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Loko Utsab Of Lalpur Chhedipara: A Rural Tradition

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Abstract: Lalpur Chhedipara is a small village located in Dhuliyān town of Murshidabad district, West Bengal. This paper attempts to explore the cultural significance of Loko Utsab in this village. The study focuses on the active participation of villagers in preserving this tradition through performances. Gambhira is one type of Loko Utsab. It also highlights Gambhira's role as a medium of social awareness and cultural identity.

Keywords: Lalpur Chhedipara, Village, Tradition, Gambhira, Folk

Introduction

Murshidabad is a historic district in West Bengal with a rich cultural heritage. It played an important role during the Mughal and British periods and was once ruled by Siraj-ud-Daulah. One of the most famous places is Hazarduari Palace, which means "Palace of a Thousand Doors." Dhuliyān is a busy town with markets, schools, and diverse communities. Located near the Bhagirathi River, it supports daily life. Lalpur Chhedipara is a small village representing local tradition and culture. This paper will discuss the Loko Utsab of Lalpur Chhedipara.

India is a land of rich culture and tradition. Culture constitutes the mode of life of a person. It is the result of a relationship between people and society that speaks out through its refinement. Culture gives expression to the social thoughts, opinions, and values of human beings. The word "Folk" comes from the popular word "Lok." The word "Lok" reflects the intense lifestyle of the village people, and "Loko Utsab" is a kind of festival by which they show their happiness by gathering together. Gambhira is one type of Loko Utsab. "Gambhira" by far is the most popular festival in Malda. It is celebrated that Gambhira keeps changing from time to time, coming after the varied lives of everyday people. Gambhira's songs can be located between the modern and traditional styles of writing. Later, Muslims became the keepers of these songs and made many modifications in their course, as it was an integral piece of their social life and their culture of the fourth dimension. Gambhira is one kind of folk song. Folk songs are traditionally sung by the common people of a region and form part of their culture. We cannot find the original meaning of "Gambhira." Many people define the meaning of Gambhira in different ways. Some people think Gambir is the name of Lord Shiva; it comes from Gambhira. But Gambhira is not a festival of Shiva. There is no Purana that mentions Shiva's name as Gambhir. Gambhira is a festival of Surya. Gambhira is popular in different places in the Malda district, like Gajol and Chanchal. Other than these places, Gambhira also gets performed in North and South Dinajpur and partially in Murshidabad. Gambhira's main focuses are not mythological. The theatrical form is secular, as the invocation of Shiva in the Bandana phase has changed into Nana. Interestingly, Shiva used to represent a human who is elder to all and not an idol to be worshipped. In this theatrical, Shiva used to be one of the only performers who used to dress up as Shiva. Shiva listens to everyone's suffering, and the entire invocation episode is like a courtroom trial. Gambhira mainly addresses social incidents, political menace, administrative nuisance, and religious affairs as the subject of the theater. Gambhira mainly satires the power hegemony, social indiscipline, etc., which are regular injustices that rural people face.

Loko Utsab of Lalpur Chhedipara

At the end of the Bengali year, during the second week of April, the month of Chaitra begins, and the Loko Utsab starts. Chaitra is the final month of the Bengali calendar; it starts four days before the end of the month of Chaitra and continues till the end of Chaitra. It is for four days; it's not the same way that happens in every place. Ghat Bhara takes place before Chhoto Tamasa.



Ghat Bhara Day of Loko Utsab at Lalpur Chhedipara

There is the main Sannyasi who goes to the river and returns filled with Ghat's water, using clay pots as Ghat. After filling it up with water, it is kept in the Shiva temple. Children participate in Ghat Bhara. Nothing enjoyable happens on Ghat Bhara day, but on its beginning day, everyone in the village, from children to adults, feels excited. There are some places where it ends with Charak Puja. However, here I will focus on the village of Lalpur Chhedipara. In this village, it ends with Mashan, which happens after the day of Neel Puja.

Chhoto Tamasa is the second day of Ghat Bhara, called Chhoto Tamasa. "Tamasa" means an event, song, or enjoyable moment. Child or old, female or male, almost every person in the village enjoys this; even Hindus and Muslims together enjoy seeing it. Those who participate in this Loko Utsab are called Bhaktas. In this Chhoto Tamasa, Bhaktas go to the jungle for cutting flowers, fruit, etc.; this is called Pholas Chara. The Bhaktas follow the main Bhakta, who is called the Sannyasi. Before going to cut the fruits, a dhuti is spread in front of the Shiva temple. Knives and chisels are placed on the dhuti, and each person sits in front of their weapons, which they will use to cut fruits and flowers. Some people also use sticks as weapons. Standing between the temple and the Bhaktas, the main Bhakta, Sannyasi, sings songs with dhak and kashi. After returning from cutting the fruits, the flower Bhaktas were rolling them in front of the temple; the main Bhakta sings songs to awaken them, and they wake up from rolling. This ritual of rolling Bhaktas is called Mashan.



Boro Tamasa Day of Loko Utsab at Lalpur Chhedipara

Boro Tamasa happens after the day of Chhoto Tamasa. It is similar to Chhoto Tamasa, but in Boro Tamasa, everyone from children to adults participates on this day. In Chhoto Tamasa, mainly children participate. On this day of Boro Tamasa, the main Bhakta, some children, and adults who participate go to the jungle to cut and bring a banana tree for Neel Puja. The main Bhakta has to cut the banana tree in Boro Tamasa before the day of Neel Puja, and participating people mean the flowers of the main Bhakta stay with the main Bhakta at the time of cutting the banana tree. On this day, many people come from different villages and dance.



Neel Puja Day of Loko Utsab at Lalpur Chhedipara



Durga Nach: Dance with a Durga Mask



Kali Nach: Dance with a Kali Mask

Neel Puja, after the day of Boro Tamasa. Mask dances happen on this day. Kali Nach means "Dance with a Kali Mask," and Durga Nach means "Dance with a Durga Mask." Many people come from different villages to dance on this day. Villagers enjoy this day a lot.



Mashan

After the day of Neel Puja, the last day of Loko Utsab, in the afternoon we see Mashan. It is not only on this day that we see Mashan. Mashan happens on both Chhoto Tamasa Day and Boro Tamasa, children participate in Chhoto Tamasa, while adults participate in Boro Tamasa Day. It is a day when everyone, both children and adults, takes part in it in front of the temple. Those who participate in this Mashan Day, the last day of Loko Utsab, go from village to village with the main bhakta and dances. It happens in the open air. The audience means villagers take their seats around that area. The setting gets established in front of the Shiva Temple.



Girl Gambhira Singers Performing at Malda College

It was an amazing performance, brilliantly executed by the artists. This time, the performers introduced new instruments, such as the harmonium. In the past, women did not participate in Gambhira. In this performance, the character of Shiva played the role of Nana, while the girls presented social and political issues to Nana, to which Nana responded with solutions.

Conclusion

What I have said above about Loko Utsab of Lalpur Chhedipara is that it is a traditional form considered religious. It is associated with the village of Lalpur Chhedipara, which I have observed with my own eyes since my childhood. There are two people, Nitai Mandal and Babulal Mandal, who arrange the Loko Utsab in this village. Though different people organize it in different years, it is mostly arranged by Babulal Mandal. The village name of Lalpur Chhedipara comes from the name of this village, Maral, Chhedimaral. I also highlighted Gambhira, which I have seen with my own eyes, where social and political issues are presented to Nana through song performances. During the Indian Independence movement, freedom fighters used Gambhira to express patriotic feelings. They also gave importance to Gambhira for patriotism among people. These days, the arrangement has changed. People can get the greatest gain from Gambhira in education. Gambhira is a medium through which we can easily teach common people. There are a large number of uneducated people in the country for whom the folk drama role played by Gambhira is reverently remembered. Instrumental players are arranged behind the stage; girls participate in Gambhira, which they can't mostly do. Social issues arise through Gambhira.

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