

COMMUNICATION THROUGH FOLK THEATRE: A STUDY ON *GAMBHIRA*

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“Loko Utsav” (Local Festival) become the heart beat among the people of country side . The word “Folk” came from the popular word “Lok” . The word “Lok” reflects the acute life-style of village people and “Loko Utsav” is a kind of festival by which they express their happiness by gathering together. “Bera , “Karticker Lorai” , “Tusu Mela” , “Karam Utsav” , “Hazra Puja” , “charak” , “Neel Puja” all these folk festivals are related Bengal like all . Among all these utsavs “Gambhira” is a very famous “Loko Utsav” in Malda and this utsav remained within Malda. People think that “*Gambhira*” is just a type of a song but Pushpajit Roy has expressed in this book of “*Gambhira*” that – *Gambhira is not a form of song , gambhira reflects on the total ritualistic drama* . Later , we will try to discover the total grandeur of gambhira and also try to keep up the downward picture of gambhira .

Naturally a question may arise in our mind , what is the literal meaning of “Gambhira” . Mr. Haridas Palit has commented in book , named , “Addyer Gambhira”-ancient days the house which was look like chandimandap was used to call gambhiri or gambhira . During the period of second Dharmapal Deb and Gabinda Chandra , gambhira used to be that kind of house in some province like Gour , Rangpur and Dinajpur. So , it means the word gambhira is a “house of God” , where religious activities used to perform . The “Gajan Utsav” of Rarh area become “Addyer

Gambhira” in Malda district . But this days it is renowned as “Gambhira” , means utsav of “Lord Shiva”.

The festival gambhira is basically famous within Rajbanshi , Chnai , Koch , Mahali community . In gambhira festival there is no traditional play . Though there is no particular myth in gambhira but the character of Lord Shiva is always there and he is known as “nana”

Structure of a Gambhira programme

At the end of Bengali year (April – 2nd week) means starting of the month Chaitra which is called Chaitra Sankranti gambhira get start . Though Chaitra Sankranti is on 30th Chaitra but gambhira starts four days before Chaitra Sankranti and continues till the end of Chaitra .

1st day – 26th Chaitra – Pouring of pitcher (Ghat vara)

2nd day – 27th Chaitra – Small Drama/Show (Chhoto Tamasa)

3rd day – 28th Chaitra – Big Drama/Show (Baro Tamasa)

4th day – 29th chaitra – Ahara/Bolai/Bolbai

But in different region gambhira seems to celebrate on Chaitra (Hobibpur Thana , Dohil-Gazole etc.) , Baisakh (Alipur-Kaliachak , Sekendarpur-Englishbazar etc.) , Jaistha (aiho-Hobibpur Thana) , even in the month of Sravana (Boyaliya-chanchal Thana) .

1st day – 26th Chaitra – Pouring of pitcher (Ghat vara)

At the starting of the Gambhira Utsav there is a ritual called-“Pouring of pitcher” (Ghat vara).But this ritual does not celebrate by other region . The time length is different , somewhere this ritual takes it part before three days , seven days , even nine days before . This decision depends on the senior associates of the group.When Sun sets at the evening , one Bramhin take a pitcher by drowning it into the river and after that the water-full pitcher finally establishe to its pre-fixed place , according to Shastra . Thus , the first day of gambhira festival ends with this ritual , there would be no other ritual that day .

2nd day – 27th Chaitra – Small Drama (Chhoto Tamasa)

Gambhira Festival starts with some small shows .The show starts with by woshipping of Shiva or Hara-Gouri . The junior disciples take the look of Sannyasi . These sannyasi are called “Bala-Vakta” . That day and next day all the Bala Vaktas stand before the Lord Shiva and recite the Shiva-Vandana . After the recitation of Shiv-Vandana all the Bala-Vaktas stand by one leg and take the name of Shiva in mind . Various kind of dances like solo dance , group dance and facial – act(Mukha Nritya) happens that night . Dr.Pushpahjit Roy has commented about the use of mask that the facial-act is a very important act in gambhira festival . in his own word – even today gambhira is a “Ritualistic Theatre” (“MUKHOSHER PROYAG - PROSANGA”- Essay by Dr.Pushpajit Roy).

3rd day – 28th Chaitra – Big Drama (Baro Tamasa)

Big Show bangs at the 3rd day of gambhira festival . At afternoon all the disciples move for jatra called “Shova-jatra” . in that shova-jatra all the disciples of different age group took part and they move from one mandap to another mandap by disguising them as ghosts , witches , fireman , snake-man etc. and they loudly beat Dhak . After finishing the shova- jatra , the Act “Lanka Dahan” happens that evening .

Some people thinks that this festival(specialy Chhoto Tamasa and Baro Tamasa) was in ancient days “mahajani Lokayat Bouddha Utsav” , slowly the Mahajani got away from this festival of and Lord Shiva been added to this festival . It means that Hindu religion infleneed the gambhira festival .

4th day – 29th chaitra – Ahara/Bolai/Bolbai

Gambhira festival ends at the fourth day with “Bolbai Songs” . Bolbai songs are reputed as gambhira songs . Because all these songs are used to sing on the gambhira stage which at present is known as Gambhira songs .

Gambhira is basically vocal folk song.It has no written practice.Every song is based on contemporary event.Basic characteristic is humour and it is presented on the stage always with comic , ironical tone.The basic purpose is to present the plight of common man due to high price rise , corruption , misuse of political power under the pretext of expressing them to lord Shiva.

At the beginning gambhira was only a song form. But now a days it consists dialogue between characters along with songs – sometimes solo , sometimes in chorus and sometimes in refrain . therefore it has taken the form of folk drama.In the ‘Duet’ & ‘Char Iyari’(four friends) part of gambhira we find the abundance of acting than song . It is needless to say both are forms of folk drama .

In recent times the scope of gambhira has narrowed and it has become limited to Duet and Char iyari drama-song.Now gambhira does not stand for any cultural festival,it has become a performance.It is no more attractive to modern generation.The folk-element has decreased and the tunes of popular hindi songs have entered in gambhira.Besides the artists are also struggling to survive.So in order to keep up this art form every year a gambhira festival is arranged by Old-Malda-Municipality with all the leading gambhira bands of this district during the end of December at the school ground of Kalachand High School , Old-Malda .

Analysis of a Gambhira Performance

An earnest effort of ‘Lubdhak’ to keep up the folk tradition of gambhira from the clutches of modern electric-equipments and cheap hindi songs . In this duet songs there are two characters.Besides there is no presence of ‘Nana’(Shiva)as we find popular gambhira songs.Here the Husband is a gambhira artist and the wife is a modern orchestra artist (here a male artist takes the guise of a female).Both the characters,i.e, Husband and wife have a deep love and devotion for their own art . In this gambhira song the wife returns

after her show and finds that the door is locked. When the husband returns she wants to know where he had been ? she is having pain in her throat by singing the whole night at the programme-at this the husband sarcastically says – “gala byatha korchhye.....hami gala tipe dichchhi”(come.....let me press your throat).The wife also comes to know that he had also gone to sing at gambhira .She gets angry and says that if he wants to keep up their conjugal life he have to , quit gambhira a singing wearing torned (chhira-fata dress) dresses.The husband also replies firmly that – “ei chhira-fata dress...protik ache...chhira-fatta dress samajer aina...samajer poristhiti...samaj valo nai...hamader samaj venge poryechhe...”(this torned dress symbolizes the mirror of society...its real condition...that the society is suffering...)it is falling a part . The wife then says if she is unable to keep him happy. At this the husband reforts - you have not keep me happy(sukhe kothae rekhyechho)you have kept me like a puppy(sukiye rekhyechho)...

Again when the

wife asks the husband to quit gambhira the husband thinks that she would not understand directly , it has to be done through gambhira and he strarts singing –

The Husband : “Adhunik juger nari toder selam , toder selam (hail to thee!modern women,hail to thee!)

tora moder peye soja,chapiye bojha korchhis golam(finding us idiots you have made us your-

Property)

Toder chape purus mora adhmara hoye gelam.”(we have become half-dead under your cruelty)

At this the wife says-don't talk rubbish,how a husband can become half-dead ? the husband answers – earlier my body was 34,after marrying you I have become 32.The wife says that – if he keeps on behaving like this , she would go to her parents house.At this husband says that he would also go to his in-laws house.Which cause terrible laughter among the audience.They keep on quarrelling.After marriage the husband is not happy at all.He has to do all the household duties like – cutting the vegetables , cooking , and even cleaning and washing clothes.The wife also does not lack behind.She says That has husband knows how lavishly she has been brought up in her house before marriage.....she is an orchestra artist and her husband sings gambhira ! whom no one gives any importance.The wife sings:

The Wife : “Adhunikatar sami/swami tumi thakchho old fyan/fashion(being a modern man you’re so old

fashioned)

mad-mataler sange gaichho gambhirar gan(sing at gambhira with the drunkard)

jar nai kono sanman(which has no honour).

dyakho gaichhi ami pop bhangra ar disco beat-e(see I sing in Pop,Bhangra and

Disco Beat)

janogan matchhe uthe dichchhe sanman,korchhe selam.”(people are dancing on my tunes,under my

feet)

She then invites her husband to sing in their band.She has heard their gambhira at various functions before their performance and has found gambhira without any proper tune and lyrics .

At this complain the husband gets angry and firmly says –

Gambhira is the traditional folk-culture of my district... as I proudly say that I am an Indian , as I proudly say I am an inhabitant of Malda ; I would proudly say that I am a Gambhira artist

After saying this he sing –

The Husband : “du diner boiragi hoye vatke bolis anya(being two days nun you call rice ‘anya’)

toder bhangra disco beche achhe loko-gitir jonnyo.(your bhangra and disco is alive because of folk-

songs)

tora sab hoyechhis bonyo .(so all you people have become ‘Banyo’/wild)

Then the husband says that , during the ‘Banga Sanskriti Sanmelaan’ , Rabindranath Tagore says after listening gambhira – wow ! this is my Bengali song...flower likefull of soil...song of soul...then the husband says about how Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was impressed after listening to gambhira when he came to Naghoria,Malda –

Husband : kobiguru ar subhas chyakhe eyar sas,(kabi guru/Tagore and Subhash/netaji after tasting the flavour has

praised and honoured immensely)

maldake diyechhe sanman , resham gambhira ar fozli am”/mango (silk of Malda , Gambhira & Fazli)

After this the husband explains how various folk songs have influenced various popular hindi songs.

After listening all this the wife at last utters –

The Wife : “etoi jakhan gambhira niye korchho sadhona(when you are praising gambhira so much)

Young chapra keno egiye asena ?(then why do the young generation not come forward ?)

Anya deshe loko sanskriti achhe torijut(in other country the folk culture is flourishing always)

gambhira niye keu vabe na sabai shudhu rajnir golam.”(but in ours everyone serves only for political interest.)

According to the wife only the older people(burha lok) sing gambhira,while in other states like ‘Chhou’ of Purulia- it has got good recognition,but gambhira is unable to make its mark is the National or International platform .

Answering to this complan the husband says that in his gambhira band there are artist of various ages.The average age of his ‘Lubdhak-Ekti Sanskritik Proyas’ is 30 , who says that they have no honour ? Govt. is providing Identity Card to every folk artist . Obviously there are some problems,but they have to solve them.At this the wife says that if her husband teaches him gambhira song then she would be able to sing gambhira in her orchestra. Thus the story ends .

Conclusion

So we find that there is a conflict in the story-between Modern song & folk song.At the end folk song wins through the logical arguments of the husband.Conflict is the soul of a drama.So it is a folk-drama.In between there are some songs to strengther the action of the drama .As the people of Malda are proud of Gambhira , so there are many who have no respect for Gambhira . The Duet song is a presentation of this conflict.Many popular songs of today are influenced by folk songs-this truth is not understood by many learned fools of today.This Duet performance of

‘Lubdhak’ of Old-Malda initiates a new genre to the age old tradition of gambhira. Therefore we can not help but praising and welcoming “Lubdhak” for its “Cultural Endeavour” to protect and save our rich folk tradition-gambhira from extinction in todays adverse situation through their rich musical and dramatic performance.

Presently, “Lubdhak” , “Anwesa” , “Nana Hey” ,”Puratuli Gambhira Dal” all these groups are helping to spread the art at its best . During the time of freedam fight of India gambhira songs has left their mark . The period from 1971-1972 to 1976-1977 the artists of first half of gambhira were at very poor condition . now a days , the gambhira artists are trying to save this culture but unfortunately this art will remain within uneducated-village-people . An authentic art is getting evaporate for the discouragement of urban people and by the bad influence of television culture .

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