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Khon, a Folk Drama of Dinajpur

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Abstract:

This essay is a study of cultural life of Dinajpur. Dinajpur, divided between India and Bangladesh in 1947 have the same culture in the rural area. The land has divided between two country and Border has been established but the cultural heritage of thousand of year tied the people of Dinajpur with a invisible thread. Composing Khon, Folk Drama is still a genre of the artist of Dinajpur. The inhabitants of Dinajpur get touched to the drama and lost themselves in it. Khon give an opportunity of getting entertainment in villages of both side of India and Bangladesh border. Till the drama could maintain its popularity it will be alive, and will enrich Dinajpur's culture.

Keywords: *Khon, Dinajpur, Folk, Deshi and Poli, Maya Bandhaki India, Bangladesh*

1. Introduction

India has long possessed probably the most remarkable tradition of folk drama. By this meant a popular theatre with some claim of poetic excellence distinguished from entertainment and from any school of drama cultivated by formally educated or literate groups. These drama wherever given are intended for majority of people. Many popular entertainments in India are, to be sure, of little or no literary substance. The author and the actor of folk drama may or may not professional. Families have for generation dedicated to the art. Only and extremely small proportion of such plays has found its way into print. The character of Indian folk drama is unique and it derives from Indian social and cultural tradition. Such a cultural tradition of rural Bengal (the area of Dinajpur only) is composing Khon, a typical form of folk drama. Khon is reciprocally related to the soil of Dinajpur. The fertile land of Dinajpur not only produces crops, but also produce such a cultural tradition, like Khon.

Khon is a typical form of folk drama of Dinajpur, the northern part of west Bengal(India) and Bangladesh. According to W.W. Hunter the area covers 4095.15 square mile in 1872. In 1872 the largest Dinajpur was constituted by 30 police stations. These were Dinajpur, Chiribandar, Parbatipur, Nawabganj, Ghoraghat, Biral, Kushmandi, Banshihari, Kaliyaganj, Gangarampur, Tapan, Fulbari, Dhamaihat, patnitala, Thakurgaon, Aatabari, Baliadangi, Haripur, Ranisangkoil, Pirganj, Bochaganj, Kaharul & Khansama. On 15 august 1947 among the 30 police stations 20 goes under the Government of East Pakistan and rest of police stations come under Indian union, hereafter these Indian part of Dinajpur is known as West Dinajpur. So Dinajpur district was divided between two nation and khon became an international form of folk drama. Though Bengal has divided, but its cultural unity remains unchanged. Latter In the year 1992 west Dinajpur is again divided into North and South Dinajpur district.

Khon song or folk drama is still stands popular in following villages in Bangladesh; Uttar Gobindopur, Sreechandrapur, KantanNagar, Barail, Aamaier, Karnai. Villages of Dinajpur, and Rangamati, Damodar pur, Katabari, Biswanathpur, Gurum pukari, Bhanga dighi are in pholbari police station. Under Birol police station the villages are Ramachandra pur, Keshabpur Dharampur and Garhgram, Dharmagarh, Bachor, Baksa Sundarpur, Gorkui, Mahalbari & Bhabanandapur villages in Ranisangkoil Police station. Whereas in India Khon is well known in south Dinajpur and North Dinajpur district. Kushmandi Block in south Dinajpur district is famous for khon folk-drama, especially the villages like Dikul, Makal, Dhakdhal have the practice of composing khon. Instant story writing, production, direction of khon folk drama is become a popular genre in Kushmandi Block. In North Dinajpur District Khon is famous especially, in Kaliyaganj, Raiganj, Hemtabad & Itahar Block. The northern part of Uttar Dinajpur earlier was in Bihar and so there is a less attraction of khon among the inhabitants of this area.

1.1. Origin of Khon

The question regarding the origin of khon song creates different opinion. Khon are mainly composed by the Deshi and Poli community of these areas. Some scholars are in the opinion that Sarala Village in Kushmandi Block in South Dinajpur is the origin land of khon, whereas some other scholars consider Krishnabati Village of Hemtabad Block or Lohatara Gram of Kaliyaganj Block is the origin center of khon. Some are of the view that KantaNagar (Presently in Bangladesh) and khoja Gram of Biral P.S. (Presently in Bangladesh) can be traced as the origin land of khon. Some famous show of khon like *Maya Bandhaki* comes from Krishnabati Village & Halua-Haluani from Durlav pur of Raiganj Block. Diner Sha Para Gram produced, Dhakoshori, Nayanshori and Barmoshowri the Most famous khon show.

Famous shows of khon folk drama during the 1960's and 70's came from the above Villages. So far, scholars have not reached to any concrete answer regarding the question of origin land of khon folk drama. Khon got the patronage of Dinajpur's Kings like Maharaja Girija Nath Rai(1882-1919 AD.) and Jagadish Nath Rai (1919-1965AD.) during the celebration of Durga Puja they used to arrange the khon folk Drama at King's palace.

1.2. Subject Matter of Khon

The matter or the subject of khon is very simple. Different incidents of the society are incorporated as the subject, these are like – extortion, story of unruly landlord, folk tales, intermingling of tears and smiles, love, affection, hunger-anger-Fear, the farmer's life story, illicit relationship story, corruption of Panchayat Pradhans, B.D.O., M.L.A, Ministers, social and economic inequality, Health & Awareness on pollution, freedom movement etc. Basically, these stories are local & based on social life. Matter of khon folk Drama is a true local story mostly illicit relationship story, therefore there was no need for writing down the Drama. So the identity of the writer of ancient khon is not known to us. The artists are given oral instruction about their character in the folk play. They may have got only few information of their dialogue, as the story was true and known to them. Their rustic names were remained unchanged in the play. Some notable writer of the present day is Barin Sarkar & Profulla Barman of Krishnabati village, Khusi Mohan sarkar of Kushmandi Block, and Dhaneswar Barman. Professionally the artist of this drama is among the farmers, landless labour, van puller, small shopkeeper, industrial labour and unemployed youth. Earlier in the drama male being were to play female part but now a days the ladies are also attached with the folk drama. The language of khon folk drama is mix language. It has been observed that in the village of Dinajpur lot of families have different languages. The dialects are used and are influenced by Rajbanshi language. Due to Geographical location, Dinajpuri local language is enriched with the uses of Hindi, Arabic- Persian, & Maithili's words. This enriched mixed language is very sweet to listen to.

Khon is like an open concert, it does not need any formal stage to perform. It is performed on the roadsides, village fair or community place such as outside of folk god's temple. In khon the stage is round shaped and the audience throngs around of the stage. In the drama the instrumentalist play vital role. Harmonium, flute, dhak, khol, are commonly used in the drama, where the actors are dressed according to their role. The main character (Heroine) put zinc oxide to make her face white. The leader of the drama called as Makhi, now a day's 'manager' word is also using for him. Before starting the drama the artist adore the god such as Bramha, Bishnu, Maheswar, Kali, Krishna, Dharma Thakur, Gangadevi & Pir of Muslim community. Praising rhymes for Pir shows the unity and bondage of Hindu & Muslims in the village area. The Muslims of Dinajpur are also take part in composing or playing the Khon drama. Lifestyle of Muslims in Dinajpur villages is also influenced by Deshi and Poli. In the last part of the praising rhymes they mention the name of the drama. It is like

Khan Palar Bandana Gan

*Humra Kari Bandana Barma Bishnu Maheswar Tin Jana
Purabe Bandana Kari Dharma Thakurer Charan Bandi
Tahar Charane Humra Pranam Kari.
Uttar-E Bandana Kari Kali Mayer Charan Bandi
Tahar Charane Humra Pranam Kari.
Paschim-E Bandana Kari Pir Saheb-Er Charan Bandi
Tahar Charane Humra Pranam Kari.
Dakshin-E Bandana Kari Ganga Mayer Charan Bandi
Tahar Charane Humra Pranam Kari.
Aasore Bandana Kari Dash Thakurer Charan Bandi
Tahar Charane Humra Pranam Kari.*

Translation

*We humbly pray to the Brahma, Bishnu, Maheswar
We humbly pay our homage to the holy feet of the god;
We, again, offer our pranam (homage) to him.
Towards north, hail the holy goddess, Kali Mata
She to, deserves our pranam.
Towards west we pay homage to Pir sahib and
Pay our sincere salam(homage) to his holy feet.
Towards south we sing for the holy goddess Ganga Mata
And pay our respect to her..
Now, here at this stage, we hail to the holy Dash Thakur
And pay our sincere respect for him.*

(Thus the invocation to the god/goddess of all dimension is completed. The chorus declares the title of the Kon / pala and the invocation ceremony closed)

The chorus again shows respect towards the audience and humbly declares the beginning of the scheduled Khon

The story of khon are full of romanticism. In composing khon binary principle of writing were used. The Bengali meaning of Khon is a khondo (Part). In the village society throughout the year a lot of incidents happened. The author makes the garland of pearls with this trifle (simple) village incidents. The life never stopped its going on and creates a lot of resources for the drama. Their illicit relationship story is always an attractive topic for the rural audience. In a village area where the other sources of entertainment are not available. Their gossiping issues are thrilling topic. Folk culture is simple in character and precious in value. It is a mirror of the simple life of village society. The language of Khon is often unpolished and rustic in character. Mainly after cutting the autumnal crops the farmers have has ample hours for rest and during this period they compose the Khon folk drama. It has a good demand in the villages and the Government also used khon as media for social awareness campaign such as Literary Campaign, Swachha Bharat Mission and many more.

In spite of its own identity and popularity Khon folk drama is now facing major challenges for its survival. The Governments initiative effort to protect it is not enough. The writers and artists of Khon are in economic crisis, they need proper aid. Due to the advertisement of government project the rustic language and character of khon loses its originality and ownness, for using cosmopolitan words in such khon drama instead of its original language. With the passage of time the set up of the society is changed. The taste of the audience is also changed. So is true in the presentation of folk drama. Responsibility lies on hands of our Government as well as the conscious citizens. Their joint venture can protect the existence of this famous art form of Dinajpur to maintain its originality.

2. References

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