

Folk Art of Maharashtra TAMASHA: Birth of Marathi Theatre

Prof. Arvind Ganveer (M.Phil. History, M.A History)

Assist. Prof.

The D. G. Ruparel College of Arts, Sci. and Commerce.

Senapati bapat Marg, Mahim, Mumbai-400016

Abstract:

Maharashtra is a state of Indian Republic traces back its origin in history to late Harappan period & Jorwe culture 1300 to 700 CE. State first settlement discovered at Diamabad. On administration status state was first ruled by Maurya empire in the fourth century BCE. During 230 BCE state came under the administration of Satavahana. Along with its geographical and historical traces of administration & rulers, settlement, it has long historical tradition of art and culture in various streams from the old aged settlements. Maurya who were once supreme rulers of the state were very fond of Arts & Culture, music & sculpture. During the rule of Emperor Ashoka the Great state which was not in the form of its united form came into consideration for the first time and this was the age where Maharashtra first time saw the flourishing of Arts and sculpture in the caves of Sopara, Kanheri, etc. During the rule of Emperor Samprati Maurya state first time saw the public celebration organised by the monarch for public entertainment. In the reign of Gautamiputra Satakarni public entertainment in the theatrical form was organised by him as utsav for his masses stated on the inscription of Trirashmi caves inscribed by his mother Gautami Balashri gave first account of theatrical entertainment which is related to the traditional form of Tamasha.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally Maharashtra is home to many cultural and arts related activities. It is a land of saints, rulers, scholars & artists. During Maurya, Satavahana, Gupta period flourishment of Arts of sculpture, literature, music & trade. In Mughal period Ghazals, Dance and Sufi Sangeet achieved great heights also this was the period of bhakti geets and folk music rising to their heights. During the rule of Maratha period under the rule of Chatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj and further Maratha administrators gave royal patronage to all the traditional folk of the lands. Lavani & Tamasha, Dhashavtar & Kirtan are the main folk art of the state.

TAMASHA: Tamasha is the traditional form of theatrical entertainment which is topic of research.



Introduction to Tamasha:

'Tamasha' word derived persian and arabian word Tamasa means public display or show for entertainment . The word shahir of tamasha is also derived from urdu word shayar .Tamasha is a entertainment art from maharashtra which was the rawest and authentic form of theatre art carried out from many centuries traces back to its origin in the form of raw folk art during the satavahana rule where the group of people who were artist to perform the acts accompanied with dialogues presenting on theme of living of people and their problems to present it in form of monarch or to spreading awareness of royal policies created for the people into the people by presenting a conversation in a dramatical way. Later it grow in the form of Tamasha during the form which is known to todays world in the period of 17th century and 18th century basically the shringar form of Tamasha took rise and became popularised in Peshwai .where the main focus were on women artist expressing the seductive acts of dance form in royal courts of peshwai to entertainment the peshwas .Before Peshwas period Tamasha was mostly in the form two types concerned with the topic of presentation of knowledge and awareness to the masses with music or worshipping form of local god & goddess & kings & Brave warriors of that eras .Mostly talking about the bravery acts of warriors to encourage people to fight for soil and rights where the artist played the acts & shahir narrates the stories of the heroes or spread awareness.

Phase of Tamasha :

1st phase :

1st Century BCE :

It is considered as Tamasha the word arrived in later period but the form of theatre folk is located in satavahana period in recorded history. The Jataka katas also state about the play & dance arts founds in **silk road** inscription.

2nd Phase :

In late 1600s :

Tamasha was seen in very different form to the modern form of it. Form of the art in 17th century to 18th century is considered as mother of traditional Marathi theatre. In this period the art delivered entertainment to people in two forms that are detailed as follows.

Satwik : In Medieval India, Bhakti movement took birth in 13th century and it continued till 19th century. India saw many spiritual reforms and bhakti saints from the period. Dnyaneshwar to Chokha Mela till Gadge Baba. Their preaching and teaching were used to spread by local artists who were also followers of saints convey the messages to the common people for spread of bhakti revolution & strengthening the bhakti movement and advising people to conduct right code of spirituality and humanity by avoiding sin. The Shahir conveyed the message which saints wrote or delivered in their presence. Waghya murli, kirtan, gondhal and other local worshipping practices of local gods of Mahar & Maratha khandoba, who were warriors & landowners influenced the Satwik form of Tamasha & it incorporated the dashavatar, kirtan, gondhal, Waghya murli in its advanced form.

Shoor natya : In medieval period the folk artist used to encourage people to fight under the local rulers against the invaders for the protection of their provinces. It was a thought process of

“प्रांत , प्रण आणण प्रप्यरांसरठी घ्यर मशरल हरती” . In this era when the idea of Swarajya came to birth under Jijabai Bhosale mentorship & Shivaji Maharaj leadership many local artists and saints like Tukaram used the medium of shoor natya or abhanga with instruments such as tuntuna to encourage youths to join the army of Swarajya to fight against the foreign invasion. In later 18th century and 19th century the Tamasha artists also performed the plays on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj & Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj by praising the life of warriors and spreading awareness about the legendary heroes and their heroic deeds.

3rd Phase :

Peshwa rule :

In Peshwa rule, Tamasha seen in a totally different face but not new where most of the Tamasha are incorporated with Lavani another folk art of Maharashtra where the main characters of the Tamasha were a female lead accompanied with Nachya (A man or third gender who also plays the women role or performs with female lead by performing seductive jokes). Shahir who sings songs accompanied with Dholki or Halgi irrespective to the old form of Shahir who perform poems or dialogues or monologues.

Tamasha took here the form of shringar ras, where the dancers present their beauty and seductive expressions along with dance to entertain the rulers in the Peshwa courts. The songs were written and sung were also sexually explicit and double meaning and the dances performed by the female leads were also mostly conducted of seductive acts by objectifying the women's in Tamasha for entertainment purpose of the administrator & rulers of Peshwa period and other landlords and feudal lords. This was the era of Tamasha when it occurred in its distinct self but also this was the era where the traditional form of Tamasha got maligned and got a new face of entertainment with sexual pleasure satisfying to monarch & feudal lords.

This was also the same era when the art saw the phase of caste slavery where the female dancers were mostly forcefully carried out from lower castes, mostly tribal women's. Who were objectified by the feudal lords and Peshwa rulers as means of entertainment and sexual mode of entertainment by putting a slavery on them that certain caste women's should perform

their art and body in respect to the ruler . Where women’s were forcefully put in those acts against their will and we’re sexually abuses by rulers , feudal lords, courtiers to create and enforced a slavery environment by patriarch and castiest thinking of a selective nastiest community. **Bavankhanni** also settled by Balaji baji rao during his reign a two storeyed chawl with 52 chambers where the dancers and sexual service provider women’s were kept for serving the nobility .
4th Phase :

Modern Historical era:

In late 1800 to middle of 1900 many distinct changes seen in the art along with the change of audience type .During this period the artist perform their arts by stepping out from royal court to open public stages as it to is prior phase before peshwa period. The art got the respect which it deserve for its real form came into existence in this era .In late period of 1800 where Social revolutionary like Mahatma Phule used Tamasha a weapon or medium to spread revolution in society against the casteist practices and the casteist people.

Satyashodhak samaj uses Tamasha in its authentic form of theatrical art to spread messages of Mahatma phule and raised social topics popularly known as Satyashodhak Jalsa along with it they started protecting Tamasha artist mainly female by protesting against the objectifying of females and putting end to the casteist angle .By encouraging women’s of lowers caste that not to do anything or perform any art against their will . Spreading awareness about the art they stated that Tamasha is pure form of art known as loknatya for the entertainment of people and not to malign it.

5th Phase

Post Independence:

This is the period where Tamasha also got wide focus from the public and many women’s with their will joined the art as pure form of art to perform it as their skill. People migrated from konkan to Bombay(present Mumbai) in localities of giran gaons (localities of mill workers such as area of present day **Girgaon to Elphinstone road** in West stretch and **Byculla to Worli** in central stretch of south mumbai) became a open stage for the art of tamasha in 1940s to 1980s .Mill workers and labours who migrated from villages where the original tamasha fad (groups) located call them up to their localities for entertainment purposes in their social celebrations as it is only major mode of entertainment to them in those period .

Tamasha have two branches in main are as follows.

Tamasha type	Presentation type	Time period
Dholaki fadacha tamasha	It is a type of tamasha where most properly main form of tamasha is of dramatic form along with music & song	17 th century & before
Sangeet Baaricha Tamasha	This type is more occupied with dances and songs than the later form and absent dramatic or theatrical plays compare to older form.	18 th to 19 th century

Bodies of Tamasha

Gan (गण) : Tamasha begins with Gan or Gana which is a praised to lord ganesha by the Tamasha team ,who is considered as lord of arts according to Hindu mythology . It is believed that Gan is performed as similar to the traditional belief of praying lord Ganesha before starting any new thing or auspicious occasion so that any obstacles should not intervene in its success . While performing this Gan a shahir perform a poem consist of bhakti known as Ganachi Lavani.

Gawalan (गौवलण) : After Gan Gawalan is presented in front of audience .Which have it roots in bhakti movements saints and it is considered by portraying most of the scenario of epics such as Ramayana & Mahabharat . By presenting the scenario of Krishna childhood stories where a performer play a role of krishna and other artists plays the women's who were known as gopikas or gawalans in shri krishna stories and how he played and perform rasleela or play fight with them or by stealing curd from theirs pots and they counter krishna .Gawalani were some times terms as Mavshi too.

Lavani (लावणी) : This is the most favorite part of Tamasha by audiences .Where Dancers perform their dances with the songs perform by shahirs accompanied with musical instruments such as dholaki , tuntuna,etc.The songs performed in lavani were mostly based on romantic scenarios between Male & female , describing the beauty of women's , social customs and in some extent to religious or spiritual customs. In Lavani a dialogues sharing between a dancer and Nachya is most attention seeking of audiences as it gives varieties of content as per the theme of the lavani performance . Sometimes a dialogues between them are double meaning jokes and based on adult jokers .

Batawani (बतावणी) : This is phase of Tamasha where the artists create a sarcastic environment which take place when the artist perform the jokes and sarcastic staunch on the social issues or the topics which decide in the theme to express and entertain people by mostly playing jokes of double meaning between the Songadya . In Batawani Babu & Tatyia are traditional main roles of this act .

Vagga or Vag (वग) : Vag is played after batawani which is real form of theatrical drama of Tamasha .Where artist play the skits by presenting their artistic skills .It is similar to Natak of modern days and the characters and script and way of performance is more similar to Natak of present days . Characters such of king , sevak ,queen ,Darbari, & narrated by shahir or narrator who is a jester .

Instruments of Tamasha:

Dholaki : Most important & influential instrument of the tamasha. The instrument is 45 cm in length & 26 cm in breadth. It has two side drumheads one side with small head made of skin of goat and other is made of skin of Buffalo which is big side .The body is made of sheesham or Mango wood .

Tuntuna : It is a instrument which is made of wood & leathers and strings which are available to produce sound or music when stretches .It has main role in bhakti geets and kirtan along with Tamasha.

Halg : Is a traditional daff type instrument made of wood , leather, iron & parchment. Which is the symbolic instruments to many of the folk arts in Maharashtra . Shahirs used to play it while singing their songs.

Jhanj : Cymbal is also known as jhanj is a musical instruments made of various alloy thin plates are in the pair of two which produce sound on clapping with one on other .

CONCLUSION:

In Land of Progressive social reformers like Mahatma Jyotirao Phule , Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar , G.G Agarkar , M.G Ranade. The state which have a long pride history of social reformers & along with it artistic history of state is also prestigious from artist like Patte Bapurao, Gopal

Shashtri, Keshavrao Bhole , Bhaurao Kolhatkar a system and society didn't provide justice to this folk artist .Most of them in compare to big screen artist living a misery life.They are facing with poverty in their day to day life. Some of them even left their art for survival of them or their families which is not healthy for the art and culture of the state. AS a state , Government made policies but those policies and facilities are not reachable to this artist till date so this misconduct of system have to be improve to keep alive the great folk culture of Maharashtra from becoming extinct . Because the artist who do commercial films on big screen cannot do a similar justice to this folks as it is very different from business and also the various medium of art & skills.

Reference code	Name	Analysis code
2034	Namdevrao Vhatkar : Maharashtrache Lok sahitya ani kala	6014 mh 309
7809	Folk of maharashtra	8056 d*Mh 99

REFERENCES:

1. History of Folk Dances , syllabus of Shahu university ,Series 2008 .
2. Mukhasala, Journal of Bhadrak Sahitya Parisada, 1976.
3. Souvenir, Balasore District Writers' Conference, 1979.
4. Mughul Tamasa, ed. Sri K. C. Behera, Bhadrak, 1966.
5. Dr. H. K. Mahatab, Istedn. pub.Student's Store, Cuttack, 1948.
6. Dnyaneswar Nadkarni Sangeet Natak Quarterly Journal
7. History of Indian theatre, Volume 2, By Manohar Laxman Varadpande.
8. Jump up to: Thielemann, Selina (2000). The Music of South Asia. New Delhi: AHP Publishing Corp. p. 521. ISBN 982-81-7648-056-8.
9. Mahadev Shastri Editor Bharatiya Sanskriti Kosh(vol.3) Bharatiya Kosh Mandal Pune
10. Medieval Indian literature: an anthology, Volume 3 By K. Ayyappa Paniker, Sahitya academy
11. R. C. Dere. Lok Sanskhthi Upasak Sahityalay Pune, 1971.