
THE OTHER SIDE OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND LIVING: A CALL TO HEDGE THE DYING ART

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ABSTRACT

A written document is no longer treated as a piece of literature; rather, readers' needs have surpassed the limits of traditional expectations, beyond the purview of common scrutiny. A piece of writing has become a stale reminder of the time spent; the recurrent images of everyday life and living, the bread and butter of the populace, their anguish and pain, the contours of traditional moorings, nuances and nemesis, rituals and rebuttals clubbed together have become the choice of the present time. The big question, therefore, is to bring in necessary modifications to our notions and approaches towards literature, without which it amounts to infidelity with the readership. The present paper aims to highlight how different elements of behavioural knowledge are intelligibly incorporated in the verses of *Ghodanacha* and how they influenced the life and living of *Kaibartas/Keuts* for ages as scriptures of inspiration, encouragement, and discipline. This will connect the art's history, evolution, and current state as it stands at the gateway to its own graveyard.

KEYWORDS: Culture, Literature, Art, Tradition, Preservation, Community, Values.

RESUMEN *El otro lado del lenguaje, la literatura y la vida: Una llamada para proteger el arte en declive*

Un documento escrito ya no es tratado simplemente como una obra literaria, al contrario, las necesidades de los autores han superado los límites de las expectativas tradicionales, más allá del alcance del escrutinio común. Las obras escritas se han convertido en un recordatorio obsoleto del tiempo pasado; las imágenes recurrentes de la vida cotidiana, el sustento básico del pueblo como el pan y la mantequilla, sus angustias y dolores, las figuras de las tradiciones arraigadas, tonalidades y adversidades, rituales y contradicciones apaleados juntos, se han convertido ahora en la preferencia del momento. La gran tarea es, de este modo, encontrar las modificaciones necesarias en nuestras nociones y enfoques hacia la literatura, sin ser infieles a los lectores. Este texto tiene como objetivo destacar cómo elementos diferentes de conocimiento conductual son inteligentemente incorporados en los versos de 'Ghodanacha', y cómo han influenciado la vida y las experiencias de los 'Kaibartas/Keuts' durante años, como escritos de inspiración, fomento y disciplina. Esto relacionará la historicidad del arte, su evolución, así como su estado actual, cuando se encuentra en el portal de su propia tumba.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cultura, Literature, Arte, Tradición, Preservación, Comunidad, Valores.

Introduction

The cultural canvas of Odisha presents a unique mix of varied colours that showcases a distinctive blend of classical and folk forms. This is the only province in India that records the due assimilation of myriad racial and cultural elements. The land of art and literature is enriched with multiplicity and manifold folk traditions and has been able to keep its head high above petty discriminatory prioritisations of any sort. In recent times, we notice, that globalisation has brought a paradigm shift in every field, including popular perception and belief, concepts of selfhood and identity, and cultural values have adopted new connotations (reluctantly though), the implications of which are visible in the daily chores of the common citizens who once basked in the vintage flavours of age-old practices, traditional dance, and the nitty-gritty of celebration within the ambit of their treasured ancestry.

The study shall heavily rely on secondary sources, which will be a combination of existing literature, scholarly articles, historical records, and archival materials, offering a broader context and historical perspectives on *Ghodanacha*.¹ The study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the cultural significance, evolution, and contemporary relevance of *Ghodanacha*, shedding light on its multifaceted aspects and adding to the body of knowledge in the field. It will do this by carefully comparing various sets of information and collected data and conducting a thorough analysis based on the validity and relevance of claims made about the art form. The study will concentrate on the fundamentals of the art.

The theoretical framework of the study draws upon a synthesis of cultural studies, performance theory, and folklore studies to provide an inclusive lens through which to analyse the content and relevant contextualities. In the given context, cultural studies shall be the foundation for exploring how *Ghodanacha* is embedded within and weaves the cultural fabric of the community and influences the social dynamics of the region. This will quote from the original texts to validate how *Ghodanacha* shapes the cultural identity of the community. It will take cues from performance theory in providing insight into the dynamics of artistic expression and shall examine the intricate elements of *Ghodanacha* as a performing art form. Furthermore, the study shall integrate folklore studies to analyse the narrative and mythological

¹ *Ghodanacha Gita*: the song that accompanies the dummy horse, music, and dance

aspects inherent in *Ghodanacha* by exploring the symbolic meaning, rituals, and art of storytelling within the performance that has long remained a gospel for the community.

The erosion in different typical socio-cultural practices, although it started with the colonial period, was executed by forced interpolation to suit their administrative needs; consequently, it dispersed the fine harmony of oneness and the bond between people and communities that kept them together for centuries. The popular ‘*Khanjani Bhajan*²,’ evening cluster at the *Bhagabat Tungi*³, *Raja Doli Gita*⁴ during the month of June, *Loka Nataka*⁵, various folk dance and song forms like *Ghodanacha Gita*, *Chakoria songs*, *Daskathia*, and *Pala*⁶, *Gopala Ogala*⁷ during *Dola Purnami*⁸, the village *Melana*⁹, and *Holi*¹⁰ celebrations are fast losing their identity as the representatives of Odia culture along with their corresponding behaviours that once resonated with public life. It is a distressing reminder of the need to preserve and revitalise these practises, ensuring that the rich heritage of Odia culture continues to thrive as before, rather in a more pulsating way in tune with the changing lifestyle and taste of contemporary society.

Preservation of Cultural Identity

Cultures as equally important and precious as our environment. We adhere to various ways in which humans have formed connections with both the natural world and their societies, which demands our attention and due consideration to preserve those legacies. Our cultural heritage and historical legacies have played a crucial role in shaping our present identity. By appreciating and comprehending these connections, we shall grow better equipped to adapt to intruding external cultural aggressions and related influences. Instead of simply replicating them, we can learn to assimilate and enhance them while promoting what we call cultural inclusivity and convergence. In this connection, Nathan Peters remarks:

² *Khanjani*: a musical instrument, a variety of Daf of Odisha origin, played along with ‘*Bhajan*’ or spiritual song

³ *Bhagabata Tungi*: a typical culture in Odisha, the villages in Odisha used to assemble at a small house or to listen to recitations of *Bhagabata*. *Bhagabata* is a Sanskrit book on lord Krishna, which was popularised by Jagannath Das in Odisha after he translated it to Odia,

⁴ *Raja Doli*: a swing decorated with flowers and leaves on a string tied to a tree, and women love the swing.

⁵ *Loka Nataka*: popular theatrics

⁶ *Dsakathia & Pala*: is a traditional Odia folk art. It is a performing art widely performed by local or travelling performers within the state of Odisha.

⁷ *Gopala Ogala*: (Gopala) Their traditional occupations include dairy farming, cattle herding, (Ogala), a typical song sung by Gopals during Holi festival

⁸ *Dola Purnima*: is a popular Hindu festival which is celebrated on a full moon day in the month of Falguna (March).

⁹ *Melana*: a congregation during the ‘Holi’ (festival of colours) celebration in rural India.

¹⁰ *Holi*: The Hindu festival of colours

Culture includes the way we express ourselves, language, the way we see and respond to things, our myths and beliefs, our knowledge about our natural and social environment, our tastes, and customs. Giving up would leave us orphans of identity, and we would lose an important part of our value as individuals (Peter, 2020).

This is to add further that, beyond the threshold of safeguarding one's own cultural traits, the optimal approach should be to fortify and enrich them, making them resilient to stand against external factors. This doesn't mean rejecting the diverse cultural influences, but rather embracing them with authority and without diluting the essence of one's own culture. Provocations remain, so does the ability to fight. In brief, while it is crucial to preserve our tangible cultural heritage, it is equally vital to uphold and celebrate our intangible cultural identity.

A look at the cultural landscape of India lets us know that we are part and parcel of a country, where, throughout the year, various traditions and cultural programmes are observed. We can notice that people observe innumerable topicalities and unique ways in which people commemorate and celebrate those traditions. Regardless of whether these celebrations are rooted in religious significance or not, they always aim at emphasizing the stuff that connects the common to the age-old practices and solidifies a sense of belongingness that the communities cherish. These traditions not only enrich our cultural identity but also contribute to the diverse tapestry of our multicultural society. This also allows us to preserve, promote, and express a wide array of colours, flavours, and thoughts, ultimately shaping the distinctive characteristics of the 'Odivian' perspective on life that advocates cultural inclusiveness

Mytho-historical Genesis

In connection with the above, the *Ghodonacha Gita* is one such typical form of folk dance, and once so familiar and popular, it is now on the verge of extinction. The patrons and practitioners of such dance forms are now left high and dry, sans any efforts of advancement, patronage, or protection. This being a form of performing art, the performers who were dependent on it to earn their living are now struggling with their negligible presence in a few pockets of Odisha, particularly in the undivided Cuttack, Puri, and Baleshwar districts. It is worth mentioning here that most of the communities residing in Odisha have their own cultural identities that include dance, theatre, rituals, legends, and other practices.

In order to understand the quintessence of the art, it is pertinent and essential to revisit a few mythological references regarding the said ritual and its tributary practices; besides a fair

understanding of the core components of the *Ghodanacha Gita*, its language and literature, the underlying connotation, the cultural flavour inherent in it, and above all, how these dance and song forms imbued the life and living of people in general with their moral teachings. One of the structural ventures of the study would be to map the three important dimensions, i.e., the historicity of popular culture, the linguistic aspects, literary angles, and their subsequent relation to the lives of people in general and of the respective communities.

There is enough space for investigation when we examine the cultural imagination as it is embedded in the songs of Ghodanacha, a common dance style accompanied by song. This is in connection with the root of such practices and their relevance to the socio-cultural milieu. The paper shall attempt to bring together and put forth an honest interpretation of some select texts in *Odia* language and their translation as well as transliteration, in order to make them look natural for the readers to understand the leitmotif behind such texts and how those verse forms consistently coloured the canvas of the common life.

The history of *Ghodanacha* dates back to the 16th century, when one of the poets of the most popular *Pancha Sakha*¹¹ group, Sri Achyutananda Das, composed and popularised the *Kaibarta* songs. Since then, the songs bear the sanctity of religious texts for the *kaibarta* /fishermen community. There are a couple of myths attached to the origin and evolution of the tradition, the song, the deity and the timing of the celebration. If it is discussed in terms of caste, the ‘Chaitra festival’ is the main festival of the *Keuts/Keutas*. It starts every year on the full moon of the fourth month, named ‘Chaitra Purnami’. On *Chaitra Purnima*, the dummy wooden horses are played in every village, and it continues for eight days from *Chaitra Purnima*. In some places, it starts as early as ten days before the *Chaitra Purnima* and ends on the *Chaitra Purnima*. Although all *Dhibars* (fishermen) don’t play dummy horses, in every house, *Maa Basheli/Bashuli Pooja* is performed on *Chaitra Purnima* with all the sanctity it can get. A look into the *Kaivarta Purana*, (the earliest scripture that records the origin and ancestry of the *Kaibarta* community) gives us a lot of information about the birth details of *Kaivarta/Keut* or *Dhibaras* and the history of horse dance.

It is believed that when Lord *Narayana* was sleeping on the ‘*Butt*’ branches, it was the time; a man was made from His ear wax and was named *Dasaraja*. *Dasaraja* was then assigned

¹¹ *Pancha sakha* : five famous saints popularly known as *Pancha sakha*

the duty of guarding *Narayana*, who was sleeping on the floating leaves of the 'Butta' tree as there was water all around. Unbeknownst to *Vishnu*, the *Raghava* fish/a giant sandfish, swallowed *Dasaraja* / King *Dasa*. Angered by this, Lord *Narayana* killed the *Raghava* fish and rescued *Dasaraja*. As the water receded, Lord *Narayana* gifted a horse to *Dasaraja* saying that it would guide him to find the path to the field of work. *Dasaraja* took care of the horse with great care. When the horse died, it transformed into a woman. *Dasaraja* was shocked to see that and prayed to Lord *Vishnu/Narayana*, the Almighty. Lord *Vishnu* appeared and said that the *Butta* / Banyan tree on which he was sleeping turned first into a beast and then into a woman. She would be known as *Baseli* the goddess. This goddess would be worshipped as *Istta Devi* (the presiding deity) for all *Keuts*, and would be worshipped for eight long days starting from the *Chaitra Purnima*. The goddess would also be honoured as the ascending 1st *Devi*, revered throughout the year.

Similar beliefs run parallel to the previous one if we talk about *Tretaya* / *Treta Yuga*¹² when Rama Lakshmana asked *Dasaraja* (king *Dasa*) to help them cross the *Sarju* River on their way to *Vanavas* /exile. *Dasaraja* did not take any reward from Lakshmana and Sita for helping them cross the river but received a wooden horse from Ramachandra as a gift/token of love, and that day was *Chaitra Purnima*. From that day on, *Dhibars* worshipped 'Nets', 'Boats', and *Dinkis* (husk levers) on *Chaitra Purnima*, connected with their respective skills and fields of work, along with *Maa Baseli* (the horse) gifted by Lord Rama.

It is also believed that the festival originated during the 10th – 11th centuries when Hindu Tantra and Buddha Tantra merged into one. *Baseli* is one of the various deities of Tantra culture, which evolved during this period. (Odisha tourism, 2022)

Another belief connected with the worship of the Horse Headed deity links back to the same period mentioned above, when the horse gifted by God died and all its body parts were distributed amongst different groups, i.e., '*Gudia*', (confectioners), '*Teli*', (oil merchants), and '*Mochi*' (cobblers) continued their worship of limbs, but over time, all those communities got united and agreed to worship the deity in full physical form instead of limbs and body parts. It continued for quite some time till there was a conflict between the *Gudias* and the *Keuts* on the ownership of the deity, and the *Gudias*, being a rich and powerful community, wanted to

¹² Treta Yuga: the second age as per Hindu cosmology, characterised by a decrease in virtue and the advent of organised society, with an average life span of one thousand years.

impose their say on the poor *Keuts*. They forcibly took the deity and didn't allow the *Keuts* their right to worship. Finding no other option, *Keuts* prayed with utmost sincerity, and the deity being pleased, blessed the Keut community and released himself from the confinement of the *Gudias* to be with the *Keuts*. Since then, the *Keuts* have worshipped the deity separately.

ବାଟରେ ମାଲି ବୋଡ଼ା ସଭାଜନେ
 ମୁଁ ବାଟରେ ମାଲି ବୋଡ଼ା
 ରାତିରେ ନଚାଏ ଚଇତି ଘୋଡ଼ା ମୁଁ
 ଦିନରେ କୁଟଳି ଚୁଡ଼ା (Tripathy: 26)

Translation:

On the way I met a viper
 A viper I met on the way
 At night, I perform the *Chaiti Ghoda*
 And confectioning during the day.

The confectioners' claim of the dance form as their own is reflected in the above lines, besides the hint at their active hours, which are primarily at night, just like Russel's Viper '*Boda*'. It may be noted that “the behavioural differences of the '*Boda*' (Russel's Viper) during the day and night are quite peculiar. During the day, it is generally sluggish and passive, but at night, it is generally very active.” (Gopalkrishna,1990)

ଢିଙ୍କିରେ କୁଟିଲି ଚୁଡ଼ା ସଭାଜନେ
 ଢିଙ୍କି ରେ କୁଟିଲି ଚୁଡ଼ା,
 ପ୍ରଥମେ ପୂଜିଲି ସର୍ବ ମଙ୍ଗଳା ହେ
 ନାଚିବ ଚଇତି ଘୋଡ଼ା,
 ସଭାଜନେ, ନାଚିବ ଚଇତି ଘୋଡ଼ା (Samal, 2019)

Translation:

I prepare the flattened rice in the husk lever
 ‘Doha’ (repeating the above for rhythmic purpose)
 I invoke Goddess Mangala, before the assembly
 Before performing the *Chaiti Ghoda* dance.

The customary invocation is required prior to any performance, and the same is well incorporated in the form of a song that the ‘*Radhis / Gudias*’ (confectioners) sing, so as not to miss the sequence of events and compromise the sanctity of the dance form. This time too, the use of the husk lever to prepare the flattened rice finds a mention, as well as a reference to the traditional profession, which is sacrosanct for the entire community.

It is interesting to note that each community in Odisha has preferentially been given a text to strengthen their roles, i.e., a *Gita* for the fisherfolk or a *Purana* for the potters, and this signifies an attempt to legitimise their respective places in society and, hence, an attempt to empower them in the greater scheme of things. This inclusiveness is indeed a unique and captivating aspect of Odia culture. This approach not only preserves the cultural heritage of the region and community but also fosters a sense of unity amongst people. In a world that wrestles with matters of exclusivity and divisive intent, it is certainly consoling to see the commitment to preserving and promoting the traditions of every community. Herein lies the inclusiveness that makes Odia culture essentially beautiful.

It is well connected with a series of festivals and dance forms usually found in Odisha. These Odisha dances are spectacular and present a visual delight to onlookers. The simple rhythmic foot-tapping music fills the senses and impels one to shake a leg or two. The beat of the drums and the lilting songs, coupled with the graceful body movements and unique poses, combine to create a panoramic dancing delight. The bright and gorgeous costumes, ornamented with colourful beads, silver knick-knacks, and headgear, jangling and clanging with every twisting movement, reproduce the freshness of the traditional rural flavour.

ପନିକିରେ ଶାଗ କାଟ
 ନାଇଲେ, ରଷି ଛିଣ୍ଡାଇଲେ ଜଟ
 ବାପା ଯେ ଦେଖନ୍ତି ପିଠି ଆଡକୁ
 ହେଲେ ମା ଉଣ୍ଡାଳଇ ପେଟ (Tripathy, 26)

Translation:

Cut the leafy vegetables in the slicer
 Else, can split like hermit’s *Jata* (*matted hair*)
 A father is concerned about profile and status

But a mother worry about the stomach

Odisha probably counts the highest number of folk-dance forms and most of them are associated with either ceremonial worship of gods and goddesses or social functions like marriage or courtship, or are connected with war, hunting, etc. Each dance carries its own uniqueness and is characterised by its gestures, costumes, and musical instruments.

These dance forms of *Ghoda-nacha* or *Chaiti Ghoda-nacha* in Odisha hold a profound significance and have remained an integral part of the lives and livings of the people of Odisha, rather than being a mere ritual and a form of entertainment. Cultural expressions are deeply intertwined with the daily existence of the community. The internal message they carry is that they go beyond the realm of mere performance and are replete with values and behavioural knowledge, which have a direct bearing on the day-to-day life of the community. The moral teachings as well as the inherent philosophies inculcate life's lessons and ethical values that shape the collective consciousness of the community in the form of entertainment. This is indeed a remarkable feature of the art, and that makes them an indispensable part of Odisha's cultural heritage. Some of the verses can be cited here for clarity and certainly can open up new avenues for further research in this field, which will be a great help in preserving the folk form that is dying fast.

In one of his interviews, Utsav Das, the lone artist of the dance form who has won several awards for his dedicated effort to preserve the dance form, indicates:

The dance used to be performed by my ancestors and I learned the same from my grandfather, however I am worried about, what will happen to the art form that I have dedicated my whole life to. (Telegraphindia.com, 2012).

It is worthwhile mentioning here that had he (Utsav Das) not shown interest in the dance form, probably it would have vanished from public memory long ago. It is indeed lamentable to note that, in the absence of due diligence and community support, the art has barely managed to resist erosion, primarily due to the dedicated efforts of a few individuals. Mr. Das is credited with keeping the dance form alive by his individual interest in it for over five decades. It is not too far-fetched to believe that the dance that retains the ability to tickle the viewers with its grit and mirth will become a thing of the past, if not preserved or given due patronage for its promotion and protection. It is high time that people and organisations carry out intensive

research in the form of action groups to ensure the dying performing art is properly documented, at least for reference of future generations. They are not just a part of our heritage; they are the living threads that connect us to our roots and bind us as a community.

This paper attempts to interpret and analyse some of the collected scripts and stanzas to validate their worth and urgency for future research and, hence, is a small step in the direction of preserving the dying art. The songs accompanying the dance are often in the form of arguments, questions, and answers. The argument between the *Keut* and *Keutuni* - the fisherman and the fisherwoman - fills the air with amusement and humour, and the horsehead dance follows in tandem with every bit and foot-tapping. Although over time, some of the interpolations made inroads to make it interesting and relevant to the changing tastes of the viewers. Nevertheless, the originality of the dance form and the song have remained unaffected to the present day.

A detailed study of the songs, if documented, may invoke an idea of the ancient version of Narada's estimation of the magic and mystery of life delineated in his famous composition "Book of Questions", and the possibility for readers worldwide to figure out how difficult questions and the intricacies of life's tangled complexities find expression in a playful musical art form in a commoners' language.

କେଉଟ ବଢ଼ିଲେ ବଢ଼ଇ ଜାଲ

ଧନ ବଢ଼ିଲେ ଯେ ବଢ଼ଇ ଗାଲ (Tripathy, 11)

Translation:

The net grows bigger, and so do the fishermen

When wealth grows, so do the cheeks.

The above excerpts from the '*Ghodanacha*' highlight the consequences and, at the same time, hint at the obvious signs of wealth accumulation that promote indolence and insensitivity towards one's health. Thus, in simple language, preferably for the understanding of the common man, by means of dance and song, a message is given to all to be careful about their health. Similarly, some of the exceptions can be cited here, which will further justify the importance and validity of those songs in shaping the common mind and the role they played in spreading awareness about different aspects of human behaviour.

କେଉଟକୁ ଯଦି ଧରେ ଶରଦ
ଦରଜୀ ର ଚିପ ହେଲେ ଦରଜ
ବଣିଆ ର ଯେବେ ଆଖି ଧରଇ
ଗୁଡ଼ିଆ ହାତରେ ଛଉ ଫୁଟଇ
ଧୋବଣୀ ଗୋଡ଼ରେ ହୋଇଲେ କନ୍ୟା
ଏ ସବୁ ଜନଙ୍କ ବୁଝଇ ଧନ୍ୟା (Tripathy, 11)

Translation:

If a fisherman catches cold
If the fingertip of the tailor gets impaired
If the goldsmith gets a sore eye
If a confectioner develops fungal infections,
If a washerman develops ulcerous feet
All of them lose their profession and earnings.

Although the above supplications were originally linked to the *Dhibara/ Keut, /Radhi/* communities, the same have been on common lips for ages in Odisha as unrecorded annals of popular idioms reminding us of the dying art form. Dr. Manindra Mohanty, in his essay on horse dancing, gives details about this dance performance. He says: “The man who rides the horse is called *Dihuri*. Two horses are carried on the shoulders; the coloured artistic cover of the wooden horse hangs down, and it remains about six inches above the ground. *Dihuri* ensures that his feet remain covered from public notice. The typical attire of the *Dihuri* is very interesting and colourful”.

The *Dehuri* carries a sword, a turban, and other traditional wear to look colourful and, at the same time, gallant as a soldier. The tail of the horse is customarily made of jute. The last part of the tail, when it hangs down, looks beautiful as it dances in the wind to the beats of the music. The wear and attire of the *Dihuri* dressed as a gallant soldier find their expression in the verse form as stated below; this also highlights the religious belief and reverence towards the goddess *Baseli (Siddha Thakurani)*, and the horse dancers are respected as the messengers of the goddess.

“କାହୁଁ ତୁ ଅଇଲୁ ସିପାହି ଭାଇରେ
କେବଣ ଦେଶରେ ଘର
କାହାର ଉପରେ ସବାର ହୋଇଛୁ, ସିପାହିରେ
କେବଣ ନାମ ତୁମର?
ଘଡ଼ିକି ମାଇଲି ଟିପା
ସିଦ୍ଧ ଠାକୁରାଣୀ ଘୋଡ଼ା ଆସିଅଛି, ସିପାହିରେ,
ଦିହଯାକ ସୁନା ଟିପା”! (Antaranga kalinga, 2022)

Translation:

From where did you come here, soldier brother?
Where is your home?
what on you are riding dear soldier?
What is your name?
The clock ticked the time
It's none but *Siddha goddess's* horse
spotted with golden drops.

The social customs of Odisha are losing their control day by day due to advances in technology and cultural intrusion, leading to erosion in popular belief and various other interpolations, but public life is still vibrant and reliant on the folk traditions and has been able to preserve the rural flavour of Odisha. ‘*Chaiti Ghoda Nacha*’ or the ‘Dummy Horse Dance’ is the best example at the portal of its own graveyard, yet it carries the mettle to imbue the common behavioural practices that are evident in the songs. some of which are cited below. The stanzas taken from different scattered sources speak about various procedures for cooking different varieties of fish. These procedures are still followed by the common man and serve as a manual even today.

କଉ ମାଛ କୁ ଲୋ ଖାଟା ମିଠା ଦେଇ
ଭାଜିଦେବୁ ଯତନରେ, ଲବଙ୍ଗ ଲୋ
ଭାଜିଦେବୁ ଯତନରେ
ତାହାକୁ ଖାଇଲେ ଆତ୍ମା ଶାନ୍ତି ହେବ

ବାସି ପଖାଳ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ- (pratyavartana part-3, 2020)

Translation:

Prepare the climbing perch fish with a mixture of
Sweet and sour, and fry with care,
people will go crazy with the taste of it
The taste of it would bring absolute satisfaction
If taken with '*Basi Pakhal*' (a typical Odia recipe),

Through these songs and dances in the form of question-answer sequences, we find references to different food habits and procedures for preparing different curries. Hence, the dance is not just a form of performing art intended for entertainment, but rather includes numerous narrations of social behaviours, food habits, and other references to traditional practices that are directly connected to the life and living of the specific community, with general utility at the same time. The above stanza highlights the procedure to prepare a delicious fish (*Kau Machha* / climbing perch, / *Anabas Testudineus*) curry by adding cooked rice extracts; the stuff, often treated as waste, can be best utilised as a healthy and primary ingredient besides tamarind and sugar in the preparation of the said curry.

The tradition of *Chaiti Ghoda Nacha*, or Horse Dance, is replete with many such verses that deserve attention and should be preserved, along with authentic information circulated through media and audio broadcasting, besides their publication in book form as one unitary whole of all those scattered sources connected to this unique art and culture. This is the need of the hour, which will not only revive the spirit of the fishing community against modern evil, but also introduce the colourful folk dance of Odisha to the new generation before being forgotten for good. Similarly, there are several other varieties of fish, and their respective recipes which are lucidly narrated in the verses in a very playful manner. One such example can be cited here for clarity. Salmon is the most common species of fish everywhere, and people of different regions and countries have different ways of preparing salmon fish, but the verse given below, which links back to a millenary tradition is quite familiar in the rural pockets of Odisha, highlights a typical recipe to cook salmon (*Rohi*) fish. The procedure and ingredients add taste and flavour to the curry, which is more mouth-watering, and leaves an unforgettable memory in the mind of the person who eats it, even just once.

ରୋହୀ ମାଛ କୁ ଲୋ ଦହି ଭାଗ ଦେଇ
କରିଦେଲେ ତ ତିଅଣ
ଖଣ୍ଡିଏ ଖାଇଲେ ହାଣ୍ଡିଏ ମାଗିବୁ
ଝୁରୁଥିବୁ ସବୁ ଦିନ (Pratyavartana part-3, 2020)

Translation:

Rohi (salmon fish) if prepared with curd/yoghurt
becomes so tasty that if one eats a piece
would ask for the entire bowl and remember it for life.

The principal characteristic of folk music like *Chaiti Ghodanacha* is that (1) it is tied to history, (2) It has a common heritage, (3) a common belief, (4) a connection to oral tradition, and above all, a wide acceptance of the religious flavour attached to it, and has all through been the source of inspiration for a community or a section of society. The only thing it lacks is its recognition on larger platforms of social literature as an equally vibrant form of life and living through verses and its inherent messages, which have been able to win the confidence of a community for such a long period of time. It is beyond doubt that music, like any other art form, always reflects people's ideals, values, desires, and aspirations; besides, it encompasses a host of other information regarding the life and living of the common mass. The same goes for folk music. Moreover, music is often used to celebrate certain days and events of the year. For example, chants are used to celebrate events such as initiation ceremonies, weddings, and funerals.

Conclusion

The study of folk music in today's society should have been a subject of growing interest, but in the midst of widespread advancements in every sphere of our lives, that interest is fast fading away. One of the reasons the said art endures is its relationship to culture, which extends far beyond being a mere form of entertainment. They are emblematic of ethnic identity and patrons of our cultural landscape and heritage. Although it is often associated with uneducated groups of people, with the evolutionary development all around and economic compulsions, the people belonging to the respective community are both getting educated and at the same time losing interest in traditional dance and art forms. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that, as affiliates of the larger interest, the dying folk music and the originality of the performing art

should be stopped from changing colours with the flow of time. When society races forward and reconnoitring the geniuses, it must try to safeguard the traditions that resonate with the souls of our communities. As repositories of shared human experience, they should not be left unaccompanied to die down the lanes of apathy. To this end, we can conclude that beyond the simple interpretation of art, dance, and literature as facets of entertainment, they should be taken as living wisdoms, and hence, it can be argued with all conviction that folk music is still relevant in today's society and deserves attention for its preservation and promotion.

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