

Dasakathia In Ganjam, As A Traditional Folk Media

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ABSTRACT :-

Traditional folk media have been in existence for a long time and have been used as a medium of communication, particularly in the remote areas where modern media of communication is non-available. The traditional media yet occupy some space in delivering of messages to the mass. During the advent of electronic media, the traditional media not only reflected the joys and sorrows of the people but also inspired the common mass. Traditional folk media, with their inspiring colour and customs, dance and music, have enriched the content of mass media channels. In Ganjam Dasakathia, as a folk media play a vital role.

Key Words – Dasakathia, Folk Media, traditional media, Communication

Introduction:

Modern mass media alone cannot reach to the millions of people in rural areas who have no regular access to TV, Newspapers, internet due to poverty and illiteracy. The reach of modern media is largely restricted to urban areas as a result, information, education and entertainment do not reach to a large majority of the people in rural and remote areas. Folk media is one of the most important vehicles of social change and nation building. Therefore it is essential to keep our traditional media alive and safeguard and preserve it from the effects of globalization.

Traditional folk media generally include the presentation of different types of programmes like folk songs and music, folk dance drama, street theaters etc.

All programs have individual criteria and attractions. Here are few programmes widely accepted in different region for its unique presentation. In south Odisha majority of people live in rural areas. Mass media such as Newspaper, television, radio and internet do not effectively reach these people. The high rates of illiteracy is one of major factor majority of people who resides in the rural areas are illiterate.

Folk art and traditional media are the aesthetic belonging in a cultural context. These traditional media are alive in villages in now-a-days also and provide both information and entertainment to the people.

Feature of traditional media :

The prominent features of traditional media included,

- 1) Traditional media are not-technological,
- 2) Not so expensive,
- 3) Traditional media have tremendous impact on the audience the messages are presented live before them.
- 4) These traditional media have the advantages of in-built instant feedback because face to face interaction.

Traditional media attracting the people easily. All the performer of all the traditional folk media are almost from the local community. They are more acceptable to the society and their idea can be easily adopted by the people.

Forms of traditional media :

Traditional media are various kind and vary from place to place and culture to culture and region to region also but in all the purpose remains the same that to inform, educate and entertainment the audiences for awareness of various issues of the society. Nautanki, Puppets, Jatra, Pala, Dasakathia these traditional folk media are almost from the local community of Odisha we found.

The folklore, folk art and folk theaters are integral phase of folk culture, interlinked with the growth of civilization. From time, immemorial, the oral tradition of performing art in varied forms has been maintained by the rural folk with twin objectives of aesthetic pleasure and education¹. The district of Ganjam has the rich tradition of dance and culture. It is the cradle of many folk-dances-folk-theater, folk music and folk songs.

The geographical situation, the topographic feature, the religious and literacy background, patronage of the rajas, maharajas and zamindars of the region. The beauty and bounty of the nature all have contributed

significantly to the growth and development of number of folk dances in this part of Odisha. Among the folk-dance and theatres of Ganjam like Dandanata, Prahallad Natak, Bharat Leela, Radhaprema Leela, Rama Leela, Ranapa Nacha, Dasakathia occupies a distinct place.

Folk art is an expression of rural people which manifests itself through various forms of songs, dance and plays. Folk life and folk art are inseparable attached to each other. Therefore, the villagers themselves are the participants and their patrons.

Ganjam is famous for Dasakathia which is the most indigenous form of balled singing in Odisha. It is the most inexpensive but popular form of both folk dance and play that has received internal recognition². Dasakathia, which owes its origin from Das Bhakti though, was one upon a time most popular folk institution of Ganjam district only, but later on it spread to other parts of Odisha.³

The term 'Dasa-Kathia' is derived from two words i.e. Dasa and Kathi. The etymological meaning of Dasa is devotee or Bhakta and Kathi means two wooden pieces played in tune with the prayer of the devotee⁴. It is performed by a team of two persons. Learned Pundits with extensive knowledge in Purans, Sastra and old literature perform this dance art by narrating different mythological theme with touches of satire and modern taste to entertain the audience.⁵

Birth of Dasakathia :

The origin of Dasakathia is surrounded in mystery. Some say it is originated since the day of Ramayan. Hanuman played with Dasa-Kathia while praying Rama. Others say it was started by Lord Lakshman, who used the two wooden sticks by reciting the name of Rama in order to arouse vigour and strength among the Kapibala (monkey soldiers) while constructing

the Setubandha to proceed to Lanka but there theories seems to be unscientific and unhistoric. Because if that in case Dasa-Kathia must have been continued since the days of Ramayan and must have been privileged throughout India.

Dasakathia originated in selected regions, though it became a popular art all over Odisha. Taking birth in Ganjam district of southern Odisha, it spread all over Odisha, Dasakathia is said to have been originated in 15th century in the village Pitlaof Ganjam district⁶. According to research scholar of folk theatre, BayamanuCharchi, AgadhuSahu of Khandara near Hinjilicut was the pioneer artist who popularized the Folk Dance. There after their eldest son Krishna Chandra Gayakratra and BinayakSabat devoted their energy to enrichment of the folk play. The Dasakathia singers mostly belong to Ganjam, the southernmost district of Odisha where most of the well-known Odia poets of Medieval period flourished.

There is no certain chronicler about the inception of Daskathia in record form, but like other histories Dasakathia is having some oral evidences. Basing on that in present scenario many theories are surfacing about the beginning and nomenclature of Dasakathia. As per one theory, the district Ganjam is sharing the border with Andhra Pradesh since a long time and many Telugu communities live here from centuries. Lower Brahmin categories of Telugu community so called 'Dashiri' have their profession as begging. They beg by in chanting Harinam and use the wooden clapper as a supportive musical instrument. Since then Dasakathia was named after their community. In this dance, a ballad is sung by two persons Gayakas or the Palia. Gayaks is the main singer and Palia is the assistant singer or who sings with the help of the Gayaks. In this dance, the singers sing

with the help of a set of musical instrument of a pair of castanets of wooden clappers.

In this folk play, the singers instrument is called the Ramatala where as that of the assistance singers is known as Laxmantala⁷. The theme of this play is taken from the epic Ramayan and Mahabharat and other mythological epics along with that in Dasakathia, different episode like Maran (Means Demise) that is death or killing of different mythological character are narrated to the audience. Harana (means kidnapping) written in mythological epics such as ChandrakalaHarana, SuryakantiHarana, MadanabatiHarana, JambabatiHarana etc. In sarana (Means Sheltering or Protection) such examples are like DandirajaSarana, Hariraj Saran. Along with that modern literatures of KabisamratUpendraBhanja, KabisuryaBaladevRath, Bhaktakabi Gopal Krushna's are also performed. No stage is required for the performance of this dance Dasakathia is staged under the open sky. Dasakathia performance are usually held in evening hours in the middle of the village street or in somebody's courtyard or in temple precincts depending on the nature of patronage⁸. These two persons stage in the whole drama. They act all the parts, change their tone hour after hour and introduce humorous stories to break the monotony. They utilize their good knowledge or purans for attracting mass minds. They act like patuas in singing ordinary and puranic song pala actors in dress and tone and Gotipua in their dance and action and military commanders while expressing about a war⁹. The Dance Continues for three to four hours and within that time one mythological story is fully narrated by the players. A lyrical stanza is other repeated by the singer saying 'jayarama je – Nabinsundarashyama je' (meaning victory of lord rama and Krishna)

At intervals during the singing of the ballad, the Paliaputs questions in simple prose-dialogue and the singer (Gayaka) answer through the songs. By this the musical narration becomes more interesting to the common audience. The success of Dasakathia depends upon the skill and talent of the Gayak. Basic differences between Dasakathia and Pala are manifold. The contents of both Dasakathia and Pala are same. Both of them collect the finding from the pages of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Both these epics are to satisfy the spiritual thirst of people there is no need of any ordecorative expensive stage for both Pala and Dasakathia. Both can be performed at any place. Some difference regarding the origin of the two are Pala took birth from the assemblance of Hindu Muslim culture where as the birth of Dasakathia is from by the hostility of religion and culture of the two another basic difference between Pala and Dasakathialies on the person and musical instruments. There is a Gahan and a Paliain Dasakathia whereas in a Pala, there is a Gahana but there are more than one Palia. Baring a little difference between the two, the voice of Pala and Dasakathia is almost same. Like the Pala singer, the singers begin with an introduction in which he seeks the blessings of a deity. Intermittently, the Paliaalso sings doggerels and banters to provide enough comic relief. Both the singer and Palia not only sing they enliven the performance with unsophisticated dramatic action and mild dancing¹⁰. Dasakathia is composed with chand, choutisa and chaupadi, Poems of apendraBhanja, KabisuryaBaladevarath and Gopal Krushna Patnaik are profusely used to enthrall the peoples mind¹¹. Dasakathia has close resemblance with Harikatha and Burakatha of Andhra Pradesh and baul or Kabigana of west Bengal¹².

Generally traditional singers (Gayak&Palia) came from the community of lower Brahmin who plough

the land are debarred from taking part in the traditional ritual service. Nowadays there are singers from other communities also. They move throughout the length and breadth of south Odisha during the fair weather day to perform their plays, and earn their livelihood of all the singers of tradition, Gayakratna Baidyanath Sharma was most popular. For his unique presentation style of dance and expression he won the sangatNatak Academic Award.

Costumes and Instrument :

In this dance, the singers sing with a pair of castanets wooden clappers. These clappers are not hollow but solid and resonant, fitted with bunch of tiny ankle bells¹³. The Gayak play with the two pair of clappers simultaneously in both the hands and prove his skill. But the Palia held the clappers in the left hands with four fingers in between to keep them apart and placed by the right hand with the thumb pressing the upper one with a jerk to strike below. In this folk play the Gayaks instrument is called Ramatala, and Palia as Laxmantala and Gayaka and Palia are dressed with colourful robes, Tuban, RamanandiChitra, and Ghungur the typical Odishicostumes. Dasakathia is one of the unique traditions of South Odishan folk art and culture due to its presentation style dasakathia still obtain a special position. It used to be one of the most important forms of entertainment in South Odishan culture.

In recent times, the credit of popularising Dasakathia beyond national frontiers goes to late Bidyanath Gayakratna and Bhimasena Satapathy. For their unique style of presentation they have won many medals, prizes in and outside of the country and also won Sangeet NatakAkademi Award. There are about 150 Dasakathia troupes only in Ganjam District.

Among them, the countable few Dasakathia teams found in the villages like, Khandara, Erendra, Nagardhia, Lathi, Haladiapadar, Ambapua, Balasi, Digapada, Kodala, Babanpur, Pitala, Polasara, Pattapur, Jilunda, Bhejput, Podamari, Soroda, Mathasarasingi, Beguniapada, Chirikipada, Thuruburai, Takarada, Gandala, Hinjilikatu, Narendrapur, Digapahandi, Badagada and Jamuni.

Those who were established as outstanding Gayak (Director of Dasakathia) the names of Krushna Chandra Sahu, Adikanda Padhy, Baidyanatha Sharma, Krushna Chandra Satapathy, Rabinarayan Satapathy, Bhimasena Satapathy and a galaxy of others are to be reckoned with.

In this Dance the village culture, tradition, religion in clearly reflects.¹⁴ besides mythology, stories based on love, romance, deceit and marriage are used as subject as well with the advent of other modes of entertainment Dasakathia has lost its popularity. However, with efforts of Government and Non-Government organisations effort are being made to revive the art form.

Dasakathia carries message of Orissa culture. It is the safeguard of literature. It entertains human mind with religious thought and conscience as well as establishing communal harmony.

No doubt everybody admits the important role of Dasakathia in the development of Orissan literature, culture, society and religion. Since long past Dasakathia artist had tried to keep this art alive by devoting much labour and sacrifice. They brought sensation in human heart exposing them to religion mythologies, literature and idealism. But, with the flow of time this art is at the verge of extinction. It has lost its popularity for the widespread

of electronic media and people attraction towards western way of living. In this situation, the renovation of the popular art Dasakathia has been urgently felt¹⁵.

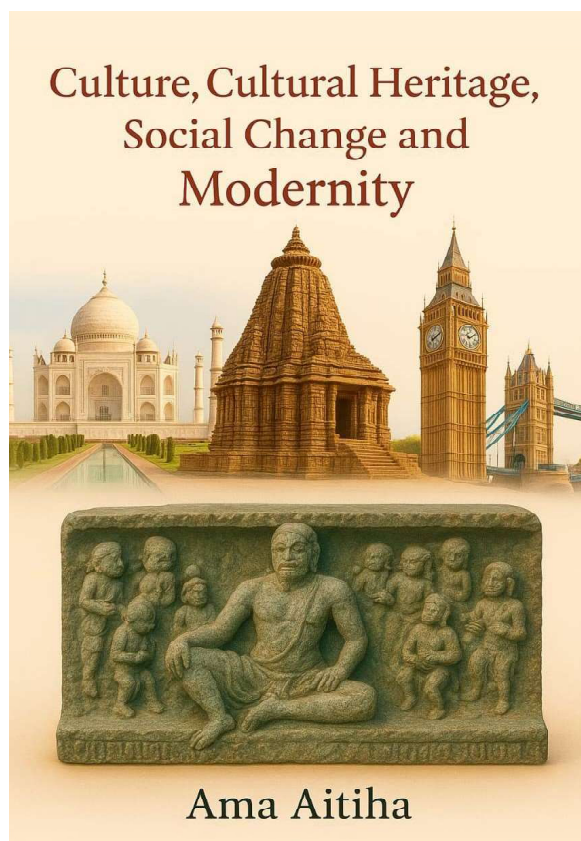
Even now, the state Government has taken up this popular milieu to propagate their different prog for social awareness. The important feature of folk media is that then the information seat, directly reaches the heart of the audience.

There is no doubt that centuries old art will continue to pave the way for knowledge awareness among the people. Dasakathia as a folk media play a vital role in Ganjam. But it is matter of regret that the Dasakathia which was a source of great entertainment and livelihood for the rural folk and also helped in spreading the messages of morality, truthfulness victory of righteous over evil forces, cooperation and harmony in the society are on the verge of decline and death. Many artists of Dasakathia are leading a very pitiable life because of lack of patronage. So necessary steps may be taken to revive this rural culture. Otherwise the society will be vanished within a few decades.

Dasakathia is the most inexpensive and popular form of both folk dance and play, that has received international recognition. No other creative medium is used so extensively and is so popular in Odisha in the recent past as Dasakathia has been. It is being used by Govt organization to propagate and developmental activities in the rural areas. Before the advent of television, the Government used it as the best media to bring the message of Family planning to the rural masses. Even now, the state Government and other organization should use folk media, folk song and dance to involve the common people in different activities.

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