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RESEARCH ARTICLE

MUGHAL TAMASHA (INSOLVENT SPECIMEN OF FOLK THEATER AT BHADRAK DISTRICT, ODISHA)

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ABSTRACT

Bhadrak, a north-eastern district of Odisha, is situated between 20°43' and 21°59' north latitude and between 86°16' and 87°29' east longitude. It contains an area of 6394sq kms. (According to the Surveyor-General of India) and a population of 2,253,090 persons (provisional figures) as ascertained by the Census of 1981. The density of population in 1981 per square kilometer is 357 persons. Bhadrak sub-division of the undivided Balasore district became a new district on the first April, 1993 (vide Govt. in Revenue Department Notification number DRC-44/93, 14218/R dtd the 27 March, 1993). It is one of the northern districts of Odisha lying to the east of the Indian sub-continent. Its geographical coordinates are 20°44" and 21° 15" Northern Latitudes and 86° 16" and 86° 58" Eastern Longitudes. The district is surrounded by Balasore district in the north, Jajpur and the river Baitarani in the south, Keonjhar district in the west and the Bay of Bengal and Kendrapada district in the east. The area of this district is 2505 sq.km with a population 15, 06,522 as per the figure of the 2011 census. It is a level track of alluvial soil with gradual slope eastwards to the Bay of Bengal. The Salandi, the Baitarani, the Kanshbansha, the Gumati, the Mantei, the Genguti, the Kochila, the Reba and the Kapali river & flow through and around the district. The East Coast Railway runs through the headquarters making the place a big trade Centre from a long time ago. The place has a long cultural heritage which has been duly recognized by eminent historians. Contribution of Bhadrak to the literary heritage of Odisha is vast and varied, unique and immense. From the hoary past, the district of Balasore and Bhadrak has been a meeting place of divergent-cultures and communities. The picturesque landscape, hemmed by the blue sea in the East, bounties of nature with a range of mountains at the West line, rich treasure of flora and fauna and cosmopolitan cultural tradition have made the district, an emotional ground for literary exuberance. Its saints and scholars, poets and patriots, prose writers and playwrights, journalists and novelists have contributed proficiently to the literature of Odisha through ages. It is very much true that many a literary lights hailed from the district of Balasore, Bhadrak and enriched Odia literature-but to localize the persons of these creative writers, who belong to all times and climes, is a delicate issue and moreover, it is detrimental to the literary ethics. But, each 'culture unit' of our community life, with its own distinct features contributes more or less to the main stream of national life. Proper historical study of the contributions of these "culture units" from a true perspective becomes, therefore, indispensable for national interest. So to have a close look of the literary history of a "culture unit" or a region is not unwarranted. The literary history of Balasore and Bhadrak before the 14th century, the probable period of Sridhar Swami, the saint-scholar of Remuna remains shrouded in obscurity. Even after the 14th Century, we come across very meagre manuscripts. But with Dinakrushna, the literary history of Bhadrak emerges into a clear height.

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INTRODUCTION

"Mughal Tamasha" was a unique form of folk drama written and staged at Bhadrak, 150 or 200 years before. Dr. H. K. Mahtab is of the opinion that Odia Yatra in the coastal area had its root in "Mughal Tamasha" I. Prof. T.

Misra, holding a similar view, says that possibly M. T. was the progenitor of the popular form of Odia folk drama "Yatra", which was profusely reformed later on by Vaisnava Pani, the reputed folk-dramatist of Odisha, Similarities between the representation of Mughal Tamasha and Yatra lead to hold such opinion.

In Mughal Tamasha chorus songs are sung in tune with violin, pakhawaj and Kubuji (gini) in praise of Lord Siva. Similarly Yatra is started with the group dance in tune with the playing of musical instruments like harmonium, clarinet, pakhawaj or dubitabla and Kubuji. Like the Mirza Sahib of Mughal Tamasha, the Raja inquired about the condition of the particular region in the presence of his minister. Like the Faraswala or the Jhadudar of Mughal Tamasha, the Dvari creates humour before entering into the stage. Then the actual performance begins after the entry of Mirza of Mughal Tamasha and Raja and Rani of Yatra.

THE TAMASHA WRITERS (AUTHORS): The authorship of Mughal Tamasha is ascribed to BansiballabhaGosvami (b 1728, during the Maratha period), son of a Brahmin scholar, namely SatyanarayanaGosvami of Village Samgata in Bhadrak. The author has written a number of Tamashas, which are satirical light plays on the luxurious and decadent life, behaviour and maladministration of the Mirzas (who fully depend on the corrupted courtiers and flattery of the servants) long after the Mughal rule in Odisha Amongst them Mughal Tamasha is well known as an interesting specimen of an indigenous dramatic form. Credit goes to this peculiar dramatic form as the first milestone in the gradual development of modern Odia drama. Its satirical songs and dialogues (meagre prose) are written in Persian (Pharsi), Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and Odia. It is interesting to note that Bansiballabh has displayed his talent in this indigenous dramatic form in an age (18th C.), when the poets of Odisha could not venture to go aside the traditional trodden path of decadent ornate poetry. The realistic picture of his contemporary society that we find in his works certainly indicates the modern outlook of an indigenous author of the 18th Century, which is exceptionally a bold deviation from the literary practice of his time. In view of the presentation of this peculiar dramatic form, the interesting historical background warrants our attention.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND: Since the last part of the 16th Century Odisha came under the rule of the Afghans, Mughals, and Marathas during their reign Bhadrak played an important role as an independent administrative unit called "Bhadrak Sarkar. Before the advent of the Mughals in Bhadrak, the Afghans settled up here. In the 17th Century a large number of Muhammadans came here in connection with administration and during the reign of Aurangzeb a powerful administrative and military personnel came here with a large number of Muhammadans of various official strata, who encamped at fourteen places of Bhadrak (who settled! up here), subsequently known as 'Cauda Mahalla' in Puruna bazar area, this administrative and military factor contribute to the increase of Muslim population in Bhadrak and in its locality. The number of Muhammadans, who were granted Jayagiri in Bhadrak since the reign of Akbar, was more in comparison with other places in Odisha. In the beginning there would have been conflict among the Hindus and Muhammadans owing to which Bhadrakali, the presiding goddess of Bhadrak was debased and in many places Hindu temples were converted into mosques. Persian was the court language and Urdu was the language of conversation in day-to-day life of the Muhammadans. Besides this, Bengali was the mother tongue of some families who settled up here long ago. Indigenous schools called Pathshalas, established with the financial aid and patronage of rich persons and Zamindars contributed to the spread of Primary education in addition to which some Sanskrit Tols and Madrasas had been established to impart

Sanskrit and Urdu teaching. Luxurious and sensuous life of the Mughal rulers (Bad Shahs, Nawabs, Naibs, Subadars, Devans and Fouzdars); their absorptive and extorting attitude, torture and maladministration at the cost of higher human values and higher code of conduct had the worst impact upon the Society. People led a very miserable life in an atmosphere of panic and anarchy. Sense of security in life, personal property and chastity were a dream for them. Luxury, low morals and degraded human values amongst the so-called aristocrats led to several social evils such as injustice, inequality and prostitution. Ordinary people in a hapless condition were threatened to be fatalist in such a state of security and panic as a result of which the whole society groped in the darkness of evil social and religious customs and ignorance. In order to satisfy the lust of the so-called Zamindars and aristocrats, the harlots (Baijis) settled up in different places of Bhadrak such as Naripur, Saban bazar and Bankabazar and presented their dance and song (composed in Persian, Urdu and Odia) in different social festivals. Even long after the lamentable fall of the Mughals, the Afghan Mirzas (when they had a settled life) had completely been a prey to luxury and an air of finality. During the reign of the Marathas (in the Middle of 18th C.) they could not cope with the change of the time. Their blind imitation of the former rulers in administration and ways of living prompted Bansiballabha to write these Tamasas, which were realistic reflections of the society and culture of his time with a sharp sense of satire and sarcasm. By the time when Bansiballabhatook up pen, the Afghan Mirzashad lost all the glory of their past victory, but the Maratha rule did not stand against the prevalence of Persian as the court language. During the reign of the Marathas, in spite of their usurpation and extorting attitude, worship of Hindu gods and goddesses was encouraged uninterruptedly and worship of Siva became popular as the Marathas were worshippers of the latter. Bansiballabha could venture to write his satirical Tamasas on the ways of living of the Mirzas, when there was no fear from them. Even the rich Mirzas of his time would have enjoyed the satire dispassionately.

MUGHAL TAMASHA: Mughal Tamasha can be estimated as a type of farce or satirical light play, not a drama in the true sense of the term. Though there are certain characters (drawn from different stratas of contemporary society), dialogues and songs, it lacks dramatic qualities. Besides the presentation of a few social pictures of contemporary society there is a want of story, plot, conflict and action. In the modern sense and perspective we cannot expect dramatic development of conflict and characters, and dramatic suspense. Still its performance is enjoyed even to-day by a huge audience.

SUBJECT MATTER: At the outset the 'Copdar' (servant or orderly) makes the audience conscious by uttering. "DabeKhade ho-Hat Khade ho" (Stand up or sit-down without making noise) and announces the entrance of 'MirzaSaheb The latter tossing this and that side like a Badshah or Nawab reaches the place of acting in a palanquin (Caudola) in a procession. After alighting from the Palanquin he takes his seat on the throne placed on a raised pendal. Then he calls for his servants one after another and the servants like 'Bhestiwala', 'Jhaduwala', 'Farrasawala', "Hukawala", 'Pankhawala', Daptar, 'Catniwala' and 'Totibardar' etc. com respectively one after another and present their prayers and exit the stage after doing their service. Then the Mirza expresses his inquisitiveness about the particular district (mulak), Pragna, mauza (village) and the people and makes boast of his post and title

Padapadavi, servants, garden, his wisdom, intelligence and ego. He warrants the Zamindar of the place and demands 'Chokari' (damsel), bakri (goat), chaparkhat (Cot with a piece of cloth stretched over) and massari Mosquito Net). Then he expresses his dissatisfaction on the supply of the rasad ration supplied as a token of fear and honour) of the Zemindar and warrants the milk-maid (gauduni), The milk maid enters the stage with a basket full of curd and milk jars (dahidudhapasara and the Mirza expresses his love with cajoling words on hearing of which the former escapes (out of fear) indicating her hatred and unwillingness. As mentioned before MughulTamasha is an ill constructed folk drama, seriously lacking in dramatic qualities. MughulTamasha is a loosely constructed satirical light play of the "farce nature". Despite its demerits, it can be estimated as a faithful presentation of the contemporary men and society Mirza, the centre of attraction of the MughulTamasha (round whom all other characters revolve) cannot be estimated as a hero of a comedy or tragedy either. The satire and sarcasm on the luxury, selfish judgement, complete dependence on the courtiers and servants of the Mirza is the central interest of Mughal Tamasha. Bansiballabh has given a realistic picture of the men and society with whom he was moving. His satire on the loose morals of the side characters like Hukawala, Jhaduwala and Copdar is no less enjoyable. The courtiers and servants of Mirza were addicted to some sort of intoxicants. Some of them were despised for their visit to the quarters of the harlots. In the prayer of the servants, the writer has reflected on their miserable condition, as they faced a very hard time to pull on without having any remuneration. Most of the Mughal and Maratha rulers did not properly pay their servants and soldiers as a result of which they were forced to plunder the people by all sorts of means resulting in anarchy, an atmosphere of insecurity, chaos and fear. The character of the Zamindar is presented in the garb of a Vaisnava having pig-tail, chuti), tulasi-bead, sandal marks on the forehead and arms and a namavali encircling the neck. Besides, we come across the character of a Bard (Bhata) and saintly character like Sikh Guru Nanak, The satire and sarcasm suggest the reformative and revolutionary attitude of the author.

STAGE AND PRESENTATION: For the presentation of Mughal Tamasha a special kind of open-air-pendal is constructed in front of a Siva Temple. No screen is used. On one side facing towards the temple) a particular place is selected for the pendal, which is made higher either by earth or cot and a throne is constructed for the Mirza. The throne is adorned with cloth of various colours, leaves and flowers. A small place in front of the throne is earmarked for the actors and the spectators take their seats on three sides of the stage. The musicians and drumbeaters sit on one side of the stage. Large canopy is spread over the stage, which is decorated with fans and flowers made of coloured paper. On the eve of presentation Kahali, Yodinagara or Dhola and Mahuri are played on. The singers and musicians use Harmonium, Sitar, Violin, Dubitabla, pakhanj and Kubuji. Actors are selected from Hindu and Muslim community and both the communities enjoy the performance promoting unity and fraternity amongst them. Males are dressed in female garbs for enacting female roles Most of the characters are dressed in Mohammedan style. The song, tune, dance and musical instruments of Mughal Tamasha have a speciality of their own like 'Chhau Dance of Seraikela and Kharasuan, and mark a difference from their counterparts in Lila, Yatra, Pala, Gotipua etc.

Mughal Tamasha can be safely estimated as a folk drama owing to profusion of songs and dance, open-air-pendal, mode of acting and the audience and can be compared with Lila and 'Yatra' of Odisha and Bengal; 'Nautanki of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, 'Nakal' of the Punjab, 'Bhavai' of Gujrat, Terukkuttu' of Tamilnadu and Tamasha of Maharashtra.

SONG, DANCE AND DIALOGUE:

Like the later Lilas, Mughal Tamasha is full of songs with meager prose dialogue. The dialogues have been introduced according to the status of the characters, i. e. Persian for the MirzaSaheb, Persian, Urdu, Hindi and Bengali for the Mirza's courtiers and servants, Odia for the Zemindar, his Naib (Gumasta) and the Milk-maid. Since Persian was the court language for centuries and language of the elite our writers right from Bansiballaphupto Fakir Mohan, have used a large number of Persian Phrases and words It has encouraged certain writers to create Islamic literature which has promoted and strengthened unity and integrity between Hindu and Muslim communities Odisha. Mughal Tamasha and other Tamashas are called ChaitiTamasha since they are enacted along with the Ghatayatra of Mahadeva towards the end of Chaitra Now-a-days only one day is devoted for the enacting of Mughal Tamasha whereas it took seven days (last seven days of Chaitra) previously. Mughal Tamasha was being staged in front of the temple of Siva in different villages, namely Kuansa, Sahapur, Janugania, Purunabazara, Bankabazar, Santhia, Mirzapur, Gardapur and Samgat. Some later writers of Bhadrak, namely Lala Giridhari Misra (Puruna Bazar), Jagabandhu Misra Bankabazar) and Pritilal (Nilakanthapur) attempted to write Tamasas.

Leaving aside the meager literary merit of Mughal Tamasha and other Tamashas, it cannot be mentioned that Bansiballabha is an exponent of folk drama which has paved the path for the creation and development of Yatra, Gita- bhinaya and modern Odia drama in the distant future. Mughal Tamasha can be estimated as the first stage of Gita- bhinaya (Gitinatya) or Yatra. The later drama forms of Tamasas are Lila and Suanga of which JagannathPani of Nalanga near Bhadrak is the exponent, in connection with Yatra the names of JagannathPani, KrupasindhuMisra (Dipal of Midnapur). VaisnavaPani, Kothapada, GopalaDasa (Palasinga, Kendrapara). Natyachary, Raghunatha Panda are noteworthy Lastly it will not be out of place if it is mentioned that Bansiballabha was very much modern in view of his time of advent, and his bold and independent attitude in literary convention is yet to be assessed properly in the right perspective.

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3. The authorship of the following Tamasas, is ascribed to Bansiballabha such as Mughul Tamasa, Bhil Tamasa, Candi Tamasa, Yogi Tamasa, Fakir Tamasa, Radha Krishna Tamasa, Lolin Maja Bai Tamasa.
4. Towards the last part of the 16th C. the Afghans were defeated by Man Singh and he ruled Orissa on behalf of

- Badshah Akbar. In order to satisfy the defeated Afghans he allowed them to settle up in different places of Northern Orissa granting Zamindari and Zayagiri. That is why the number of pure Muhammadans is more than others and Persian, though in a corrupted form, is still prevalent among them. Dr. H. K. Mahtab. 'Bhumika', 'Mughul Tamasa' P. V.
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