

Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity; A Case Study of Ramalila of Odisha

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Abstract: *Ramalila accurately says "Rama's play", is a stage show of then Ramayana epic in a sequence of scenes that comprise song, portrayal of story, recital and dialogue. Ramalila is one of the story-telling forms of Odisha. Ramalila remembers the conflict between Rama and Ravana and be composed of a series of dialogues between gods, sages and faithful. The audience is requested to sing and take part in the narration. The Ramalila carries the entire population united, without distinction of caste, religion or age. In this working paper I focused the rich cultural tradition of Ramalila of Odisha.*

Keywords: Ramalila of Odisha, Stage show, portrayal of story, narration, conflict

1. Introduction

Ramlila precisely Rams's lila or play is any dramatic folk pro-creation of the life of Rama. Rama is the seventh Avatara of the Hindu deity 'Vishnu' and the central appearance of 'Ramayan' a Sanskrit epic that harmonize performing art with stories handled by moral values. According to Ramayana or collateral backup; literature established on it such as the 'Ramacharita Manas' written by 'Tulsi Das'. (1) It especially quotes to the millennium(2) of Hindu God Rama intertwined melodramatic plays and dance episodes, that are performed during the annual autumn festival of 'Navaratri' in India. (3)

2. Tradition of Ramalila in Odisha

After the achievement of the mythological conflict between prosperity and iniquity the Ramalila ceremony climax in the Dussehra where demon Ravana(Symbol of evil) are burnt, normally with fireworks. (4) Which is called 'RavanaPodi'. Most Ramalila's in north India are established on the Tulsi Das's 'Ramacharita Manas'(5). These verses are used as dialogues in historic classical conversions. Open air performances are performed by regional ramalila committees (Samiti) and sponsored totally by the civilians or villagers. (6) the most universal heritage

of Indian theatre is apparently based on Ramalila circle. In our state odisha, there is a rich tradition of 'Ramalila'. The centre of this performance tradition is north India. In present day Odisha, Ramalila and connected a style of art, music, dance, drama, composed regional situations restricted to particular locality with specific styles of performance. As a consequence, Ramalila is familiar under a number of names.

- Asureswara yatra (Asureswar, is a village in Odisha, India. It is located in the Nischintakoili block of cuttack district).
- Lankapodi Yatra (In Daspalla: Located in Nayagarh district. Odisha)
- Sahi Yatra- (In Puri : Situated on the Bay Bengal, 60 K.ms South of the Bhubaneswar state capital of Odisha, Famous for Lord Jagannath)

In contrast to its north Indian complement, the Oriya Ramlila is staged in the month of march-April. In odia calendar it is called 'Chaitra', occasion of Ramanabami the commemoration of Rama's birthday and ends for about ten to fifteen nights. The acting is formed on regional model of the Rama story, communicated both verbally and in writing. Ramalila manuscripts from 18th and 19th century specify that equivalent acting tradition must have been ugitimately universal in earlier times. (7)



(Ram, Lakhsman and Sita return back to Ajodhya)

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The Asureswar Yatra is performed in front of RaghunathJew temple, in Mallipur village, Katikata, Nishinkoili Block Cuttack district. A three side open chamber protempore stage prepared for performance. The Ramalila story plot establish serially in the course of ten nights; Rama's infancy, Adolescence period, his marriage, kidnaping of Sita by Ravana, battle with Ravana the

crowning of Rama. One by one performance takeoff around bewitching hour and may keep up until dawn. Comparatively thirty male probationer actors, who have usually taken their roles from their fathers and grandfathers, to perform the Ramalila. (8)



(Kalika Dance in Asureswar)



(JRF Scholar Hrushikesh Moharana with Hanuman in Asureswar Ramalila)



(Rama and Lakshman Sitting in a Temporary Stage)

To associate in the play is treated a caste-bound communal, societal and moral sacred spiritual commitment. (An utmost main actors belongs to Brahmin caste). Besides that, hundred actors merge in the performance in the role of monkey soldier called 'Ramasena' and therefore, organize the celestial army of Rama. Anybody on stage observes a holy diet (without onion, prepared in cow-ghee) and decline from sexual relation, smoking and eating meat or alcohol.

Asureswara Ramalila is primarily a mixture of imitation or caricature and dance performance, verbalizes by Brahmin chronicler (called *bachanika*) who deliver the total Ramalila by heart with few musicians. The main actors wear ornaments and apparels, a specific headgear and excessive weighty makeup. This facial painting is of gloomy dazzling colours, like yellow, blue, green and converts the original face into a mask. It withholds the personal appearance. So that the audience practically perceive their actual relation such as uncle, neighbor and son. Who might have taken the role? Once the face painted, actors have to maintain silent on stage, their dialogues are articulate or sung by the narrator (*banchanika*) existing in the contiguity to the 'Speaking' character and moving

position at anytime needed. At the time of story telling the narrator hoist a ceremonial stick. He may also recite the string in third-voice or put on descriptive remarks and perform as negotiator between stage actuality and audience. Ramalila actors will engage at most especially a small quantity of normalized motions. Once move into the stage, they proceed in striking stylish elegant gestures of arms and legs, come after given sets of steps or stand stiff like statues. Their performance is to a high level symptomatic in that different actions are staged in a very simplified or emblematic way. Besides that, there is a powerful significance on struggle sequences and the courageous dance. Actors prepared with bow and arrow will gradually step up the footsteps until their jumps and circles also set fire to the audience. This kind of systematize acting by the chief entertainer is increased by groups of people who attach the play in their day-to-day communal role and routine; fishermen pull up a boat across the stage, priests carryout rituals and musicians go along with the heavenly wedding ceremony. These actors are enrolled among the various castes only; like the rehearsal they are not fashioned but be dressed in their usual normal clothes, so far, again and again, a new or costly set.



(Fight between Hanuman And Ravana)

To conjoin the celestial play sincerely is regarded as a devotional practices and a person may obtain pious merits by doing so. The observational state of acting is presumed as a mode of submission to god and thus, may acknowledge the foretell existence to actors and observers alike. To associate with Ramlila, It also provides as a approach to explicit the essential wish (Manasika) for a sacred approbation or to recompense god for his grace. In Asureswar, the fighting force of monkey warriors is engaged by reason of such a provisional oath. For the integrated duration of the Ramlila, these men shift into the costume of monkey. In this monkey role they are able to oblige god in a in fold way, as a personality and also as a artiste. On the surface of the chronicle they support Lord Rama; on the level of communal entity they display their dedication to this god, for occasion, by bearing his personification on their shoulders. In daytime, these monkey men travel around the villages and assemble contributions.

In Dasapalla, the Rama story is observes on a momentary stage connected to the Mahabira temple and lasts for fifteen nights. Alike the structure of this temple, the acting

tradition was originated by imperial patronage and repeatedly goes back to the early 19th century; it is familiar as 'Lankapodi' (yatra) (Burning of Lanka). Now a day the approach of performance is much more pragmatic than in Asureswar. Performers unmitigated the dialogue themselves; they also engage in dramatic acting, songs and dances, the statement of emotions and show fights refer to famous theatre (opera yatra). The Ramalila portrayal has a very internal homely flavor and incorporate, for Example, Rama's visit to puri, an incident of Rama hunting a rhinoceros. Multiple performances are played with the help of customary wooden masks, although the costumes of Rama, Lakshman and Sita have been socialized in order to compeer contemporary taste. A few scenes are staged on the main road of Dasapalla. They are well known after all they encompass two giant portable props; a crane with a flying chariot to carry off sita, and a nine meter high wooden statue of Rabana. Non-professional actors are enlisted among the local community irrespective of caste. Roles are not ancestral now a day. Still to conjugate the divine play is accepted broadly as a doctrinal holy affair. Believers who wish for a mystical favor put on the costume of Rama. The Role of monkey has no specific importance.



(JRF Scholar Hrushikesh Moharana and other P.G. Students with Hanuman in Asureswar Ramalila)

At the time of Puri Sahiyatra the fictional action is approximately nominal. Local men from various neighborhoods (sahi) coordinate nighttime processions that chronologically emphasized different scenes from the Ramayana. Peoples getup as Rama, sita, Lakshmana, Parashurama, Rabana and Hanuman. In this appearance presents classical weapons and soldierly techniques. Audience may join in the acting and dancing automatically. Sahiyatra is accepted to go back 13th century when hostile traditions were necessary to the safety and security of the temple town of Puri. (9)

3. Conclusion

Ramalila is not a simple play staged out in an open pendal, but it is structured to encourage the audience to participate. The Rama story is also enacted in another popular art form of shadow puppet show called Ravanachaya in Odisha. Hence, the Ramalila Festivities were declared by UNESCO as one of the “Intangible culture Heritage of Humanity” in 2008.

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