



TRADITIONAL DANCE –SONGS OF TRIBAL COMMUNITY: BAIGA

Dr. Solunke R.E.

Department of English, Baburaoji Adaskar Mahavidyalaya, Kaij, Dist.Beed (MS)

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad

Emai. solunkeram@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper presents an exploration of tribal community, Baigas and their dance-songs. The study sought to understand Baigas background and their various dance-songs on festivals and celebration. The tradition and ritual of Baigas are quite different from other tribal communities of India. Tribal literature mostly found in the form of oral or unwritten form of dance and songs. It is transmitted from one generation to another and has survived for long time. Baigas live in marginal part of Maharashtra and rest of India. At the time of celebration they use special costumes and beautiful and colourful dresses to perform dance-songs. There are three basic types of dance-songs such as Religious dance-songs, Social dance-songs and Economy based dance-songs, related to hunting and agriculture. Karama dance –songs is one of the most favourite dance-songs of Baigas. Both men and women simultaneously participate in these dance-songs. Another dance-dance are performed by the Baigas such as Jharapat, Rina dance, Saila dance, Bilama dance, Bhadouni dance, Ddaria dance, Parghauni dance, Tapari dance and Barati dance.

Key Words: Baiga, dance-songs, religious, social and economy

Introduction:

Tribal literature in India is a colourful one. It is indeed a vast one. One of the basic problems leading to its slow and late recognition is that it is unrecorded or more appropriately it is unwritten. One of the best solutions to this issue lies in our modified notion of literature. It means that we need to concede that literature is not just written, but also oral in nature or form. In addition to this, India is best known for its rich oral traditions. Orality as a feature of communication embodies in it both traditional and modern characteristics. Timeless and unanchored, it freely travels from age to age, country to country

and genre to genre. In fact, every written piece of literature contains substantial layers of orality.

Tribal literature is available mostly in the form of songs or dance forms. These songs have been orally transmitted from one generation to another and have survived for a long time.. Even some of the folk songs are lost forever. It is high time for us to collect and conserve tribal literature for the posterity. The glory of the mainstream literature in the country lies in the fact that accepts oral or folk as complementary, as it gives a complete picture of the Indian culture and thought. Tribal people dwell in different parts of the Indian Union. They are found in small and big groups; they speak their own tongues or dialects; practice their own customs or culture; and attract the attention of linguists, anthropologists, scholars and researchers now –a-days. Tribal men and women are natural singers, dancers or performers. They are emotionally attached to their motherland. They are also full of patriotic, feelings and work for the progress of the nation. The literature of the tribal groups is marked by a great variety of songs, dance forms or dramatic performances. There are various kinds of tribal communities in India. In this paper I highlight Baiga tribal community to study. This paper also highlights dance –songs of Baiga community.

Baiga is a tribal community who lives in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. The culture of this community differs with other tribal community. Presently the Maikal Hills in Madhya Pradesh can be considered as the main habitat of this country. The Baigas are situated between the Vindhyas and the Satpuras this is the most populated part of this country. Now their villages and hutments remain scattered all over the mountain range. Now- a- days Baigas are facing problems such as high infant mortality, poor access to health facilities, low life expectancy, poverty, lack of livelihood options, inability to cope with change. The main concern of this study is to highlight the dance-song of Baigas community. They begin their celebrations and festivals with dance-songs. As an agrarian and hunting society, the Baigas follow traditional Indian calendar along with the agrarian harvest cycle. For the Baigas, dance-songs are a reflection of the zeitgeist of their society.

Baigas festivals celebrate with the presence of man and woman with elaborate dressing. Men wear frock like saya on the lower body, and shirt and black cotton jacket on the upper half of the body that goes amazingly well with a round turban adorned with peacock feathers. For the neck, they use beads, cheap pearl and copper coin to make necklaces of various types while using earrings of their own indigenous design. They decorate their legs very meticulously with iron or bronze jewelry. They also use blue coloured pichora on their back to look absolutely adorable. Perhaps the reason behind such an extensive preparation is that the Baiga youth choose their life partners in such dance festivals. The boys are usually deeply engrossed in the festive atmosphere, trying to woo their favourite girls.

In this festivals women wear moongi sari and concentrate on decorating their hair more than any other body part. They also use peacock feathers and other beautiful ornaments to embellish their head. A special kind of festoon called biranamala made of bagai grass is weaved painstakingly that goes on to make their hair look perfect. Women make beads and pearl wreaths for themselves. They use traditional ornaments to impress men and special guests. Dr. Nityananda Dixit divides the tribal dance –songs into three types on the basis of their subject matter.

1. Religious dance-songs
2. Social dance-songs and
3. Economy based dance-songs, related to hunting and agriculture.

Baigas dance performances are classified in various types of dance-songs. Baigas dance performance is with songs. The first dance-song is Karama. It is generally associated with the worship of the Karama tree for good fortune after the monsoons. Karama is a frequently performed dance type among many communities inhabiting the jungles of central India. It is beginning with Dashara and continuing till the next rainy season. Baigani Karama is the Baiga style of this form in which the youth play their drums softly after supper, as a sign of invitation to the girls who come out of their homes in the performance area to accompany them. The boys then stand in the centre playing their drums and singing Karama songs while the girls encircle them and stand

dancing with their arms around the girl next to each other. Women also play a very simplistic instrument called thisaki made either of wood or stone to produce a very catchy sound that helps them. There are various forms of Karama dance-songs such as Jhumar Karama, Langara Karama, Lahari Karama, Thadi Karama, Ragini Karama, Tariya Karama and Gendi Karama. All these people play with forcefully and realistically among people. Another dance-song is Jharapat dance, means instantly and it is basically a witty game dance that continues in a dialogue form. Women and men form straight lines facing each other and play thisaki and drums to produce an encouraging sound while replying to the oppositions' questions and remarks. It is kind of competitive play to beat the opposition by running them out.

Rina dance, is also kind of dance –song. It is performed by Baiga women alone who dance in two groups sometimes in line facing each other and sometimes forming a circle. This form is named so because the women sing rina rina as a refrain for this song.

Saila dance is another dance performance. This dance is a demonstration of masculinity because it requires physical strength and the participation of women in this dance form is not very high. This dance form used sticks during its performance. There are various Saila dance-songs such as Thadi Saila, Lahaki Saila, Julani Saila, Godami Saila, Dhimara Saila, Shikari Saila, Baithaki Saila, Chamaka Saila, Chakramar Saila, Danda Saila, Atari Saila and Uchati Jhulani Saila. For the successful performance Baigas worship to Goddess Saraswati at the opening dance performance.

Bilama dance is basically a wedding dance which is also known as the dance of separation. It is performed at weddings to depict the situations of both bride and groom. The men from the groom's side dance with vigour and enthusiasm representing excitement and anticipation for the arrival of the bride while the women from the bride's side accompany them with a slow and restrained rhythm and expression, expressive of a sweet melancholy of the girl parting from her paternal home. Bhadouni dance is also known as a marriage dance which is performed when the marriage party from the groom's side comes to the bride's place. After the arrival of the party and their ceremonial welcome,

the women sing and perform this dance teasing the guests in a playful manner. Sometimes, on moonlights the Baigas assemble and start performing this dance to rejuvenate themselves for the next day.

Dadaria dance is also called van-bhajan and it is a fantastic form which echoes the Baiga conscience in a spirited manner. Dadaria is a part of daily life, sung in field, during journeys and when weary travelers rest by bonfire. Dadaria can be viewed as a love song of the youth and its celebration. Love is the dominant emotion of this form. It is also sung a dialogical manner as mentioned above. Men and women form separate groups and then one group asks questions and another replies.

Parghauni dance, it is also a marriage dance performed by the marriage party when the procession arrives at bride's place. Tapari dance, the word tapari means claps in the Baiga language, so the musical instruments which accompany Rina dance are not used in this form, rather women dance only on clapping. Barati dance-song is also performed in the Baiga society.

A close study and viewing of Baiga dance-songs establishes that this cultural form is in a creative flux. The individual as well as community's intervention in culture is persistent and this interface offers cultural reality's dynamism. Humans are endowed with an agency to shape and reshape their cultural reality. Contrary to the theories based on urban-industrialized capital societies, which are infested with the idea of domination of one class over another, the Baigas cherish their subjectivity and agency in their performance. All the participants are equally free to introduce a new move to the already established and repetitive structure of dance. Interestingly, even the audience, especially the old people, encourages the performers to do something surprisingly refreshing and to break the monotony or the set patterns. The Baiga dance-forms are inclusive (all performers are free to innovate and contribute uniquely), interactive (performer-audience interactions are dynamic and the audience stimulates changes and the performer innovates spontaneously) and full of agency, not guided by any other motive except narration of one's experiences and emotions.

Beauty is what is experienced by all, thought about by many but understood by some. There has been a lot of contemplation to comprehend the nature of this concept but it remains obfuscating and elusive. Both the East and the West have produced galaxies of thinkers and theories on this subject without any decisive outcomes. Basically these efforts are a superego of the societies and civilizations who toil to understand experience in terms of knowledge. A conscious effort on behalf of human beings to make sense of their experience has often been futile. Such activities usually take place where there are resources and favourable conditions. Devoid of all these human vagaries, beauty remains an experiential reality. The concept of beauty or aesthetic sense is present even in the societies where a consciously construed discourse on it is non-existent. The mistake to perceive everything from a dominant point of view results in ignorance. Studies are prone to such mistakes if they are conducted without knowing the context. It is necessary to have a look at the art for art's sake/art for society's sake binary from the Baiga perspective.

A Baiga performance is perfectly functional in its utility for the society. But this fact hardly mitigates its aesthetic richness, even for an outsider who is habituated to judge a performance by the established terms and norms of beauty. A Baiga performance in its totality is an amalgamation of external beauty and internal wisdom constituting these dance-songs. They transmit and share their communitarian knowledge and experience while vigorously and willingly merging themselves into the ecstasy of a performance. On their social occasions and performances, the Baigas appear as dandy people who painstakingly adorn themselves to appear attractive to the opposite sex. In colourful attire ornamented with peacock plumes and flowers, a Baiga performer is as charming as a prince in some Greek drama. Verrier Elwin compares the Baigas' sense of dressing with that of the Gonds:

Interestingly, though the Baiga dance-songs are crammed with devotional sentiment, adherence to any magical or supernatural cause is not essential at all. Recreational and interactive existential requirements are the stimulations for the performance of the Baiga dance-songs. In a single performance, songs to

praise the gods and passionate love making are sung with equal vigour. In fact, these songs sum up the Baiga life in its entirety. A song eulogizes gods like this:

Oh the Guru worships Ganapati (the lord of wisdom).

But I worship Sarswati (the goddess of music);

For my mistakes to be forgiven. (Dhurve 92)

They take the art more seriously, and dress better for it. Men put on ornaments, tie big round turbans and stick tufts of peacocks' feathers in them. Girls put on every ornament they have, they often tie pretty red and orange shawls across their bodies, and they bind their hair in loose pigtailed with stings of mauve and little rings of biran-bark. In their hair, they put tuft of peacocks' feathers tied at the tips with bits of coloured wool pulled out of a phundara (The Baiga 89).

During a performance, the Baigas are part of a performance but it is a process where subjectivity merges into a communitarian cause. The individual improvisation and contribution is valued but it should also add to the welfare of the society. And in this case the individual will is not completely subject to general will, rather, the individual modifies it every time s/he contributes to the discourse generated by these dance-songs. It reifies to a certain extent what Friedrich Schiller calls 'the aesthetic state'. While talking about three kinds of states Schiller says: The dynamic state can merely make society possible, by letting one nature be curbed by another; the ethical state can make it (morally) necessary, by subjecting the individual will to the general; the aesthetic state alone can make it real because it consummates the will of the whole through the nature of the individual (Mennell and Rundell 93)

In *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Gautier announces, 'nothing is truly beautiful except which serves nothing. Whatever is useful is ugly' (Simpson 3). Similarly, once asked whether his play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) will be a success, Oscar Wilde summed up his attitude towards his play as 'it is already a success; the question is whether the audience will be a success' (Simpson 2). The upheaval in the nineteenth century Europe generated an urge to claim art as independent of society and subjective perceptions. As one can see, like other socio-political movements, this approach to art need to be seen in its historical context without pining and wining to universalize it. They take the art

more seriously, and dress better for it. Men put on ornaments, tie big round turbans and stick tufts of peacocks' feathers in them. Girls put on every ornament they have, they often tie pretty red and orange shawls across their bodies, and they bind their hair in loose pigtailed with stings of mauve and little rings of biran-bark. In their hair, they put tuft of peacocks' feathers tied at the tips with bits of coloured wool pulled out of a phundara (The Baiga 89).

Conclusion:

Thus, in this research paper I highlighted on the community Baiga who is tribal community, situated in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. The culture of this community differs with other tribal community. Presently the Maikal Hills in Madhya Pradesh can be considered as the main habitat of this country. The Baigas are situated between the Vindhyas and the Satpuras this is the most populated part of this country. Baigas are performers of dance and songs. They are well known for dance-songs. As a tribal community Baigas play vital role to survive primitive tradition and rituals. Karama dance –songs is one of the most favourite dance-songs of Baigas. Both men and women simultaneously participate in these dance-songs. Another dance-dance are performed by the Baigas such as Jharapat, Rina dance, Saila dance, Bilama dance, Bhadouni dance, Ddaria dance, Parghauni dance, Tapari dance and Barati dance.

Citation

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