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CULTURAL FOLK ARTS OF KARNATAKA

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Abstract:

Folk performing arts represent the cultural segments of a particular region and language. The performances presented on the stage or open fields are blended with songs, dances, facial expressions (with or without make-up), and music. These elements form the basis of any folk performing art. Audience is the most important element, whether it is an indoor or outdoor performance. The complexity traits of the performing arts gained popularity in a few regions because of its regional uniqueness. According to a recent study, regional art forms like 'Boodkali' of Coorg, 'Daasaraata' of North Karnataka and few other dance forms have lost their popularity due to the advent of electronic media - satellite television, video games, internet and so on.

KEY WORDS:

Folk, Folklore, Folk Arts, Karnataka Arts, Arts, Arts and Culture.

INTRODUCTION

Karnataka, the land of sandalwood has various folk art forms in it viz. SriKrishna Parijata, Sannata, Dodddata, Radhantha, Sangya-Balya, Yakshagana, prasanga, Badagapaya, Tenkapaya, Badagatittu, tenkatittu, Sutrada Gombeyata, Togalu Gombeyata, Gee Gee Pada, folk songs, Lavani, riddles, ornates, sobane pada, Sampradayada pada, Myths, legends etc.

Further folk arts involved with the livelihood. Basketry, puppetry, chandike gondaliga, durgamurgi, havadiga, koravanji, kammara, kumbara, veshgararu, chammara, holeru etc have been performing art forms and at the same time earning money or food for livelihood.

Folk arts forms of Karnataka have a rich tradition and there is dignity of labour. But, today, due to modernization these people have been shifting their occupation and migrating towards urban sectors. They are also aware of education and various programmes implemented by the government. They are getting almost all sorts of facilities given by government and occupying top positions and serving in government sector. They have been gradually leaving their traditional and family occupation from which we can see the present status of our folk arts. The condition is becoming worst due to modern mass media. Traditional folk art forms are losing their age old grandeur and glory. Still there are folk arts in our state and performing well in the name of tradition and rituals. During fairs, festivals and any other rituals such art forms are performing according to the occasion. Today these artists are rendering a need based services only.

India is a store house of folk arts. Karnataka also has many folk art forms in it. These folk arts were the major medium of entertainment before entrance of mass media. During fairs and festivals, ritualistic functions there were few arts performing and still today they have their own importance.

Gee Gee, Lavani, Kolata, Suggiya Kunita, Mariya Kunita, Panju Kunita, Pata Kunita, Hejjeya Mela, Halakki Goudara Kunita, Alayi Kunita, Tamete Kunita, Kurubara Kunita, Hejje Kunita, Mundalara Kunita, Koravara Kunita, Bolakata, Umattat, Balopatu, Kudiya Kunita, Dollu Kunita, Yakshagana, Bayalata, Dombidasara Kunita, Sutrada Gombeyata, Togalu Gombeyata, (Kille Kyatarata), Krishna

Parijata, Sannata-Doddada etc.

Bhootana Seve, Karapala Mela, Chandike Mela, Bhagavantike Mela, Pandari Bhajane, Karagada Kunita, Goravara Kunita, Antike Pantike, Veeragase Kunita, Halage devaru, nandi hadde Kunita, Khadgada Kunita, Beerana Kunita etc have folk arts which have religious background.

Few more folk arts have materialistic background viz, Kole Basava, Kinnari Jogi, tamboori, karade chammala, chittimela, karadi majalu, gane ooduvadu, dikambari veshha, helavara hadu, dombi dasara hadu, halage jumb, keelu kudure, maragalu kunita, budabudake, garudi kunita, ummattat, bolakat, balopat, huttari kolata, gee gee mela, lavani, tamate kunita, simha preta nritya, huli veshha, kambala, koli amka, paddana, korgara kunita, dombara ata, poti veshha, paleyagarana kunita, veeramakkala kunita, garudi gombe etc.

Folk dances do not complete without songs and instruments. Kombu, kahale, nagari, tamate, hare, donu, halage, kolu, kolalu, jagate, shankha, dhumaki, sanadi, shruti, olaga, damala, mukhavenu, gijje, pare, dudi, damaruga, gane, chandike, tala, maddale, chandi, dimmi, gummate, kunimini, gaggari, kamsale, kunjara, tabala, dollu etc.

Folk and Folklore :

Folk arts convey us the messages of our age old tradition and heritage. Folk arts are the life lines of our society. Without folk arts it is difficult to lead life in modern era.

We have been following many rituals and culture even in the scientific days.

We believe Sun, Moon and Land as Gods.

Following time i.e. Rahukala, Gulikala, Yamagandakala.

Offering Pooja at our homes and temples. Further believing on supreme power.

Sri Krishna Parijata tells us the story of Sri Krishna-Rukmini-Satyabhanma which is guiding our society in various ways.

We know the power of Yakshagana and potentially of communication.

Folk songs, riddles, ornates and theatre are the part and partial of our life.

We are following age old methods, rituals and tradition during auspicious celebrations viz. fairs, festivals, birth, marriage and death. During the celebrations folk arts are using and they are playing their roles as agents of communication.

Mangalaruti, Kasuti, Bidirina Butti, Onake, Beesuva Kallu, Kambali, Shobana etc, have their own arts and power of communications.

Folk costumes, dress materials, food, medicine etc are also playing significant role in our life.

Folk arts are communicating to us on socio-cultural, economic, political condition of the tribe, region, caste, community, and whole society. These are also representing the folklore history of Karnataka in national and international level. Universities including departments of government and researchers in folklore studies are studying various folk arts and creating further awareness among people. They also identified some folk art forms which are struggling for their existence. Among these few are considered as endangered folk arts of Karnataka. A systematic study of folklore started in Karnataka few decades back and also conducting programmes, seminars regularly.

Karnataka Janapada and Yakshagana Academy is working enthusiastically and trying a lot to popularize folk arts in and outside of Karnataka. This art already crossed sea and performed on many foreign lands like U.S.A., U.K.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FOLK ARTS:

The Karnataka government every year revives the spirit of the traditional Dasara with a 10 day programme when absorbing entertainment, classical music, folk dances and a special concert by the State Police are held either at the palace Durbar Hall or on the grounds adjoining the illuminated Palace. One can share in the colourful Karnataka folklore which becomes living history. The Dasara exhibition in Mysore is more than a century old. The first exhibition was held in 1877. Since then it has changed venue on demand. It is now held on the Doddakere Maidan. The former Maharajas held it to display the States arts and handicrafts. Now-a-days, it is an all-India affair.

Dolls, childhood, myriad colours and finally festivals. When it comes to Dasara, all these terms are strongly interlinked with each other. The celebration, which is synonymous with traditional households in Mysore, is soon losing its glory for various reasons. Easy entertainment largely lacking in value and depth has successfully wiped out most traditions. And, 'Bombe Habba' is no exception. But, with the artists trying hard to get contemporary looks to suit today's generation with dolls made from soft wood, paper, clay, lime and plaster of Paris, the festival of dolls is all set to make a comeback. The artisans indeed have a tough task, considering the generation that doles out a couple of thousands to procure the series of ever

smiling Barbies and gun-toting for their children, demands the same kind of 'finish' for traditional dolls.

"Even today Bombe Habba is celebrated with all its splendor in about 300 - 400 families with traditional Mysore an roots. The young taking to it so as to return to their roots. Their buying capacity has increased and they can afford to be generous with spending on finer things," says Raghu, curator of the Mysore-based Ramsons Kala Pratishthana.

Though the festivities of Dasara have a long history of legends and traditions associated with them, the role of Bombe Habba in adding to the festive flavour of the season cannot be discounted. Preethi Nagaraj re-discovers the ritual of displaying dolls that has staged a grand comeback.

Ramsons has organised 'Bombe Mane' an exhibition-cum-sale of more than 2,000 dolls sourced from various parts of the country. "We have got a terrific response. The very fabric of 'Bombe Habba' may have undergone change, losing most of its traditional flavour. That does not mean people have lost it completely. Our doll exhibition in the last three years has been a stupendous success. People buy dolls and arrange them at their homes," says R. G. Singh, one of the partners of Ramsons Art Gallery in Mysore.

The last five to seven years have seen the revival of the doll festival. Artists like Muruges, who have been working on dolls for the last two decades, have seen the demands of customers change every year. "Today's dolls are much better made than the ones that were made many decades ago. Modern technology has also helped us a great deal in making dolls to suit the taste of new customers," he quips. Kinhal dolls are in great demand both in India and abroad.

Mysore, being the seat of royalty in the past, is intervoven into the tradition of celebrating most festivals. This is the case with even Hinamatsuri, a Japanese doll festival celebrated by the parents of little girls. In both places, dolls are arranged in five levels with the King and Queen seated at the topmost level. Dolls, perhaps signifying the other aspects of the agrarian society or community living like potters, blacksmiths and soldiers are seated in the descending levels.

It is indeed interesting to learn that the generation that longs for foreign entertainment and toys for their children, still looks forward to Dasara Ambari. Traditional dolls or rather traditional-looking dolls with golden hues, loud colours and traditional imageries are in major demand. "We have a miniature structure of the Mysore Amba Vilas Palace made from different kinds of wood like teak, particle board and another form of soft wood. This is in great demand. Wooden Mahishasura has also been a hit. Buyers usually want Krishna, Rama, characters from Ramayana, Bhagavata, Dashavatara, ambari and the police band set in the same order," Singh explains.

The Bombe Habba has made way for new jobs as well. The 'dying art' as it was considered, is now back into the drawing rooms of the rich and the elite, and small showcases of the massive middle class. A sharp increase in the number of seasonal consumer exhibitions round the year, even in small cities, has provided good opportunities for artisans and buyers.

To boost the saleable factor of dolls, they were made to resemble actress Vyjayanthi Mala in the 1970s when she was at her peak. Later came Mumtaz, followed by Rekha, Sridevi and Madhuri. Today's dolls resemble the stunning Aishwarya Rai. It is one of the marketing techniques.

DOLL MAKERS :

In Sirsi, Yellapura, Hubli and Kinhal in the State, parts of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, the whole family engages in doll-making during specific seasons. These are mostly joint families with the total number of members crossing 15. Women and men have equal jobs to share. But, in Varanasi and other parts of North India, men do the major part of work while women mostly do the decoration bit.

Not only this, some of the rich and famous even hire fine arts students to make doll arrangements. Though it is dependent on the number of dolls and their characteristics, the arrangement which includes preparing soil bed, clay forms, fountains and miniature lakes may well require four to five days for completion. While the student gets to exercise his creative skills, the rich are particularly generous with the payment - which is anywhere between Rs. 1,000 and 2,500.

Curators are of the opinion that the art form can easily ride on the wave of consumerism and grow multi fold, even beyond the shores of our country. But, the artists are seldom flexible.

"Karnataka-based artists completely dismiss our suggestions. They are not willing to accommodate any changes in their work. But, artists from other states seek suggestions from us and implement them in a jiffy," says Raghu.

The question that remains to be answered is whether Bombe Habba that was celebrated only by the rich and the upper crust of society has resurrected itself to be all inclusive or has been further categorized to remain in the hands of privileged few.

DOLL'S HOUSE :

Bombe Habba involves the arrangement of dolls, mostly made from clay and wood. It predominantly includes children, who go from one house to another asking "Gombe Koorsideeraa?" (have you arranged dolls?). If the answer is in positive, they storm in. They get to look at the dolls and leave the place after receiving 'Gombe Bagina', which consists of crunchy snacks and sweets.

'Gombe Aarati' is performed the day before the last day of the habba, when neighbors and relatives are invited. Historians believe that dolls were made even in pre historic times. However, as they were made from wood, cloth or fur, they have disintegrated and no signs of them are being found.

Each region is known for its typical doll. Dolls form an important part of culture in Assam, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Varanasi, Lucknow, Mathura, Vrindavan, Rajasthan and Orissa, Japan and South Africa too have strong traditions of gifting dolls to young girls.

Ramsons Kala Pratishthana (RKP) started in 1995, during the silver jubilee celebration of Ramsons Handicrafts Emporium. RKP is a charitable trust that works towards research, training, development and conservation of art and craft forms that are slowly disintegrating. The Bombe Mane' exhibition and sale of dolls, which is into its third year, is an attempt to rekindle the passion for dolls and the traditional way of celebrating the festival. The exhibition has taken over eight months for the organisers to arrive at its final form, including numerous meetings and demonstrations with artists from across the country. The recreation of 84 ghats across Ganga, Krishna, Raas Leea on Yamuna Ghat and Mysore Palace have been an instant hit with people.

FOLKARTS AND OUR CULTURE :

A man's culture and tradition reveals in folklore. Through various folk arts we are trying to depict our culture and tradition in Karnataka. In our state, we have many rituals, habits and traditions. These are coming to light through folk arts.

Mysore Dasara is not only an important and auspicious event in Karnataka, which is called a Nadahabba, but, also has an international status. Most of the travelers are visiting Karnataka to witness Mysore Dasara to get entertainment, to study our culture, for research activities etc. during Dasara where our culture almost reflects at one place.

The various folk teams of Karnataka are showing their skill, talent and significance of their folk art forms during Dasara i.e. Jamboo Savari.

Government of Karnataka is arranging a procession and include almost all folk arts in it. One can witness folk arts of Karnataka at the moments.

Folk artists are eagerly waiting to participate in Dasara procession at Mysore to show their art forms. Department of Kannada and Culture and District Administration and other departments co-operate each other while selecting teams of folk arts and guiding them to represent in a better way.

Government of Karnataka mainly focusing on the developmental activities history, culture, tradition, rituals etc. of the state. Through modern mass media like T.V. and cinema we are in a position to watch and understand the art forms of state at our place. It is highly impossible for all the people of state to participate in Mysore Dasara. But, Government is arranging to know and witness the event sitting at their places only. Chandana Kannada Regional channel and All Indian Radio Bangaluru are arranging live telecasting and broadcasting respectively. Announcers are providing a lot of information in this regard participating in Dasara Procession (Meravanige). The live commentary itself catches our mind to watch TV and listen to the Radio. In addition press is giving a wide coverage on it so that readers can get a clear picture of traditional Dasara Procession.

Our culture does not change at once. There may be adverse effects, influences of west, still our culture does not change or die. But, one can not deny that some sort of impact may occur on it. And our folk arts also do not disappear or change at once due to influence of western culture. They may modify their style, costume and mode of communication but remain in our society and represent our own culture without fail.

Dasara called as Nadahabba in Karnataka has a unique tradition. During this period folklore of Karnataka spreads its fragrance. Visitors from distant land are enjoying a lot by watching Dasara at Mysore and other places in Karnataka. Basically it is worship of Goddess Shakthi and a Symbol of victory. It is also called as Vijayadashami. Foreign visitors are collecting information and following the significance, technique, skill of the folk arts merely by observing them and listening to the folk music. Folk song, dance, music, costume, facial expression, step, body language, melody, pitch variation and context of situation of folk arts are communicating to the people those who don't know our language at all.

CONCLUSION:

Karnataka has a rich tradition of folk arts and folklore. Different branches of folk art like singing, drama, dance and puppet shows are popular in the rural parts of Karnataka. On different festivals and especially during Dasara these artistes visit the city of Mysore and perform. In the olden days they performed before the King, today they perform on the streets of Mysore or in specially designated areas during Dasara. Presentation of Folk Art by popular folk groups of the state has become an established and regular part of the Dasara celebrations.

These folk artistes form part of the famous Dasara procession as well. Bessu Kamsale, Somanakunitha and Yaskghagana the popular folk art of Karnataka form an integral part of the Dasara celebrations and the procession. Beesu Kamasale has been recognized as a leading folk art of India and many leading groups have taken part in national and international cultural festivals. Yakashgana is a nightlong stage play, where the actors enact episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata throughout the night.

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