

The Tradition of Shadow-play in Odisha 'Ravana chhaya' A case study

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Abstract

Shadow theatre is an earliest classical configuration of narrative cum amusement which uses flat comprehensible figures to create the influence of moving humans. It is also called Chhaya nataka or Shadow puppetry. It is a traditional still effective model of folk theatre. This antique form of leather puppetry in India is continuing through ages but it is unfortunate to indicate that today in the age of science and technology. It is slightly Viable in few regions in India. After all these shadow theaters indicates our culture. It becomes our responsibility to maintain and popularize such art forms for future age groups.. The present paper aims to focus the importance of shadow theatres of modern India with special reference to Ravanachhaya of Odisha.

Keywords: *Shadow theatre, Ravanachhaya, Chhaya Nataka, Leather puppetry, traditional, Viable.*

Introduction:

The Shadow theatre (chhaya nataka) of Odisha is popularly well known as Ravana chhaya. In additional Indian languages this pattern of puppet play is called leather puppet play (charma puttalika nataka in Odia). In Marathi its form art shape is known as "Chamdyacha Bahulya". In Bengali it is well known as "Chhaya Putul Nacha" But In India the name the name 'Ravana Chhaya' look like a segment atypical unconventional in this subject. This is also a one type of performing art.

Tradition of Ravanachhaya:

Researchers say that this type of performing art might have developed elsewhere in countries like India, China in the 5th century B.C. In spite of the fact that the exact point of origination has not been found out, number of researchers have recommended that the Indian heritage must have fabricated this art form (1) scholar Richard Pischel and Olive Blackham are ambiguous about the primordial birth place of puppet dance. Question arises whatever it is in India or China? They quote from 'Patanjali's Mahabhasya' (4th Century BC), Vyasadeba's Mahabharata (5th Century BC), Kautilya's Arthashastra (3rd Century BC), Vatsyana's Kama sutra (7th Century AD) And Bhabubhuti's Uttarama charita (8th Century AD) (2), But not yet an area, especially part of a country of its birth nor the people who come up with and who bring up the Design of this mystifying form of transmission have yet been purposive with any reliability. The reality is that from the 10th to 14th Century A.D, there were dozens of Sanskrit plays written particularly for arranging as shadow theatre is a evidence sufficiency of the recognition of this form in India.(3)

The historical convention of shadow play in Odisha covered in a closed book (Mystery). Some scholars return back to the 3rd century B.C. to uncover its origination, but they can depend on the unclear of authentication. They point out the fresco in sitabenga present in Chhattisgarh, similar design on the canvas (4) and the fresco in sitabinji, Keonjhar district of Odisha, popularly known as Ravana Chhaya by the regional people. It was emulsioned in the post Gupta age in 4th / 5th Century A.D. At that time the king was Disa Bhanja (5). This hypothesis has been given the thumbs down categorically by Keith (6) while Jacob and Lueders obtain known's speculation Remarkably, there is no uses of the term 'Ravana Chhaya' elsewhere either Odia literary texts or in religious and prior historical writings. In whatever way all information regarding shadow theatre convenient in the Mahabharat of Sarala Das (15th century), Dandi Ramayana of Balaram Das (16th century), and the Kavyas of Upendra Bhanja, Dinakrushna Das, Avimanyu Samantasinghara words like patachitra (painting on cloth/canvas), Chitrapata (photograph) have been used as equivalent with the shadow theatre.

There have been various controversies in backing of the name Ravana Chhaya as a shape of shadow theatre. The inaugural and best vibrant opinion could be that the icon of this play is not Rama, personification of Bishnu) but Ravana, the powerful vigorous demon king. In his former birth, Ravana was Jaya, the door keeper of Lord Vishnu (Rama), who had been damned by Maa Laxmi for no mistake of his own. Vishnu had taken birth in personal form to rescue Jaya and put the specimen of an perfect archetypal husband, secondly Rama is think up as Parambrahma, metaphysical vital force that is also shadowless. For that reason it would be inappropriate to use the term Rama Chhaya. The third point is an extensive one. The impressionist suggests that one day, an appeal of her Sakhis (female partners), Sita drag a figure of Ravana on the floor. The animated picture of Ravana made the companions (sakhi's) interested to know how Sita could see Ravana (the demon king). Sita foolishly conversed that when she was kidnapped by Ravana and was being taken in a Chariot called Puspaka Bimana (name of the Ravan's Chariot) in the sky over the seas. She had seen the shadow of Ravana in the water. Even a harmless sight of Ravana's shadow in the sea was equivalent to sita being contaminated; predict the catastrophic future of Mata Sita Devi and this eventually confirmed the pride of truth over fakery confirmed the pride of truth over fakery and dishonesty and blessings over immorality.

Biswanatha Khuntia's "Bichitra Ramayana" text of fast half of eighteenth century AD considered as the mother (source) book of the play. The whole text has been composed in different ragas and raginis, such as Rahga chokhi, Ahari, Bhairavi, Todi, Rasakullya, Nalinigouda, Bangalashree, Kalahansakedara, Pahadia kedar, Malashree, Kamodi and so on. But these ragas are vocalized in desi (folk) style. Also, the entire Kavya (verse) has been composed in this way as to be performed within a period of 21 days. For that reason, in all possibilities and impartially, we may identify the revival of Ravana Chhaya with Bichitra Ramayan.

The puppets used in Ravana Chhaya are made of untended deer hide, mountain goats and Sambar. These puppets are flat plates without any joints. They are narrow cut with different shapes and sizes and are shaped by the puppeteers with the assistance of bamboo sticks connected to the bottom. Commonly an orchestra (musician and singer group) sits either on a head or further back the stage with the following orchestral equipments such as- Khanjani (tambo urine), daskkathi (Two, flat pieces of wooden board), small cymbals (A pair of rounded brass plates) and mrindangam. While the puppeteers handled physically their puppets behind the screen in front of the light source, the shadows in protrait progress on the screen graciously to the concert of melody and song. They are so proficient to handle physically that the audience observes as if live dramatic characters, be they ancient historical, legendary folkloric mythical and social are come down from the world of illusion.



(Leather puppet Of Ravana)



(Leather puppet of Sita)



(Dark hall : Stage of Ravana Chhaya Annex -1 Ravenshaw University)

The stage used in Ravana-Chhaya is indistinguishable to any other stage made for shadow plays all over the world. It is cube shaped with every side about eight to ten feet long. Strong iron pipes or wooden poles of one inch. A straight line passing from side to side through the center of a body or figure, are used as the keep up bars to hold the covering of center blue or black cloth on three sides along with the bottom part of the front, Which fronts the audience. The front side of the bottom part is cover by a thick mat, which is 8 feet long and 3 feet wide. The puppets that are used rarely are remaining stable on this mat-mesh. At any moment the puppeteers noticed the demand for a specific puppet; they re-gain it from this group. In the middle of the stage a light source is kept in such a way that the spectator does not perceive its flame. As the spectators Sita in entire darkness and can only see the screen.

Conclusion:

At present, Ravana chhaya survive as an art form mostly in the Village of Kutarimunda Khamara of Anugul district of Odisha. To preserve the ancient but perplexing art forms which anticipate more upon Mortal imaginative innovative ability than on technological supports with this responsibility inview an insituation called, "The Srirama institute of Shadow Theatre" (7) Supervised by Prof. Gouranga charan Dash the then head of the Deptt. Odia, Ravenshaw University. And his wife Dr. Sabitri Devi newly constitute (1995) in Kutarimunda. Prof. Dash is also a well known "Guru" of "Rabanachhaya". The organizations venture is to creat a stage to the performing artists, appreciator of Ravanachhaya and researchers also empowered them to socialize and furnish the tradition of Ravanachhaya.

Notes:

1. For specific about the chronicle of shadow play, sees konow (1959:89) M. winternitz (1963/77, pp-301-3), R. Pischel (1902, p- 4) and Olive Blackham (1960, p- 1)
2. Some synonyms of the shadow play,
'Rupaka' in – Patanjali's Mahabhasya.
'Yamapata' in – Kautilyas Arthashastra.
'Akshyrapatam'- Vatshayana's Kamasutra.
'Rupajibanam' – in Mahabharata.
'Chhayanka' – in Bhababhutis uttar rama charita.
3. Following plays are completely collected and composed for performing through shadow theatre : such as Mahanataka, Damodar Mishra, 11th century A.D, (ii) Dutangada (subhata, 13th century AD)
4. See note 1
5. G.P. patnaik elaborate the style of painting (1982, p-50). Examining the hypothesis of pandit Binayak Mishra.
6. To A.B. Keith (1924/80, p- 50, p- 270) 'Rupaka' is the Dama Proper". He also deny the analysis of his forerunners and suggests that shadow play as a standard customary drama in whole respect and Dharamabhyudaya is the first shadow play composed in 15th and 16th century AD.
7. This institute has performed the following programmers (i) Shreekhetra and Bapu : visit of a legend) (two surface of Gandhi's life), (ii) Fighting between Krushna and Chanura (based on the Bhakta charana Das's Mathura Mangala", (iii) On 26th feb 2019 performed Ravana Chhaya in Ravenshaw University Organized by P.G. Dept of Odia, Cuttack.

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- 7- Performance of Guru Gouranga Charan Dash at Ravenshaw University.