

Acting Methodologies and Approaches In Folk Drama

“SWANG” With Special Reference To Bundelkhand

2

Himanshu Dwivedi*

Abstract

Elements of acting are the essential aspects in ‘BundeliSwang’ which are represented in the form of laughter or teasing. In ancient times it was associated with the traditional rituals and tantric practices; later on it was transformed into entertainment and strengthened its root in common folk of Bundelkhand. To understand about the culture of Bundelkhand, there is nothing, better than ‘Swang’. The essence of Bundeli culture is also illuminated with the candid representation of the folk dance ‘Swang’. The unwrapping of serious social issues with the different acting methods and approaches like laughter made this Swang reputed. ‘Swang’ was prominent source of conveying social message in its contemporary times and is still in vogue. The dual responsibility of conveying a message and acting had been played successfully by the performers called ‘Swangi’. The characters of King, ministers, sarpanch, were represented by these ‘Swangis’ with their negative deeds and while performing they transform their negative deeds to the positive deeds which makes these Kings, ministers etc to think and to improve their behaviors and thought even.

The very nature of folk traditions is the spontaneity which originates from different styles and different forms at different places and circumstances. And this approach itself fulfills the origination and development of Swang which on one hand comes culturally in the form of rituals and spiritual practices and on the other hand it speeds up differently with social concern in the folk culture. And Swang in its social concern is approved and accepted by the inhabitants of Bundelkhand.

Variety of laughters like Irony, Satire, Caricature, Sarcasm are the prominent contents of Swanga. Swanga consists of each and every element of chuckle, snigger, hoot, snort, cackle, titter etc. And these are the soul elements of Swang. Basically due to the pretending and imitating nature of Swang the Swangi and viewer become the same because the viewer gets so immersed in Swang that he connects himself with it and there exists no obstacle in his satisfaction and understanding.

The plot of the Swang consists of folk tales, myths, witch-crafts and riddles. It does not have a written plot. Artist or Swangi presumes the plot and accordingly moves the story by speech or dialogues spontaneously.

*Ministry of Culture Scholarship, Department of Indian Theatre, Panjab University, Chandigarh

There is no boundness like in theatre where to speak dialogue or a particular dialogue should speak after a particular. It solely depends on the spontaneity and the creation of environment for moving the plot or story. Plot of swang is not created by one man but is a combine effort of group through which plot comes out. But it depends on the improvisation or improvised act of Swang artist how he focuses and moves the story or plot because in Swang there is no narrator for giving an introduction about story but it moves as above mentioned layer by layer by improvisation through the wise act of speech and acting.

In folk drama Swang acting and dialogue aspect is much stronger. In its representation laughter is the prominent Rasa. In BundeliSwang the number of characters is very few. One actor can play many characters and he is so skilled that can portray every character with very ease. Even female characters are also played by the males. Sometimes just two characters (male-female) play the whole the Swang. There is more of comic and satire in acting Swang concerned with a particular and contemporary subject matter.

It is not difficult for a Swang artist to pretend an artificial beating, anger, teasing in the imaginative scenes. As there is no focus given to the characterization. Only the caricature or imitation of person portrays a minute glimpse. This is through the magic of dialogues by which the character awakes and evokes. Social characters are represented as it is in Swang with the full elements and capabilities.

For BundeliSwang there is no need for special training or practice. Only physical and vocal elements of acting are used aharya is not represented. Simplicity in acting is its main characteristic which is generated through the symbols and movements. These symbols are the backbone of Swang. Artist selects these symbols for making his acting influential eg. in the Swang representing a furnace artist lay down with his back up on the surface of stage in front of his face half fired cow-dung cakes are placed. The another artist moves his legs in such a way as if pretending that he pumps the furnace moreover the laid artist would blow air from his mouth thereby creating smog from those cow-dung cakes. Likewise in swang of Panda Baba, Baba uses a piece of burning coal and place it on a thick wood stick and pretend as if he is smoking a Hooka. So these small symbols represented by artist creates the magical impact on viewer. While performing in swanga there is no use of blocking or positioning as used in modern style of drama.

The gestures, expressions and costumes of an give liveliness to his act. And for this artist need not require any pre rehearsal before performance. Swangi is inherited with this form and we can also say that this is their in his life style. Year by year performance by performance he prepares, skills himself in acting performance. Whether the performance of

Swang is on stage or off stage hasya rasa comes out from their talks in a very funny or candid manner. Due to these capabilities Swangi is given respect in the society.

Swang does not relate to any caste. This is only acting capabilities of any performer which makes him. It is said that the formative phase of Swang was following some caste systems probably the low caste people used to do Swang.

Normally the content of swang would relate to Hasya and Swangi also through his gestures postures and costumes etc entertain the people but some times to exaggerate laughter or tease artists use some vulgar or erotic contents in Swang. But people assume it the part of their act.

Rai form of dance represented throughout night and for the performing artist called Bedni 20-25 minutes is given for his rest and in between this period swang is performed. This is also done so as to reduce the boredom of Rai dance.

Through the movements and actions in swang the whole environment is filled up with laughter. Swangi directly impacts viewer's mind with their speech and their act. And this is the major reason for gathering of crowd wherever swang is going on in Bundelkhand. Today Swang there is performed on separate places and platforms. In Swang of Rai dance, Kanraais was performed in the form of music only. Prayer is an important aspect in Swang. Before performing the Swang performers of Swang pray to the deity for their success in Swang. The scenes from rural and folk are performed with the influence of urbanization. Bad and negative aspect in society is performed in a very satirical way so as to awake the society and respond toward those issues. In professional Swang only male performers perform the both male as well as female characters.

In Rai dance four to five Swangs are performed in between. In the end of Swang all the performers sing in concern to the subject matter performed.

All these kinds of Swangs are the originates of NukkarNataka (Street Play). Basically actors of Swang are capable of doing every kind of act. Not only they know about their role but they memorise all the Swang and there he is at all ready to perform any character. Men performers usually represent or perform the acts of women also, therefore any performer can in disguise of women can perform in Swang. Usually Swangi or swang performer alternately performs the character and viewer also understand what he is performing because of the simplicity and naturality of Swang. Speech of the swang performer is very effective. Dialogues are according to circumstances. With the help of these dialogues and the positions artist balances the act. Dialogues of BundeliSwang are simple, perfect and quick. There is a rhythm in dialogues which helps artist to move further in the plot or story. Even there is no

repetition of speech, circumstances if the same Swang is performed and this happens only because of the spontaneous improvisation quality of Swang.

As Swang originates from common folk and it immersed the viewer within it, because these dialogues are the part of life of common folk and have come with their daily tasks. While working in fields, resting in huts, shop keeping, gossips, smoking hooka and common talks are the dialogues of the Swang which don't have any script. Dialogues of swang are the basic elements of swang in which speech is the important aspect, words are simple and general and commonly used by local people. But for making dialogues creative or influential dialogues are formed with phrases, proverbs etc.

Bundeliswangattaks on social evils and its dialogues also wake the stress of society. Transformation of serious issue in form of laughter touches the heart of viewers and effect viewer directly. Dialogues are the beauty of swang. Without dialogues this folk drama has no life. Social, cultural and philosophical concern of society is also evoked by its dialogues only.

In the formative phases of swang there was no sources like mike, speakers, so artists used to speak loud to convey their talks but with the change of time and technology mike and speakers are used. But artist are habitual with their loud speech therefore feel sometimes uncontrollable and have to modify in their gestures and postures. But in rural areas where swang is to be performed and open space is used where no mike facility is used. Language of BundeliSwang is simple and easily understandable.

AharyaAbhinaya(acting) in Swang

We can discuss stage, light, decoration, costume in this form of acting. The stage of swang is simple street, corners, cardinals, high plinths on which swang is performed. There are no curtains and even the scenes are so spontaneously imaginative and produced at time without any curtain or scene artist floats in the sea of his imagination, fly in sky, wander in gardens. This kind of imagination can't even suppose to be done in classical theatre and this is the main reason that swang is more popular in local folk rather than classical theatre. For swang there is nothing to do, it can be performed any where anytime in any circumstance. In rural areas wrestling is played in open space and viewers also gather around the players. Likewise, swang also performed in open space and viewers take their places around them. No separate arrangement for sitting is done or made for viewers. Swang is the formative form of street matter in which people gather around magicians and charmers and in that round circle performance is done.

Firelight stick is used for lighting purpose, laltin and gas is used later on. Now a days helogen lights of 200 watts are used to show light in Swang. Earthen lamps are used earlier.

There is also a traditional India in which mustard oil is used. In Rai dance these lamps are lit whole night.

Costumes are rural, simple includes dhoti, kurta, scarf, pant cap, shirt, lower etc., for example to perform an English gentleman there need a hat, tie, spectacles, pant, shoes but a swangi made hat with leaves of sagon. Tie is made by a torn rag of sari, ornaments are also made with flower buds, flowers etc. If there are no rice small pabbles of white color are used. Principle of no profit or loss is followed. Women character is also performed by male performers. Female ornaments are also worn by male performers. Bun or a long tail is also made. To make breasts artist uses cotton, guavas, pomegranates, etc. Artist also wears ankle bells. He also use wrapped clothes for performing beating scenes tied around that part of body. Moreover, bulky tummy is made by the pillow tied around the waist. Inswang of Jugia and Baba swang women usually wear male costumes and also behave like them. Shades, watches, etc. are also worn by the female performers.

For make-up no attention and special treatment is given, only the sources available at that time are used. Coal, chalk, ash, ink, water are used which are very cheap and easily available in houses. As swang's primary concern is to produce laughter or satire so the costume is worn accordingly as on seeing the costumes viewer starts to laugh. Torn and untidy clothes are also used. In every swang's performance performer performs very differently so as he changes his costumes. It is necessary to wear costume in swang. For example if artist perform Radha Krishna swang he uses yellow dhoti, peacock feather and flute. In kandraswang silhouetted jama and turban is used. Yellow and white sandal is used for make up in Radha Krishna Swang.

In sadhu kaswang, matted hair are shown with the hangings of sail tree. Moustaches are made from grass or husk which is coloured. Some times swangi use weaver bird nest.

In conclusion it is said that Bundelishwang is a folk drama form which is associated with common and rural folk. This folk drama form also influenced with cinema. Symbols and hidden elements are used to create influential and magical impact on viewer. But the major problem in this context is that this art form is going to almost vanish. It is the major and serious issue as how to give opportunities to the artists of swangs so that with the conservation of this art it should be advertize and should be famous everywhere.

References

- Panday, Dr. A K, BundelkhandkiLokParampra, state museum, Jhansi
Tiwari, Dr. Balhadra, Rai and Swang, MadhayaPardeshJansamparkPrakashan
Tiwari, Kamal, ChaumasaPatrika, M P Adivasi Lok Kala Parishad Bhopal
Aggarwal, Ramnarayana, SangeetekLokNatayaParampara, Rajpal and Sons, New Delhi

Artistic Narration Dec. 2014, Vol. VI

<http://anubooks.com/product/artistic-narration>
(p) ISSN: 0976-7444, (e) ISSN: 2395-7247

Vatsyana, KapilaParamparikBhartiyaRangmanch, National Book Trust, New Delhi

Shastri Raja Ram, Haryana KaLokSahitya, LokSampark Haryana

Sharma, Dr. Puranchand, Pt. LakhmichandGranthawali, Haryana SahityaAkadamy

Gupta, Prof. Narmada Prasad, BundeliSanskritiaurSahitya, M P Adivasi Lok Kala Parishad.
Bhopal