of Manipur

Sonia Wahengbam

Abstract

Traditional media plays a vital role in shaping developing nations since it is a more direct and intimate medium for the masses. Moreover, when we discuss a medium, it is best to start from its origin, for it gives a more holistic approach to that particular area. This paper tries to trace the origin of *Shumang Leela*, a traditional media or folk theatre of Manipur. Tracing the history of *Shumang Leela* holds significance since various scholars opine different opinions, and their hypotheses and evidence of origins support each. The paper tries to explore a common binding thread regarding the evolution of this traditional media so that whatever the debate is, there is an agreeing point, although scholars have different theories regarding its origin.

Keywords: Traditional media, *Shumang Leela*, Manipur, history, evolution, folk theatre

Introduction

Shumang Leela is a mobile theatre which travels throughout the length and breadth of Manipur and imparts socio-cultural, political and economic education to the people. Etymologically *ShumangLeela* combines the words ‘Shumang’ (courtyard) and ‘Leela’ (play or performance). So, structurally it may be termed as ‘courtyard theatre’. The play is performed in an area measuring 13X13 sq. ft or 16X16 sq. feet. The space for performance may vary

according to the space available in the centre of any open area, be it the courtyard of a house, a community hall, *mandaps* or local grounds.

Shumang Leela is a structured form of total theatre and has poetry, dance, song, music, mime, and pantomime elements. However, unlike proscenium theatre, the audience can view from all four sides, as it offers a 360-degree viewing gallery. This form of theatre reflects the social, political and moral conditions of the times and the dreams and desires of the people, which approximate protest and intervention for a better dispensation in an artistic manner. *Shumang Leela*, as a traditional media in its presentation, tries to touch the chord on several issues happening in Manipur. The origin is a point of discussion as various scholars' express different views regarding its development.

Origin of *Shumang Leela*

There are multiple opinions by various scholars and experts regarding the origin of *Shumang Leela*. The history of *Shumang Leela* is not presented in a smooth chronological form as intellectuals have diverse views about its origin and provenance. Although there is no formal classification of this traditional media of Manipur, the journey of *Shumang Leela* has been categorized into three phases for the convenience of this study:

- (i) Pre-Maharaja Chandrakirti era (1074-1849 AD)
- (ii) The reign of Maharaja Chandrikirti (1850-1949 A.D.)
- (iii) *Shumang Leela* with written scripts (1950 AD-till date)

(i) Pre-Maharaja Chandrakirti era (1074-1849 AD)

Many experts opine that the performance culture started in Manipur with *Lai Haraoba* (festival of appeasement of the sylvan deities). The festival is a treasure of Meitei history, philosophy and arts; and has survived for ages. It is a festival of fertility in which the people of the *leikai* (locality) or *khul* (village) appease the deity. The depiction of characters and events in *Lai Haraoba* is through songs and rhythmic movements of the parts of the body. There are six forms of *Lai Haraoba* – *ChakpaPhayeng Haraoba*, *Kanglei*, *Andro*, *Moirang Thangjing Haraoba*, *Sekmai Haraoba*, and *KakchingHaraoba*. Scholars believe the custom of performance originated with the *Tangkhul Nurabi* episode on the last day of *Kanglei Haraoba*. It is a mythological narrative, and the performance is an enactment of the banter between Lord Nongpok Ningthou and the goddess Panthoibi. The repartee discusses the philosophy of fertility – both productive and reproductive and there are elements of *Shumang Leela* in this enactment, such as humour, riddles, dialogues from the ritualistic rites, singing, dancing, etc. The *TangkhulNurabi* repertory, as documented in the *LoiyambaShilyel*, was incorporated into the *Lai Haraoba* festival during the reign of King Loiyamba (1074-1112 AD).

In “Folk Theatre of Meiteis”, Lokendra, eminent historian and cultural activist opines on the origin of *Shumang Leela* in the *Lai Haraoba* performances:

Therefore, the origins of the Manipuri folk theatre are to be sought in the ritual dances connected with ancestor worship and propitiation of presiding deities of the clan and community of settlement. The Meiteis of the valley, the predominant ethnic group in Manipur, are Mongoloid in racial character and are practitioners of rice culture. Leisure is one of the fundamental characteristics of rice cultivation and from it originated

the creative use of leisure. Dance, music and the performing arts had developed from that.ⁱ

Apart from *Lai Haraoba*, another form of performance with instances of comedy/satire, somewhat on the lines of humour in *Shumang Leela*, is believed to have existed in the period ahead of King Khagemba (1597-1652 AD). The performance is known as “Chengpak khulou yengdaba huidri padam loudaba tokna makhum hangba.” Loosely translated, it means speaking out one’s mind or whatever he/she wishes to. Later, during Khagemba’s time, it was known as “Mitou Tamba” (mimicry).

(ii) The reign of Maharaja Chandrikirti (1850-1949 A.D.)

A section of the researchers is of the view that *Shumang Leela* originated from the king’s court during the reign of Maharaja Chandrakirti from 1850 to 1886 AD. According to Ningombam Ibobi Singh, a scholar of *Shumang Leela*, this form of performing art originated from *Phagee Leela* (farce plays or comical skits) during the reign of Maharaja Chandrakirti. The *manai achanba* (king’s favourite servant) used to mimic the nobles and members of the royal family, somewhat akin to court jesters. The jesters performed in front of the king during his leisure hours.

In the words of Lokendra, the jesters in the king’s court were enslaved people, but slavery in Manipur was not like the American slavery system as practised in Virginia in the 17th Century. It was a mild form of slavery, with the enslaved people doing odd jobs. Apart from the *manai achanba*, there was the institution of domestic helpers of the nobles, and they were known as *phungai nai*. *Phunga* in Meiteilon means hearth, and *nai* means the enslaved person, so it means domestic enslaved person. They run errands for the family and accompany their masters during social gatherings and functions.

When their masters attend the court, they carry their seats and are not excluded from the activities of the *darbar*. They were exposed to the functioning of the royal court, manners, and behaviours of the courtiers and the royal family. Moreover, to entertain the royal court members, they performed skits without adhering to any written scripts and creating plots. Abujamba comedy, Amuthoi comedy, Yotsubi comedy, Chengba comedy are well-known examples of such performances.

During a court session, Abujamba Saiton and Kharibam Leishaba performed a skit, making fun of a courtier Thokchao, one of the king's favourites. In the performance, they pretended to stumble upon the footprints of an elephant en route to the royal court. Later, they found out that the footprints were of Thokchao and not an elephant. The courtiers and the king enjoyed the performance and laughed their hearts out. So, the jesters were invited to perform during the 10-day Durga Puja celebration. It marked the beginning of the *Phagee Leela*, shifting its venue from the king's court to open ground and making it accessible to the commoners.

There were restrictions on the court jesters' entry into the king's *darbar* after colonization by the British in 1891. Many of the jesters were dismissed from their jobs, and to make both ends meet after the unemployment, they started visiting the villages during the agricultural off-season and performed in the courtyards for an agreed fee. By then, the British had introduced the money economy. The frequency of performance also increased after it moved out from the royal ambience, and the humour started representing the ordinary lives of the general public, and it drifted from the strict hierarchical social structure. The jesters became a lot braver, and in their skits, in some instances, they started attacking the British colonial administration, the maladministration of the ruling class and the elite. Lokendra explains its endeavour in parodying the administration and society of that time:

These clowns did not follow prescribed performance rules or regulations from any theatrical tradition emanating from the royal court. They also departed from the religious plays of the court-supported theatre, starting social plays in the native vernacular, while the religious theatres confined themselves to Brajabuli. Though no long story or dramatic tale was performed, they enacted small categories of nuclear skits highlighting romantic frailties, false ambitions, contradictions of religious spiritualism, the wicked Brahmin, the upstart nobility by-passing collective norms, the over-aged gentlemen with young wives, forced marriages and their foibles, etc. Their short plays followed an anarchic style that disrupted established norms and beliefs. The entire foundation of the religio-feudal society was put to ridicule.ⁱⁱ

Apart from the farce plays during festive occasions, the court jesters continued the tradition of entertaining the king's court, his subjects, and visitors to the king's *darbar*, including the British colonizers. Although there are no documented proofs regarding the script or the type of plays performed in Maharaja Chandrakirti's court, an excerpt from the book by Mrs Ethel Grimwood roughly accounts for the performance of a *Phagee Leela* during that period. She wrote:

Furthermore, to wind up, there was a play. The Maharajah has three jesters, precisely like the old English fashion of having court jesters to amuse royalty. The Manipuri specimen was very funny indeed. Their heads were shaved like the back of a poodle, with little tufts of hair left here and there, and their faces were painted with streaks of different coloured points, and their eyebrows whitened. They wore very few clothes, but they had striped red and green and a variety of shades. They walked up to the tent where we were sitting to watch the sports, all

leaning against each other and carrying on a lively conversation in Manipuri, which seemed to amuse the spectators. On reaching the door of the tent, they all fell at our feet, making terrible grimaces by way of greeting, and they picked each other and retired a few yards off and commenced the performance. One disguised himself as an older woman and another as a native doctor, and the third as a sick man lying on the ground covered with a white sheet. Someone out of the crowd was impressed into the play, and he had to call the doctor to the sick man, who was meanwhile heaving up and down upon the ground in a very extraordinary manner. The doctor came and poked him about, making observations in Manipuri, at which everyone roared with laughter, and then the older woman arrived and dragged the doctor off home. She was supposed to be his wife, and as soon as she appeared, a scuffle ensued, in which the older woman's clothes fell off. We thought best to beat a retreat as the play was beginning to be rowdy and the dialogues vulgar, but I believe that it went on for some hours afterwards, as we heard shouts of laughter proceeding from the direction of polo ground, where the sports were held till late night. And the princess told us the very day that it had been a very good play and the only pity was that we witnessed so little.ⁱⁱⁱ

The British colonial rule started in Manipur in 1891, and slowly and steadily, the colonizers made their presence felt in the social, political and economic spheres. During this period, alongside the *Phagee Leela*, a form of protest theatre started in Manipur by the name of *Kabul Leela* (Kabul play)/*Kabul Jagoi* (Kabul dance)/*Kabul pala* (chorus of Kabul). This form of the theatre started under the aegis of one Sanamacha, a master of Manipuri dance and music, and it was staged as a protest against the Kabuli traders for pricing their goods at exorbitant rates. These traders came along with the British from the Burmese side. The *Kabuli Leela* was followed by *Phadeebi Leela*, or

the play of tattered clothes. This form of play highlighted the miserable conditions of the common mass.

According to another group of scholars, some traits of “Mandap Leela” can be seen in *Shumang Leela*. In the mid-18th Century, the religious theatre forms *Sansenba*, *Goura Leela*, *Ras Leela*, and *Udukhol Leela* were performed during Rajashri Bhagyachandra’s reign at the king’s palace. They were generally known as “Mandap Leela”. The stories of these court-supported theatre forms were based on the life of Lord Krishna. In the words of playwright, cultural activist and Lifetime President of Manipur State Shumang Leela Council Phurailatpam Gunachandra Sharma, the rituals of *Mandap Leela*—*adivas*, *mandala puja*, *Khuwaj*, *beitha*, *sabha vandana* and *nityay padya*—were performed before the start and end of *Shumang Leela*. Also, *Shumang Leela* performers do not use footwear during a performance, similar to Mandap Leela.

Another factor he cited is that during the *nata sankirtan*, the *pala* singers were considered *shokhis* and the drummer as *shokha*; likewise, in *Shumang Leela*, the male actors were considered as *shokhas* and the *Nupi Shabis* (female role enactors) as *shokhis*. In Mandap Leela, the *esheihanba* is called *mayai leppa* (standing in the middle) and the *doha* as *lamba* (opponent) similarly, in *Shumang Leela*, the protagonist is the *mayai leppa*, and the antagonist is the *lamba*.

According to Haorokcham, the *Moirang Parva* (saga of Moirang) performed in 1894/95 at Panjeemayum Lampak in Wahengbam Leikai, Imphal West is the first *Shumang Leela* performance of Manipur. The performance was based on the legendary tales of Khamba and Thoibi from Moirang, a principality of Manipur situated 45-km from the state capital Imphal. The play was banned after 4-5 episodes by the then royal family of Manipur within that year itself, citing that cracks had developed in the premises of the Thangjing Temple in Moirang because of this performance. ^{iv}

In an article written by Gunachandra on the “Origin of Shumang Leela”, in a souvenir published for the Shumang Leela Ningtham Kumhei, 2017, the author, on behalf of the Manipur State Shumang Leela Council, confirms that the *Moirang Parva* performed in 1894/95 at Panjeemayum Lampak of Wahengbam Leikai is the first *Shumang Leela* of Manipur. The article also mentions that the elements of theatre like written scripts, dialogues, songs, and dances were not covered by *PhageeLeela* but covered by *Shumang Leela*, almost in toto. ^v

In 1918, another *Shumang Leela* was performed at Tera Keithel in Imphal West district under the patronage of Aribam Amubi Sharma. The play *Harishchandra* was based on the king’s life by the same name in the *Ramayana*. *Harishchandra* was similar to the *Moirang Parva* with lots of songs and dialogues. It was a landmark in the development of *Shumang Leela* because it was a full-length play based on a story and the language was vernacular. It was received with enthusiasm by the people, the royalty as well as the commoners. ^{vi}

By the 1920s, the then king Churachand Maharaj lifted the ban on *Moirang Parva* performance. Soon, two groups of *Moirang Parva* performers started performing it—*Kongpal Moirang Parva* or *Ariba Moirang Parva* (Old Moirang Parva) and *Keishampat Moirang Parva* or *Anouba Moirang Parva* (New Moirang Parva). After the rebirth of *Moirang Parva* in the 1920s, the performances continued till the 1960s and this traditional form of *Shumang Leela*, in its distinctive style, popularized the legendary story of Khamba-Thoibi of Moirang principality. Before the Second World War, other plays that were performed were *Meiraba Charan*, *Chandrajini*, *Chandrahas*, *Satya Charit*, *Bhagyachandra Shamu Phaaba*, *Thok Leela*, *Ekadashi Swayamvar*, *Shubhutta Shuri Huranba* etc.

(iii) Shumang Leela with written scripts (1950 AD-till date)

By the 1950s, scripted *Shumang Leela* plays were performed. The first *Shumang Leela* play with a written script is *Puya Meithaba* (burning of the *Puya*) by N. Angouton.^{vii} By 1952, the first social-message play *B.A. Mapa Lamboiba* was performed, and *Nungshi Leirang* and others followed it. Plays based on the folk tales of Manipur like *Sandrembi Cheishra*, *Ngangbiton*, and *KeibuKeiyoiba* were also performed besides the social-themed plays.

During the first half of the 20th Century, the Bengalis greatly influenced the Manipur society. According to Lokendra, the elites from Manipur who travelled outside the state for their education to Bengal were influenced by the “Jatra” of Bengal and renamed this form of performing arts as “Jatra”, and the performers came to be known as “Jatrawalis”. This change in nomenclature took place in the 1930s.

For many years *Shumang Leela* was known as “Jatra”, and even the festivals conducted by the Theatre Centre Manipur and the Directorate of Publicity were called the All Manipur Jatra Festival. As the politics of name found the name “Jatra” un-indigenous, the name of this theatre was rechristened as *Shumang Leela* by the Manipur State Kala Akademi on January 15, 1976, in an event organized by the Akademi and presided by the then Governor of Manipur.

In the 1970s, another genre of *Shumang Leela* emerged, and it was known as *Epom* (wave) or *Epom Leela*. This form lacked some of the essential elements of a *Shumang Leela* performance, and the sole motive was not to spread social awareness but to entertain the audience. It was a comedy show but with scripted dialogues. By the late 1970s, a new genre of *Shumang Leela* started, and it was known as *Eshei Leela* (Leela with songs). It was also known as *Anouba Shumang Leela* (New Shumang Leela).

Scholars believe that it might be because of the influence of Bollywood and the start of the celluloid film industry of Manipur a few years before it that

the Leela groups started to include songs and dances in their performances. There were two types of *Shumang Leela*—the Dialogue *Leela* and the *Eshei Leela*. In Dialogue *Leelas*, the emphasis was put on stylized dialogues and music was confined only to simple instruments like *dholaks* (drums) and *kartals* (cymbals), while the *Eshei Leelas* had songs and exquisitely choreographed dance sequences. The *Eshei Leela* genre became more popular and completely wiped out the Dialogue *Leela* genre by the late 80s, and this is the only form that is performed nowadays. All the other genres of *Shumang Leela* are now extinct, and the present-day *Shumang Leela* is what started as the *Eshei Leela*.

Conclusion

Although various scholars have multiple opinions regarding the origin of *Shumang Leela*, it can be safely concluded that the multiplicity is simplified by the presence of elements of performance in this traditional media. The elements of the song, dance and dialogues are very much a part of the formative stage since the culture of performance started with *Lai Haraoba*, and to date, it is there. It can be summed up as evolution or work-in-progress, with the principal elements of performing art present in almost all the theories put forward by various scholars regarding the origin of *Shumang Leela*. It can be observed as evolution with the changing face of time and the development cycle, giving its impact as the theatre form progresses. The origin is debatable, as opined by various scholars, but what we can draw from the various schools of thought of its origin is that whether it started in 1074 AD or 1850s or 1894, the characteristics of performance is present from 1074 AD. Only the form and structural changes that have evolved over the centuries culminated in what we witnessed as *Shumang Leela* in the last two centuries.

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PERSONAL INTERVIEW:

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Truth is a Woobly Thing

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Book Name — Wolf Play Author — Hansol Jung Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing, India ISBN : PB : 978-1-3501-8506-7

The South Korean translator and playwright Hansol Jung is known for her weaving different societal and psychological issues together that are occurring around us. Her works '*Wild Goose Dreams*', '*No More Sad Things*', '*Among the Dead*', '*Cardboard Piano*' and '*Wolf Play*' gives a fluid, intriguing and innovative narratives that leads to masterfully paced actions in the plays. Through every twist and turn she pulls the readers into deep layers of perspective and would conclude into a very unexpected but realistic turn of events where an individual would self explore and question every action around them. The use of gender-inclusive language and pronouns for the characters and giving unflinching yet humane plots is quiet insightful.

The '*Wolf Play*' by Hansol Jung was published in Methuen Drama's Lost Plays series. It revolves around a six year old South-Korean boy Jeenu, or Peter Junior, or Wolf, probably suffering from lycanthropy, and his journey through unconventional transcultural adoption.

As Hansol said, “Wolf’s journey trying to tell the story” about his traumatic experience of being constantly being up-rooted and re-homed. First, he was plucked from South Korea by an American heteronormative family of Peter and Katie and when they felt that they cannot take care of him due to split focus and cost of their own new born, they put him back for adoption via a shady deal on Yahoo. Thus, Wolf again gets adopted by a queer couple — Robin and Ash and he is re-homed again. And at the end, he gets up-rooted again as Peter, his ex-adoptive father, cannot accept the fact that Jeenu would be brought up by a family of two mothers and not a heterosexual couple. Peter moves to court to claim for his custody but Wolf falls into the twists of the system and sent to custody of state and thus being cut off from both the families.

The appearance of Wolf in the text of the play differs from the one when performed on stages. In the text, Hansol indicates that he is a six year old boy but he is quite mature than other six year olds, maybe due to the circumstances the character was put in, and on the stage, Wolf is actually portrayed through an Asian boy doll manipulated by an East Asian descent adult actor. The use of puppets as mouthpiece in the play could be connected to Paula Vogel’s *The Long Christmas Ride Home* in which three sad children are similarly represented by Bunraku puppets as Jung confessed to be influenced by her works. In both the plays, the puppets are used to depict the trauma the child or the children go through without

actually putting the child actor in that state but also not losing the potency of the emotions need to deliver to the audience. The puppet in the *'Wolf Play'* is also used as a metaphor projecting the life of the child which is constantly being pulled and loosened as per an adult's wish and his wishes and needs are being completely ignored whether it is from heterosexual adoptive parents or homosexual adoptive parents.

The play focuses on Wolf searching for "something to orbit around" from the very first chapter "Where we Are" through the opening soliloquy. In the dialogue, Wolf is pointing out his very position in this society that how once he is "the single most important breath" at one time but the very next second he questions the truth as he is being abandoned like evil wolves by the very same society. The character is constantly accepting and rejecting his own existence and significance within flick of seconds indicates how he was being embraced and then shunted out. He believes himself to be a wolf as a survival instinct. He uses growls, howls and swinging paws or stating encyclopedic facts about the animal wolf as a response more than speaking actual sentences to people around him. For instance, when he was sold to Robin and Ash, he compared his emotions regarding this new and unknown place with the same feeling of getting "pluck from the desert and thrown into the sea". But he calmly convinces himself with the fact that "a wolf will survive" even in extreme diverse conditions, though "it takes TIME." Or the time he urinated in bed

while sleeping and to cover up he stated “Wolves are very territorial” and just like them he did it to mark his personal space that was invaded by Robin and Ash.

The play opens with the protagonist i.e. Wolf saying, “What if I said I am not what you think you see.” The statement distinctly hits the point that the preceding events in the play which might look simple, dull and daily conversations between individuals, actually has much more layers to it. In the chapters, ‘Daily Life 1’, ‘Daily Life 2’, ‘Daily Life 3’, the characters are placed on the same stage but they’re actually on different places constantly overlapping the dialogues. At first read, it may seem fragmented and confusing but the with repeated interpretations one would explore how the playwright is exposing the nastiness, selfishness in transcultural adoption and the characters’ relationships with family or society. Not a single character was being Wolf’s need for someone to be “the single most important breath in my space.”

It also projects on the taboo of queer couple becoming parents through adoption or surrogacy or other options. In the play, the adoption by queer family was associated with terms and phrases like ‘illegal’, ‘forbidden’, ‘the child will suffer additional emotional and behavioral dysfunction’, ‘you are depriving my boy of father?’, ‘induced fraudulently’, ‘the child was placed in a hostile environment’ and so on. The same concept is projected in the thai webseries ‘Fathers’, where the child is being questioned about his existence or how was he born without a

mother. The lack of mother in this family lead to both the fathers getting labeled as ‘incapable parents’, ‘abnormal ones’ or ‘a fag’ by the so-called civilized society.

On the other hand, in the play, “the guy who sold his kid on the internet” because of their ‘split focus’ and ‘cost’ of rearing a child is bothering them as soon as they had their own new-born and, in the series, the mother who abandoned the child was considered as reliable adults. This egoistic self is compared to be as weak and vulnerable as paper. Wolf mentions “Peter love papers, fortress of papers.” Or “Peters are hundred percent papers. It is his fortress for survival” indicating how weak the base of his arguments are when he claims to be an reliable adult or parent to Wolf.

There is one more striking similarity in the play and in the series is that the heterosexual individuals are concerned that presence of queer people in the child’s life would tamper their sexuality, whether Jeenu in *Wolf Play* or Butr in *Fathers*, as they are adopted by so called ‘abnormal’ or ‘demented’ individuals. This shows how society is ignorant about the knowledge that sexuality is not a communicable disease or a mental disorder but something natural.

The character Ryan, Robin’s brother, is a person who is open to LGBTQ+ community but constantly pulled back by the subconscious patriarchal notions. In the chapter “Meet the Parents”, he chooses blue balloons over yellow ones as the

boys needs to feel the masculinity and in the chapter “Play-Fight”, he thinks Jeenu needs to be little more assertive like “one of Uncle Ryan’s boys”. Before the custody fight between Peter and the queer couple over Jeenu, he is being protective brother to Robins by telling her the reality of the laws and the society, but ultimately his indirect sidings with Peter indicates that most people even who claims to be “modern” prefers societal laws over rationality. Hansol, thus, hitting the sore spot of the society i.e. role of masculine figure in the rearing of a child and moreover when it involves a queer couple and not a heterosexual couple.

In the world of story-telling, the play has created an incredible stimulation among the readers presenting the universality of racism, misogyny, xenophobia, childhood trauma and homophobia. And it’s flawed, destructive and cold stage settings has let the problems in the society pinch in heart like a slow poison rather than a knee-jerk awakening.

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BOOK REVIEW

Scenography – An Indian Perspective

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‘Scenography’ comes from the Greek skenographia, which is a combination of skene, or a small building, tent or hut on stage, and graphia, meaning writing. Putting them together, it means scenic writing. Despite its etymology, the term has remained obscure and one does not grasp the intricacies and its immense potentiality. Scenography is a visual journey of deconstructing and reconstructing the text on a theater space, a language of the spectatorial senses.

This language of space and props, though predominant in the West from the early days of the Greek plays, has never been groomed and appropriated in the long theater tradition of the Orient. That was, until a group of new practitioners and scholars decided to explore the field of design and change the description of space.

With hardly any documentation available in the backdrop of indigenous theater, there was a need for hands-on discourse for quite a long time. This book answers that prerequisite. Scenography is in reality a very important aspect of theater making: it is the total visual creation in the theater space, and, consequently, is today a subject in its own right.

Scenography, as a concept or even as a discipline, was initially weary of all its complexities and was vaguely referred to as a set design, a backdrop of painted curtains, or windows and door ‘cut-outs’ on the stage. It was extended to include

lights, costumes and choreography. Now, scenography implies a relationship with not only design and lights but also architecture and technology. It encompasses a broad and divergent sphere of activity.

Scenography appeared in theater lexicon almost a decade ago in Europe, but made an entry into India a few years later. It is still not clear for most theater directors. One initially felt that it was a grandiose term for a set designer. The term was mocked, and dismissed as pretentious posturing!

‘Scenography: An Indian Perspective’ by DrSatyabrata Rout is a refreshingly new account of the art of set design and assorted principles of stagecraft. If Scenography is an increasingly popular and key area in performance studies today, the management and transposition of the act besides the environment is what this book is all about.

A noted scenographer and director of contemporary Indian theater, Rout completed his post-graduation in design and direction from the National School of Drama, New Delhi forty years ago .He was associated with various institutions and organizations like Rangmandal, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal, Theater-in-Education Company, NSD Extension Programme et al. One of the pioneers in conceptualizing ‘Visual Theater’ in India, he has designed and directed more than 75 plays of international standing.

The magnetism of this book on theater is its sheer volume. Well-researched and gorgeously produced, the volume introduces the reader to the purpose, identity and scope of scenography and its theories and concepts. Settings and structures, light, projected images, sound, costumes and props are considered in relation to performing bodies, text, space and the role of the audience.

Concentrating on scenographic developments in the twentieth century, the Introduction examines how these continue to strengthen in the twenty-first century. Scenographic principles are clearly explained through practical examples and their theoretical context.'

It unearths the astonishing yet silent contribution of 'stage' design in Indian theaters all the way through centuries and the comparatively contemporary recognition of it. Right at the outset, Rout underlines each scenographer has to have individual aesthetics, personalized and belonging to his/her imagination. To chisel, refine and hammer that vocabulary into tangible visual assertions is a lifetime struggle and journey. He also coined his own definition, appropriately, 'as the art of writing on the stage.

The scale of Rout's explanation is incredible. The book travels from the classical to the pre-modern, post-modern, experimental, conventional, amphitheater, small spaces, black box, improvised spaces, traditional space. The range is not only mind-boggling; it leaves one wonder-struck by the quality of the research that has gone into its making. This stresses the dictum that there are no short-cuts in research.

If theater is a visual language, scenography in a certain way challenges the supremacy of text in the theater. Conventionally, the spoken word has always been considered the main ingredient for play-making. By tradition, the playwright was the fountainhead and every other aspect of mounting a play was subservient to the written word. The book does not debunk the poetry of words and speech; it's about how meaning is made and how metaphors are created through scenography. Theater is not an extension of the literary art, but an independent art form with its own assertions and power. Rout's book justifies this hypothesis.

The book has been divided into a dozen chapters making it expansive: Space that Exists in Time/Manipulation of Space in Ancient India/Space and Scenography in Popular Indian Theatre/Conventions of Space/Alternative Performance Spaces/Multiplicity of Art: Perception, Interpretation, Aesthetics/Understanding Scenography: Exploring Ideas/Representing Design Ideas: Paper Works/Elements of Design/Principles of Design and Scenographic Dramaturgy: The Space Game.

The voluminous book running into almost six hundred pages cuts across time zones, digging into histories, cultures of the past. It goes farther to the present with an erudite discernment. Analyzing and investigating visual material, gathered from dusty archives with systematic structuring and arrangement, is an exercise that would satisfy the most critical eye.

The book makes scenography the central frame of reference. An intricate matrix of overlying practices that are impossible to study in isolation from the creative imagination of the director and the actor are the gems that the book reveals.

Rout, being a designer and scenographer, has written a book that explores and understands the inextricable linkages between design, scenography, technology, and visual expression. This book needs to be celebrated, as it is the starting point for a kind of critical debate and discussions that underpin creative work and move the subject forward.

Rout's book is a timely intervention and throws up innumerable challenges for a student of drama. It is much more than set design or putting props on the stage. It requires contextualization, aesthetics and the creation of a specific iconography for the play which is being designed.

With a foreword by Pamela Howard OBE who revitalized the concept, the book is a welcome addition to the corpus of literature on theater and stagecraft. The book is a must for students of acting, design and direction, and is an invaluable resource in the visual composition of performance making.

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