

IMPACT OF DANCE DRAMA IN MANIPURI PERFORMING ARTS

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ABSTRACT

Dance Drama is a form of performing Art narrating a story wherein music is prominent, dialogues in prose and poetry are also added. Dance Drama is of Indian origin and it is known as Nritya Natya. Nritya means Dance and Natya means Drama and this term was coined by the famous Nobel Laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. On the other hand Ballet is a classical dance form of the west performed only with orchestral music. Dance drama is a performance narrating a story wherein music is prominent, dialogues in prose and poetry are also added. Ballet is popular in western Countries. The term Dance drama is more suitable in Indian context in place of Ballet. Society changes with time unaware. A society will progress quicker only when they have contact with the outside world. Culture on the other hand lacks behind because of its dos and don'ts, its religious inclinations. Society moves forward and what remains is a Vacuum in culture. But since there cannot be any Vacuum in culture, it will be filled and reinforced by other cultures. Even in dance, like Gouraleela, Gosthaleela(Sanshenba), Rasleela remained stagnant. They were based on a context and there was no change in the performance. Thus, these dance forms which were known to be admirable reduced its audience. Hence, the vacuum being created and in this vacuum came in minor theaters which were performed in localities around. Now, when it comes to dance-drama, the trend seen here is a continual progress on top of safeguarding one's tradition and aesthetic values, it moves forward. They go with the change in time giving in to the needs of the audience. So, dance dramas were the first step in the history of Manipur towards filling in the cultural vacuum. On the other hand, Dance drama not only entertains but it also conveys messages to the society as a whole like Theatre does. So, the impact of dance drama is huge as it has come in the form of an art which sustains the culture without creating the space, with its contemporary styles and an indigenous, traditional backdrop. Thus, based on the present context of the study, Dance dramas of Manipur can be classified conveniently in this manner as:

I). Role of dance drama in the society.

II). Some of the well known Manipuri Dance dramas and its messages.

KEYWORDS: Lai Haraoba, Rasleela, Gouraleela, Khubakesei, Bashok, Pena, Thang Ta, Nata Sankirtana, KeibulLamjao, Sangai,

Introduction

Before discussing the different art forms in performing arts, what needs to be carefully examined here is ``Importance of Dance Drama in Manipur". Society changes with time unaware. A society will progress quicker only when they have contact with the outside world. Culture on the other hand lacks behind because of its dos and don'ts, its religious inclinations. So culture and society do not go hand in hand. Society moves forward and what remains is a Vacuum in culture. But since there cannot be any Vacuum in culture, it will be filled and reinforced by other cultures. There was no modern song in Manipur. **Khubak-Esei, Bashok, RasaJeelas**were the only form of entertainment during those days. But after the British empire, Bengali theatre, Parsi theatre came to Manipur. Popular music based in Hindustani, Kirtan were introduced with this, which was not based in Manipuri Music. This is how the vacuum created by culture was replenished by others.

Even in dance, like **Gouraleela, Gosthaleela(Sanshenba), Rasleela**remained stagnant. They were based on a context and there was no change in the performance. Thus, these dance forms which were known to be admirable reduced its audience. Hence, the vacuum being created and in this vacuum came in minor theaters which were performed in localities around. Musical instruments like Pena became dormant; Violin replaced it. SankritanaFamsak seeped in the Manipuri culture replacing the indigenous instruments with Tabla, Violin, Harmonium to fill in this culture vacuum. The problem here is that the so-called professionals are unaware of this cultural gap.

Now, when it comes to dance-drama, the trend seen here is a continual progress on top of safeguarding one's tradition and aesthetic values, it moves forward. They go with the change in time giving in to the needs of the audience. So, dance dramas were the first step in the history of Manipur towards filling in the cultural vacuum.

Ballet was the second step in filling this culture gap. Thus, a production unit was introduced in JN Manipur Dance Academy,Imphal. Theatre is rightly said to be the greatest form of art because of the theatrical impact it gives. Whether in dance or music it reaches out to the audience with a message. This is the challenge to the dancers. There is a meaning underneath each movement, a message in each act.

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Like in Rasa-Bhava, where both imagination and expression is put to play. So here dance is not just a movement, it is a dance done consciously, giving life to every detail. Thus, a lot of difference can be seen between an ordinary solo dance of any form and a dance drama. Therefore, the impact of dance drama is huge as it has come in the form of an art which sustains the culture without creating the space, with its contemporary styles and an indigenous, traditional backdrop.

I). Role of Dance Drama in the Society

Role of Dance Drama in society is incredible. Dance Drama not only entertains but conveys a lot of messages to the society as a whole. Many of the messages that are expressed can be inspiring. Inspirational messages can uplift a community or society as a whole. For example : a choreographer can create a dance drama about overcoming an illness which can resonate with and be encouraging for an observer who is going through similar troubles. Dance Drama can also be inspirational because it can showcase people of various abilities and circumstances. Dance Drama can also show us certain things about one's culture, tradition, life styles, civilization etc. When a choreographer chooses a beautiful script related to it. There are certain Dance Dramas that used to tell stories or celebrate certain events. Various Dance Drama & Ballet of Manipur have been showcased in the past years. Among them some are acclaimed nationally and internationally. Various traditional performing art forms of Manipur can be seen in different dance dramas like the dance and songs of Lai Haraoba, graceful movement of Raas Leela, courageous steps of Thang-ta, Sankritana and different tribal dance forms.

II). SOME OF THE WELL KNOWN MANIPURI DANCE DRAMAS AND ITS MESSAGES

KeibulLamjao (Th. Chaotombi Singh 1984-85) :

KeibulLamjao, the floating sanctuary around the Loktak Lake of Manipur is the home of Sangai (Brow antlered deer). At one time the population of Sangai was numerous and covered the entire hills and valleys of Manipur. It is said that they were once very friendly to human beings.

The rulers of the state protected this elegant animal. The three subspecies of brow antlered deer of which our Sangai is one, were seen in South East Asia, from Manipur to Burma (Myanmar) to Thailand to Kampuchea. In course of time, the population of the brow antlered deer reduced and is now in serious danger of extinction. They have many enemies. And the greatest of these enemies are we humans, even today.

Legends say in Moirang Principality during the hunting festival, KadengThangjahanba, a young Chief was assigned to lead a hunting expedition. His lady love TonuLaijinglembi implored, please bring me a live deer for me. Kadeng brought her a hind. But when he arrived ... TonuLaijinglembi was taken by the King's men and now the new queen in the royal chamber. KadengThangjahanba was disappointed and let loose. Even today killing Sangai is a taboo to the Meetei/Meiteis. It is believed that this brings pangs of separation. It seems to be like the meaning of civilization is meaningless if human beings were so selfish as many ignored the rightful claims of these beautiful creatures ever so silent and unprotecting. This anxiety and the vision of the elegant dancing deer Sangai threatened with complete extinction inspired this choreography, KeibulLamjao is an attempt to express the same through dance, the only befitting medium for the dancing Sangais of Manipur. "This is an attempt to represent the appeal of wildlife to the thinking generation."

Message

The well known ballet of JNMDA is KeibulLamjao, the story of endangered species of deer choreographed by Master Th. Chaotombi Singh (Retd. Production in charge JNMDA) in the year 1984. It conveys a message of preserving the environment and as protests against the killing of endangered species. Taking a story of how a deer couple was separated and how that entire community of the deer tried to save the victim deer, woven metaphorically. Master Chaotombi used the various walks and footsteps of Sangai by dancers, and told the story movingly. A film has also been made by the Academy titled "SANGAI" directed by renowned film maker AribamShyam Sharma. This film has won several awards including 12th Wildlife Film Festival Award in 1989.

KabuiKeioiba (The - man - Tiger) By Guru R.K. Priyogopalsana 1976-77

"Sana o naril o chongangpelona

Chagemnuchawainuchongangpelona"

The above lines (which are still unintelligible) run through the folk tale of KabuiKeioiba, representing the culture of ancient Manipur. A guru taught improperly his disciple mantras, who became a tiger and the guru, a crow. The man-tiger, taking the help of an old lady, tried to unlock the door of Thabaton, left by her seven brothers. The incantation did not work at first, but he succeeded ultimately and snatched away Thabaton. Her beloved Chingkhei was also helpless. But the seven brothers found Thabaton at last and rescued her by Killing KabuiKeioiba. Thabaton became united with Chingkhei. This Dance drama was choreographed and directed by legendary Late Guru RK. Priyogopalsana.

Message

The simple story has been transformed into an allegory. "It indicates the struggle of light against darkness, the union of the evening star with the light rays of the rising sun."

Dreams of Women (Guru N. Tiken Singh), 2017 PAL

Ashoka, the great emperor of India, who had witnessed the catastrophe of war during the battle of Kalinga, created the concept of "Non-violence" and he presented it as a talisman to Indians. Using it as a weapon, father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi foiled the evil design of British colonists attempting to rule the sub continent further. Under his leadership provinces and kingdoms were integrated into one great nation. But the development policy of the country rather focuses on central Indian than other parts like border states.

Trade relations between north east India and South East Asia ceased after merger. There develops a hurdle to integrate the two diverse cultures and economy into one. This gave birth to hatred in the mainland and Northeastern part. Disturbed area status was declared in the whole northeast region. Under this provision, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 came into force in the North east. This worsens the conflict situation and alienates the Northeast people

from the mainstream. Most victims of the annual conflict were "Women and Children ". The untold woes and misery of women and children in the conflict area are well shown in this Dance Drama. This dance drama was choreographed and directed by Guru N. Tiken Singh in 2017.

Message

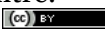
Manipur is in chaos due to insurgency related violence and bloodshed for the last fifty years. "Women and Children suffer more in the conflict situation in the state." It is to make the audience realize the consequence of violence and bloodshed. It is an effort to reduce such incidents in the future.

Conclusion

After analyzing all these Dance Dramas we came to know that this performing art form plays a significant role in moulding and conveying a message to the society. Dance Drama mirrors the past, present and future of the Society. It makes history come alive right in front of our eyes, giving the audience a chance to connect with history. This art form helps to develop our ability to communicate our thoughts and feelings to others, improving our relationship. This helps us understand people from cultures other than our own. We can learn a lot about people from all around the world by studying their performance traditions.

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