

# Presentation or Performance of Traditional Folk Drama. A Study

By

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**Abstract:** Folk Theatre is a form of mass communication, which does not use technology as the primary channel. The primary role of such a medium is to inform, entertain, persuade, and provide a means for connecting people. The present article aims to explore the folk theatre as a mass media. Therefore the researcher has conducted this study to study the acting style in Folk Yatra, to explore the costumes used in folk yatra and to discuss the dialogues used in Folk Yatra. The present study is descriptive in nature. Therefore the source of information for the present study are different books, journals and internet sources. The study concludes that folk yatra played a vital role as medium for the rural people. Its sphere was not limited to a particular region.

Key Word : Canopy, Dohar, Ostad, Jalchowki, Ashar, Anurup, Birup, Ripanurup, Opera

**Introduction:** Folk theatre is the accepted strong mass-medium at present. The stage of the folk theatre is very ancient. It is performed in the open field of village. There the acting starts in the presence of a large number of audience, and the stage is circle and rectangular. The players and the actors and actresses are sitting beside it. They act at the time of their acting. *Ostad* (lead musician) and *Dohar* move around the stage in couple or more while they work.

There is an arrangement to sit the audience of the stage. There are two seats called 'Jalchowki' (wooden structure for seating) in two sides of the stage and the *Ostad* act as prompter sitting there. These two *Jalchowkis* are used as the throne and as the seats of every purpose in the stage. The stage is as flat as bare land. Sometimes the audience/spectators use a bench, stools, etc. to watch the acting comfortably. The sitting place for musicians and prompter is fixed and beside the stage. Preferably, in an area so that the audience does not face any difficulty to watch the performance on the stage. A canopy is used to cover the stage. As a result, the sound of the actors and actress and singers and musicians cannot go upward in the air but spread everywhere getting obstruction of the canopy. The interaction between the audience and the actors in the Folk Theatre is more than the theatre at the cinema. At this, the acting will be accomplished heartily with the faith and favour of two – the audience and the actors. There is no secrecy in the Folk Drama. The characters are very realistic as if they seem to come to the stage from the audience. In this form, various types of instruments of music are used. The acting in Folk theatre is without any hall. Its temporary hall is found in so called drama literature. "On the occasion of Indra festival,

DENASUR DANDA”, an ‘ASAR’ acting has been found. Besides this, “on the occasion of Shib festival Thipurdah **natyavinay** is presented without Floor Level Acting.

**Background of the Study:** “In undivided Medinipur district and its surrounding areas in the 16<sup>th</sup> decades, Floor Level Acting was performed in the yard of Kingdom for the common citizen of the kingdom. In the ancient culture of drama, all type of Asar (floor level acting) was there. “The entrance was like the entrance of the stage of No(boat) Theatre in China, and circular place for the audience and stage were like folk theatre”. In Europe, there was also the tradition of folk theatre. “Fortunate indeed were the Elizabethan actor in inheriting and n having the opportunity to improving upon the historical methods which have developed in the playing of sixteenth-century interludes, when actors and audience occupied the same level in a great hall”. Overall, Folk theatre is not confined in the districts only. It is spread all through India as well as across the globe. It was extended when thoughts of acting had come to people’s mind. And since then floor level acting is born. At present folk theatre is based on stage level acting. But Krishna Yatra, Manasa Yatra, Yugi Yatra, Bharat Yatra and many other similar yatras are based on floor level acting. Now the folk theatre is being staged with lights and music.

**Objectives:** The present study has been carried out with the following objectives-

- To study the acting style in Folk Yatra
- To explore the costumes used in folk yatra
- To discuss the dialogues used in Folk Yatra

**Method:** The present study is descriptive in nature. Therefore the source of information for the present study are different books, journals and internet sources.

**Acknowledge:** I owe my deepest regards to Mr. P. K. Barik secretary of Binay Sadan B.Ed. College, Nedabara, Jhargrame, West Bengal, India for helping me and to get interest in this article.

It gives me immense pleasure in expressing respected gratitude to my faculty advisor Dr. Ramdas Goswami, for his benevolent guidance. I am highly obliged to him for providing 'valuable space' and 'freedom' to complete this study. It might be impossible for me to visualise this work without his support and guidance.

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## Analysis

### Acting style of Folk Yatra

In folk theatre the art of acting may be divided into five types : a) Acting with character analysis, b) acting withI owe my deepest regards to Mr. P. K. Barik secretary of Binay Sadan B.Ed. College, Nedabara, Jhargrame, West Bengal, India for helping me and to get interest in this article.

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I am deeply indebted to my parents for this blessings and also to my colleagues for this support throughout my course stunt and pose, c) emotional acting, d) melodramatic acting, e) mixed stunt acting.

a) **Acting with character analysis:** In this acting there is an effort to present a character with the sense of art and measurement giving up all kinds of forces. In this type of acting smartness, talent of character analysis and imagination is essential. The acting of this style is hard working.

b) **Acting with stunt and pose:** The acting of this style emphasizes to create character. But its special feature is that to create the wonder in the audience's mind some special art, posture and gesture is to be taken. The professional artist presents the art, pose and gesture so wonderfully that the audience gets pleasure for this. In this action it should be noted as if there will be no monomania in the creation of such art, pose and gesture. So the skill and talent is needed for this acting. Fonibhushan Motilal is the most famous in this type of acting.

c) **Emotional acting:** In this acting voice and emotion are more necessary than characterization. The main object of this style is to create passion in the mind of the audience through the ups and downs of the deep and emotional voice of the actor. In this genre some famous actors are Nilmoni Biswas, Chandra Kanta Dutta, Upen Panda, Kali Kinkar Guha.

d) **Melodramatic acting :**Through exaggeration of physical ability and voice to create passion in the heart of the audience is the main feature of this style. The attention to the personality of the character and the self-assessment of the same is absent here. Everything is possible here. In this respect a comment by Prof. Nickel is to be remembered : “...*performance which reaches its effects almost always by crude and generally physical means, which never seeks to persuade an audience that the actors an actions are related to life outside the theater's walls*”. In the folk drama this type of exaggeration is to be followed by most of the actors.

e) **Mixed stunt acting:** In this style the actors do not give importance to a particular style but they try to make a mingling of the acting with character analysis, acting with stunt and pose, and emotional song. To create a character is its main motto.

In folk drama there is another style. It is called speech drama. Speech is more important than to create character here. The actors present speech in various matter while performing on the stage. This speech irrelevant to the drama is main attraction of this style. Moti Roy, Purna Das etc are the pillars of this style in this 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Presentation of Conflicts:** To make it more attractive the conflict characters are to be included here. This conflict is of four types –

- a) Static – here character cannot take any decision. So, in character the real conflict is not possible.
- b) Jumping – here the desired stage of the flow of action is not properly incorporated. The character does not keep up the sequence. Sometimes they skip some characters. The flow of growth of the characters is hampered here. So the dramatic conflict is impossible here.
- c) Foreshadowing – In this style there is a prediction of conflict. But ultimately no dramatic conflict is seen here.
- d) Rising – Here every layer of the conflict among the characters is vividly presented. In consequence of it, the drama has become interesting and at the same time the turn and twist among the characters has become vivid and comprehensive. This type of conflict is required in good drama. But in folk drama jumping style is mainly seen. Folk drama is somehow partially melodrama so the conflict style is presented here.

**Costume:** “Though in earlier time of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in opera, like, *Tailokya tarini*, *Bhaba tarini* and *Kotagolani* female character was practically present on the stage”. But in folk theatre there was a tradition that the male character on the stage had to perform as female character. Bharat, a dramatist, has mentioned three types of expression.

‘*Anurup*’ is the making up of the male and female character according to their age and physical structure. And if they are not judged in making of the male and female character is called ‘*Birup*’. To dress up a male as a female and vice-versa according to their age and physique is called ‘*Rupanurup*’. In ancient time male character is dressed up as both female and male character. In folk theatre it is going on since earlier time. Chaitanya Dev acted as a female character in ‘*Ranjani Haran*’.

**Contradiction of dress for male and female actors:** To dress a male as a female, male has to brush up more face powder to hide his line of beard. On the other hand, to dress a female as a male, female has to make coloured her face brightly to create a line of bread. To make up a male as a female the dressers especially give more importance in their voice and physique. Sometimes it is seen that performer who perform on the stage is impossible to be recognized either he is male or female observing his physique, voice and acting. “In 19<sup>th</sup> century’s *Yatra* or drama almost all time the male is to keep long hair and make hole in his ears and nose. In 20<sup>th</sup> century this is totally vanished. As a result naturalness increases in make-up.” In folk theatre Make-up-man is not required for make up of male actors. From the child to the adult everyone has to finish his/her makeup without taking help of others. In they are ready for acting finishing their make-up. The characters start their make-up half an hour before starting the theatre.

In historical and mythological drama there is no compromise in dressing. In costume there is no naturalness in dressing up in these dramas. In plays --‘Ramayana’ and ‘Mahabharata’ – characters have to put on glorious and decorated upper garment (blouse), mantle etc. There is no difference between dressing up of Kings and Samrats. As for examples Ashoka, Bikramaditya, Mahilal, Shashanka, Prithwiraj and Shibaji are to be mentioned.

**Dialogue:** Dialogue is an important pillar of opera. Acting expresses the value of dialogue. Necessary information is displayed with the help of dialogue.

In Sanskrit rhetoric, there is a quotation about the female voice. The quotation summarizes that if there is no rest/full stop the whole world will be under darkness. Indeed, the whole world is lighted with the glossary. Man becomes a man with the help of this light of the word. Whatever the animals are able to see is seen with the use of sunlight. But man can see everything. He can see something more with the help of his third eye. He can see the past and his future and his present. He can also observe the internal and external world. This is possible only because of speech. Once, he has got idea and feeling by the inheritance. Scripture and literature are formed with the sentence. Scripture is man’s thought, and literature is a man’s imagination. In scripture, speech expresses man’s view, and in literature, speech enlightens emotion. In pure lyrical poem exchange of language or speech is used to utilize the nature of emotional soliloquy of the artist. In narrative stories sentence is used for in places and artists.

In drama, conflict life is expressed through language or speech. The artist himself is responsible for it. The artists do not use the dialogue of the drama, so they are to be accountable to express the meaning the language of the drama with their own capacity. They act in this way from one scene to another. The dramatist only directs the characters when they will enter or when they will exit. But the actors are to be fully responsible for presenting the theme of the drama with their dialogue. The characters are to be confined in a circle created by the composer of the drama. As acting is a social medium and it expresses the life of the ordinary people through the dialogue of the characters, so the interaction between the characters are to be perfect in their delivering of speech, physique and makeup. Overall to express action and reaction of people is the primary purpose of the drama.

Dialogue in a drama is not limited in the rhetoric of verses. It will be extended only through the prosaic forms or prose play. In nature, there raises a question if people speak in verse form. The answer will be in negative. Now ordinary people do not want to express his feeling through poetic language. On the other, human’s feelings and thoughts are indeed attached to music. Human’s passion, either in poetic form or prosaic form flows naturally. Other than the literate when the illiterate speaks emotionally and cuts any jokes or talks humorously, their expression is filled with a poetic touch. So the critics say that the playwrights must be ordinary to poetic and the dialogue would be more poetic in tone. So according to Loson, “Dialogue without poetry is only half alive. The dramatist who is not a poet is only half a dramatist.”

**Conclusion:** The dialogues and plots of Folk drama or folk theatre have been composed on the basis of the ideas, beliefs, knowledge and psychology of the audience of the village and town. When opera is acted in town area the acting should be as perfect so that it can raise the appreciation from the audience as it is the characteristic of people's theatre. It makes the audience pleased and at the same time the value of characters increases. For this logic is not always carried out here and dialectical style is always not maintained here, too. The dialogue is also composed proportionately. It acts like a tradition of drafting dialogue in the acting of opera. In drafting dialogue in the folk theatre it is acted as action and reaction.

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