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THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH OF ODIA DRAMA AND THE FACTORS THAT OF PROMOTING IT TO THE AVANT-GARDE PLAYS AND THEATRES: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT:

Odisha is the state of arts. Its earlier or previous name utkal, as the name of the religion indicates, was once and abode of the best and finest arts. Even today the famous shrines of Konark, Bhubaneswar and Puri bear of this. The art and sculpture of Odisha also depicts wonderfully – dance, drama and music. A rapid development of the modern theatre play thus took place during the present century. Prof. Girija Shankar Roy, the scholarly historian of the odia stage and drama in his authoritative book ‘Oriya Natyakala’ or ‘The Art of Oriya Drama’ first published in 1943, wrote – “But it is Orissa’s misfortunate that in spite of tremendous enthusiasm of the people for dramatic performance and thousand of rupees being spent over these shows year after year, Orissa has not got a permanent theatre as yet”. [p.85]. And there after we all see that so many theatre and drama got highlighted. This study has been undertaken to show up how the conventional form of drama acted in several place of Odisha before independence and what the actual factor that formulized the traditional form of drama which converted into avant grade/experimental form of plays after independence / post independence.

KEY WORDS: Conventional drama, avant-garde plays, absurd, folk drama, Dramatic suspense, conflicts, Epic plays and theatre, Amateur theatre.

INTRODUCTION:

The conventional plays in odia are dependent for survival upon the professional theatres. From the professional point of view they rely on the taste of the contemporary public. The trend after Kalicharan was in favour of rapid change. The dramatists of this period wanted to present before the odia audience plays of novel tastes. In this field, along with Ramachandra Mishra, Gopal Chhotray and Bhanja Kishore Pattnaik are contributions from many of their contemporary and succeeding dramatists. Conventional plays normally reflect the taste of contemporary audience. As the plays performed on professional stages

could gain popular easily, almost all dramatists, having an eye on performance in professional theatres, have written plays of this type. As many year rolled out some talented playwrights came to realize the fact that this popularity was not permanent. In order to align themselves with the taste of modern age they have tried to tell new things in a new style. New techniques and new intellectual ideas have been implemented and accepted as the basic principle for composition of plays.

CONVENTIONAL PLAYS : VARIETY AND EVOLUTION

According to Birjadish Prasad, “Drama presents fiction or fact in a form that could be acted before an audience. A play has a plot, character, dialogue, at atmosphere, and an outlook on life much as novel has, but it is as a rule intended to be performed in public, not read in private. Its full qualities are only revealed in presentation on the stage. The drama alone is a composite art, in which the author, the actor, and the stage manager all combine to produce the total effect.”

The conventional play is of enacted it is in a room of three walls – the stages and fourth is between the actors and audience. The conventional theatre anything absurd can only exist outside of the drama. What is included in it must be believable and what takes place should have nothing irrational about it – Aristotle. It composed of stories and character, forming and ending with a certain message to the audience.

Two mythological plays ‘Radhika’ and ‘Naradevta’ and one legend based play ‘Sadhaha Jhia’ – All by Dr. Adwita Chandra Mohanty, whose profession is as a doctor but has find of interested in writing plays, have gained much popularity. Although there was no novelty in their subject matter yet much newness is noticed in the style of presentation and engrafting of dialogues. For reasons they achieved wide success on the stage. Out of these three play mohanty wrote many one play act ‘Drusya Para Drusya’, ‘Chakhi khunita’, ‘Chandra Arapate’, ‘Sunabohu’, ‘Bharata ku uthao’ and many more.

Laxmidhar Nayak is another successful dramatist of this period. Most of his plays are based on class struggle in his ‘zamindar’, ‘lalchabuk’, ‘Dharmapatni’, ‘Ladhei Chalichi’ class struggle has been forcefully presented for the first time. For the excitement born of conflict, pathetic emotions and interagtion in plot construction these plays have gained much popularity. As Mr. Nayak is labour leader, the true picture of class struggle as is presented in his plays has not been portrayed ad effectively in other places. He can be accepted as the first successful carrier or progressive thoughts in odia drama.

In the most influenced and motivated factor as of result by his elder brother Ashwin Kumar Ghosh, Kartik Kumar Ghosh concentrated first on acting then on composition of plays. At the earlier time of his career he was acted so many plays. In that time his elder brother wrote many plays and Kartik also manage the stage as a stage manager. After acting so many plays Kartik wrote many odia plays and himself introduced as a play writer. Though his earlier plays could not gain much success. Yet the plays writer after 1950 got much appreciation and popular, being produced in the professional theatres. The writers uniqueness is reflected in his mythological plays ‘Laksha Hira’ and social play ‘Emiti bi hue’. His efforts at the composition of mysterical romantic plays are lawlable.

The next Bhubaneswar Mohapatra is of one writer on the decades of 1950. He wrote many social, mythological, Historical and criminal play. 'Golaka dhanda', 'motimahal' are criminal scene. His all plays got appreciable and laudable. This type of drama go popularity on the theatre also acted on the near village of Odisha. Character, dialogue, dramatic suspense applied in a way that got popular on the theatre. The main characteristics of Mohapatra's play is 'Dramatic Climax' or 'Natyotkantha'.

The plays of Udayanath Mishra are satirical and reformative. His uniqueness lies in the assemblage of many character for representation of various social problems, 'Koila Company' and 'Swargare Ganatantra' bear proofs of his talent. Dramatist Mishra wrote his many plays as conventional form. Social enactment affect on his plays.

Having written plays after 1950, Kamalalochan Mohanty has achived much popularity. For forceful expression of on temporary problems contained in them, his plays had also created a stir in the professional theatres. His speciality lies in the composition of dialogues of modern life.

Another personality and said to be another fame of drama Shri Jadunath Das Mohapatra (Surya Mandira, Athaba Andhara, Bhuli Huean, Sangram) a conventional dramatists of modern sensibility.

The conventional form of drama appeared day by day on the purpose of audience interest. New writer and dramatists were formed and they also written on the same way.

The taste of persiveness now got formatted in audience. They are looking for new taste of drama, where the same formula way of drama not to be followed. After 1960 because of the introduction of the abstract style many talented dramatists have been involved in experimentation and employment of an international awareness. As a result the traditional style has to be some extent been harmed. But plays of this type have still walked shoulder to shoulder with experimental plays. Yet the style of composition and representation of the plays have to some extent undergone changes, new complex social problems have been accepted as material for the plays. On the whole the traditional plays have also aligned themselves with the changed modern taste. In the post independence period. If we study the dramatic perspective. We see how the folk elements used. Heres the glance-

1. Forming plots from folk ballads.
2. Use of plots from folk tales.
3. Direct use of folk songs in drama.
4. Use of rhythm and styles of folk songs in drama.
5. Use of folk saying like proverbs, idioms and riddles etc.
6. The experiment of styles of folk literature.
7. Assimilation of characters from folk drama.
8. Use of stage of folk drama.
9. Use of folk language and dialects

10. Drama based on tribal group and tribal lifes.

Here some of the element of folk literature seen in the perspective of the modern odia drama. The use of folk elements in modern drama can be categorized in to following four types.

- (a) Complete symbolic representation of drama
- (b) General conventional story telling
- (c) Partial symbolic representation
- (d) Free and open visualization

Although Kalicharan's plays dealt with certain problems, they failed to make any mark in the minds of men afterwards as the plot had been too much fanciful. His succeeding dramatists like Ramachandra Mishra, Gopal Chhotray and Bhanja Kishore Pattaink etc. evinced great awareness for existing problems but the truthfulness. Dialecticism and progressivism who followed and above dramatists have made odia drama more lively and more effective.

It must be remembered that audiences are, to a large extent, responsible for the quality of a play. The standard of a play always depends upon the high or low taste of the audience for which it is written. The present audience belongs to that section which likes to be pandered to cheap humour and dances and songs are still found to be indispensable for the popularity of a play. And it is almost in perseable to do away with them. A number of professional actors and actresses have come to understand their art more thoroughly than their predecessors. The modern dramatic literature has been sufficiently enriched both in quality and quantity. There have been extensive changes in the techniques of performances of stage. The play writers have shown greater sincerity in the presentation of internal picture of the mind than the external pictures of family and society. Each and every activity of man has been considered from the psychological point of view. A realistic approach followed in the modern odia plays. The traditional way of drama not to be disappeared permanently, but with the interest of audience and the favour of dramatic culture implemented.

Character ranging from rich zamindar, businessmen, industrialists, officers, doctors, engineers, lecturers and clerks up to poor farmers, wage earners, rickshaw pullers, factory labourers and other labours have appeared in odia plays. Many characters from the lower classes of society who had not previously found place as characters in the dramatic world have now been portrayed in the plays. Men belonging to different religious and castes – Hindus, Muslims and Christians and even the Harizans and Adivasis also found into plays. They have got the opportunity to express themselves on the part of character.

Though the traditional play wrights were giving much emphasis on the spectators delight, yet they had enough awareness for instruction of the people like all the other genres of odia literature the dramatic literature has also continued to develop.

PREFACE OF THE AVANT-GARDE PLAYS:

Even in the preface to “American Avant-garde Theatre : A History Aronson acknowledges the often misinterpretation and unfortunate stigma attached to ideas of the avant-garde throughout history as the notion develop. He feels that the term avant-garde” has been applied indiscriminately, almost as an epithet, to a wider range of performance that falls outside the boundaries of naturalism and realism – that is narrative, psychological, melodramatic theatre.

Avant garde plays and theatres push the past traditional theatres and plays to formulize the new technical and experimental form of plays with theatre. It breakes away from culture tradition with shown daily basis on the past and theatrical ritual to obliterate accepted conduct the spectator normally enters into experience with.

THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE CONVENTIONAL PLAYS WHICH IT CONVERTED INTO AVANT GARDE:

Conventional plays normally reflects the tastes of contemporary audience, as the plays performed on professional stages could gain popularly easily, almost all dramatists having an eye on performance in professional theatres cause of popularity and fame, have written plays of this type. As Years rolled by some talented play writers came to realize the facts that this popularity was not permanent. In order to align themselves with the tastes of the modern age they have tried to tell new things in a new style, international dramatic awareness has gradually spread in their minds. Instead of being restricted to their narrow confine, dramatists have become more interested in floating in the international stream.

METHODS OF CREATION:

Traditionally, a writer identified a problem, a writer writes a script, a director interprets it for the stage together with the actors and the performers perform the director and writers collective soon. Various practitioners started challenge in this and started seeing the performs more and more as creative artists in their own right. Within this different structures and possibilities exist for performance maker, a large variety of different models are used by performance, a large variety of different models are used by performers today. An interdisciplinary approach becomes more and more common as performers have become less willing to be shoe-horned into specialist technical roles.

IMPACTS ON ODISIA DRAMA:

Earlier, the conventional or traditional form of drama shown by the purpose of audience like same variety, same formula with same culture followed by dramatist. No new form of play have had introduces. The ornamental age of odia drama introduced on the name of Kalicharan Pattnaik solve some problem behalf of this ‘Girlschool’, ‘Bhata’, ‘phatamati’ and many more plays got new progress. It theatre, it acted so many nights (‘Bhata’(Rice) – 108 nights). After Kalicharan the next generation play wrights Mishra – Chhotray – Pattnaik (Ramachandra Mishra – Gopal Chhotray – Bhanja Kishore Pattaink) also followed the same rule; rather they enact some other elements in the dialogue section, dramatic suspance and even at theatre.

After post independence or 1950-60, odia drama got a new change. We see, since the time of Jagmohan Lal's, in his 2 play like 'Babaji' (1877) and 'Sati' (1886), social relevance, Social problem, abductive of drug consumption, women's perseverance and the effect of 'Paschatya Siksha' to the younger's they got wrong path followed, all are beautifully described by them. And thereafter all playwrights followed the same path. After post independence, this abstract style is completely different from the traditional pattern. The traditional dramatic skills are totally absent here. Some of the audience after watching this type of drama, called 'absurd' in the beginning. But gradually it came to known as experimental plays are not absurd at all.

Absurd plays were totally extraneous both in subject matter and style. Their presence could not be felt in the climate of this country. They emphasized discovery of absured parts of life without attempting to create conflicts and suspense or to construct plot and hence this is plotless drama.

Manoranjan Das is always worthy of commendation as the herald of a new awareness in modern odia drama. Though his traditional plays achieved much success on the stage he did not cling to this style for the entire span of his carrier. He has been involved in a search for new styles and subject matters. Initially he was attracted towards the western psychological and problem plays. The style and subject matter of his plays have been control accordingly. By 1964 under his leadership the odia dramatic world experienced an unprecedented stir through the new dramatic movement. 'Srujani' established in this year. 'Surjani' performed Manoranjan's 'Sagar Manthan' first and then Biswajit Das's 'Pratapagada re Di Dina'. Although these two plays were of a completely new taste for the oriya audience, yet they were respectively weak imitation of J.B.Priestley's 'An inspector calls' and Gogal's 'Inspector General'. These two of course, had been extremely helpful in breaking the traditional pattern by creating a commotion in the dramatic world. Such imitations are necessary when a new movement is raising its head. In reality, not only Manoranjan's but the works of the other dramatists well have taken a new turn after this Manoranjan Das's 'Agami' got the right opportunity to change the path of whole dramatic movement.

Biswajit Das is the creator of many plays and also the founder of the dramatic organisation 'Samketa'. In the initial stages of the new drama movement he got involved with the dramatic organisation 'Srujani' having been inspired to create something new. Many of his plays are based upon modern political, economical and Psychological problems, but they have not been able to enlist themselves as new plays in odia.

After Manoranjan the most effective playwright of avant garde drama is Bijay Mishra. Although initially he was writing traditional plays base on social problems late in pursuance of the taste of his age he was started experimenting with various new techniques and themes. The existential philosophy and the novel conception of the stage as reflected in 'Saba Bahaka Mane' (1986), his first play in the new style has once been the object of the love and the wonder of the audience. Man having lost his natural liveliness and human values, has turned into a corpse.

In the initial stages of the new drama movement Ramesh Prasad Panigrahi appeared in Odisha. From the beginning without being involved with the famous amateur dramatic organisation 'The Ganjam Kala Parishad' of Berhampur. Before discussion about more view point. I want to clear that the exact meaning of amateur theatre. Amateur theatre (Amateur Dramatics) can be defined as "theatre performance in which the people involved are not paid but take part for their own enjoyment." Let's begin. For his originality has carved a niche for himself among the other avant garde odia dramatists. The main/basic problem of Mr. Panigrahi's plays are sociological in nature, while Manoranjan in his psychoanalytical plays emphasized analysis of the human mind.

Epic drama being a carrier of mass education presents the modern sense of life through the techniques of traditional opera and folk drama. Ramesh Panigrahi's is written on the style of the traditional yatra's of Odisha. But what is Epic drama? In naturalistic or dramatic theatre the audience care about the presence of character on stage. They forget themselves and got to attached with the characters. When an audience cries for character or feels emotion through the events happening to them its called 'catharsis'. But Bertolt brecht was against it. He believed that while the audience become emotionally involved in the action they lost the ability to think and to judge. So he prepared that type of theatre, called 'Epic Theatre'.

As an avant garde dramatist, Ratnakar Chaini makes his first appearance in the play 'Punascha Pruthivi'. He had written many traditional and psychological plays before this 'Punascha Pruthivi', 'Nachiketa' and 'Ubacha' and 'Athacha Chanakya' are his famous abstract plays. Although he has experimented with absurd and epic styles in many of his plays yet they are all full of incidents.

Odia drama has undergone which qualitative improvement between 1960 and 1980 on the one hand, while the creation of traditional plays have continued unabated, on the other hand the avant garde drama has spread far and wide. In the traditional plays along with presentation of some contemporary problems, there have been attempts at exhibiting excellence and novelty in stage craft and the style of presentation. The experimental plays have come forward to accept completely novelty both in form of matter.

CONCLUSION:

Three different dramatic styles are noticed in the field of odia drama in the 1960 onwards:

1. The absurd style
2. The epic style
3. The mixed/open style

From the attempts of expressing the inner mind of man through new forms. Odia drama was faced with wide spread changes. After widescale experimentation, the playwrights mainly imitating the techniques of total theatre or the third theatre. Kunja Ray, pramod Tripathy, Rati Mishra, Bijay Satpathy,

Purna Chandra Mallick, Ramachandra Behera, Niladri Bhusan Harichandan, Prasanna Kumar Das etc. are all successful representatives of this new stream of experimentation.

As we all see, the avant grade or modernist odia drama of today is enriched with an assimilation of elements both traditional and the modern. The addition of the forms of various odia folk dramas even to the combination marks it off as different from similar developments in other parts of India.

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