



Inclusive Dimensions of Social Capital in Folk Dance of Odisha

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Abstract: The aim of the paper is to present a significant component of social capital on Odisha' one of the folk dances which is named as "Pala". The concept of Pala is associated with belief, tradition and culture of the people on religious activities and mythological thematic expressions performed by a group of persons. The objective of this paper is to present the features of social capital which facilitate the 'Pala Culture' in establishing a strong network and civic associations. The reflection of social capital is higher in the Pala Community or Pala group. Social capital is the density of voluntary associational life among groups and individuals based on trust accepted norms and reciprocal networks for the attainment of a common good not only in political but also in a social sense. As such, social capital is the bonding relations among the peoples, groups, family members and community members. The successful performance of Pala as folk dance is possible with the good coordination and companion and compromise among the artist or performers. However, the Pala in Odisha has promoted and preserved the language, literature and culture of the society.

Keywords: Social Capital, Folk Dance, Pala, Culture, Network, Bonding

Introduction

Odisha is a state situated in the eastern part of India. It is bounded by Bay of Bengal, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. It has rich culture and strong religious faith upon God. The people of Odisha, by tradition, have been accepting the Odishan folk culture and folk dance. Folk dance in general and Pala in particular of our society is a reflection of group activity. The members of Pala group cooperate each other and they establish network of social relations. Pala is the combination of folk dance and folk songs which are mainly based on Odia literature

and culture of Odisha. This dance represents the social harmony in Hindu and Muslims. In this dance people worship the God “Satya Peera”. ‘Satya’ represents the Hindu God ‘Satyanarayana’ while ‘Peera’ represents the Muslim God ‘Peer’, in this way Pala dance represents unity of both community.

The objective of this paper is to present the components of social capital. These components facilitate the Pala culture in establishing a strong network and civic associations. The reflection of social capital is higher in the Pala Community or Pala group. Before correlating it is to be understand the conceptual framework of social capital and Pala in Odisha Culture.

Conceptual Framework

(i) Social Capital

The evolution of cooperation and trust among citizens signifies the establishments of civil networks or human coordination. Historical evidences suggest that the capacity for creating the requisite institutional structures and organizational means of cooperation varies considerably among different social set ups, whereas some groups have developed a substantial potential for such endeavours, a property which is referred to as social capital. (Hadenius & Ugglä, 1996). Society symbolizes the network of social relationships when a number of individuals live together in society, they establish cultural, economic, political, relations among themselves. Civil associations provide the networks of civic engagement within which reciprocity is learned and enforced, trust is generated, and communication and patterns of collective action are facilitated. The chief virtue of civil associations lies in their capacity to socialize participants into the norms of generalized reciprocity and trust that are essential components of the ‘social capital’ needed for effective cooperation (Putnam, 1993).

Social capital is created by individuals forming social networks, to produce goods and services, non-monetary as well as monetary (Rose, 1996). Social capital facilitates coordinated action among individuals. It is a means of searching for the possible solutions of the collective action problems. Social capital refers to the features of social life including inter-personal trust, networks, and shared norms that enable people to act together more effectively to pursue common objectives (Blomkvist, 1996), (Mishra, 1996). Putnam defines social capital in terms of its ability to improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action (Putnam, 1993).

Civil society combines in itself social capital, civic engagements and voluntary associations which aim at common benefits (Rose, 1996). Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having characteristic features in common. First, they all consist of some aspect of social structure; and second; they facilitate certain actions of individuals. Unlike other forms of capital, social capital is manifested in the structure of relations among persons. Social capital is the set of resources that is here in the family relations and in community social organizations (Coleman, 1990). Social capital is the density of voluntary associational life among groups and individuals based on trust accepted norms and reciprocal networks for the attainment of a common good not only in political but also in a social sense (Bhattacharya, 1996). Social capital is a social energy, acting as connecting bonds and rooted in social mores. It is related to civic humanism or civic virtue which ultimately contributes to the common wealth (Satapathy, 1996).

(ii) Pala in Odisha

Various folk dances like 'Chaiti Ghoda Dance', 'Sabara Sabaruni Dance', 'Patara Saura Dance', 'Chhau Dance', 'Sakhi Dance', 'Jhamu fair', 'Dhanu fair', 'Pala', 'Daskathia', 'Kela Keluni Dance' and 'Farce' etc. had greatly influenced the socio-cultural life of art-loving Utkal. Among these, Pala occupies the pivotal position. It is quite distinctive along the ceaseless flow of Odisha's culture. It has notion of social life with its quality of amusement, poetic excellence and religious upliftment. It is very important as noted in Folklore of Odisha. "Pala is a popular cultural institution responsible for the popularization of ancient Odia literature" (Panda, 1998). Pala has been originated from the mixed worship of the Hindu Deity - Satyanarayan" and the Muslim Deity - "Peera". As mentioned by the noted historian Krupasindhu Mishra in his book 'The History of Utkal', the Satyanarayan Puja started in Utkal in the year 1716 during the reign of the Muslim ruler Sujauddin. In the book "Gradual Progress of Oriya literature" by Pt. Nilakantha Das, Pala originated during the ruler of Hussain Saha of Bengal. Its language was neither Bengali nor Oriya but a unique blending of the both (Das, 2011). Basically, Pala divided into two categories. The Baithaki Pala (sitting performance), which is performed in sitting posture and has less popularity in Odisha. While the second type of Pala, the Thia Pala (Standing performance) is more popular than that of the Baithaki Pala. This type of Pala performed in standing posture only. This dance totally related to Odisha culture and traditions. In old days

people organize these functions in marriages, birthday functions and other festivals in their locality.

Social Capital in Pala Culture

Social capital, as embodied in networks of civic engagements support the performance of the polity and the economy. ; strong society- strong economy and strong society-strong state (Foley & Edward, 1999). The components of social capital includes, culture, norms, interpersonal relations, trust, associational life, building harmony etc. These components are reflected in pala, the traditional folk dance in Odisha.

(i) Culture

Pala possesses two merits - both entertainment and religious upliftment. It has achieved immense popularity for bringing progress to Odisha in fields like religion, culture, literature and social values. It is needless to say that Pala, which has so widely influenced the social life of Utkal, is a spiritual and cultural awakening. Before the arrival of printing press in Odisha, it used to help in social, cultural, literary and religious progress. Both the literate and the illiterate were able to achieve the four universal attainments - religion, wealth, desire and salvation (Dharma, Artha, Kama and Mokshya) through Pala. The common man was able to get the spiritual and literary pleasure from Pala easily even without reading the great Hindu epics and mythologies.

(ii) Norms

Pala is a spiritual institution related to Shree Shree Satyanarayan Puja. From the time immemorial of the worship of the Lord Shree Shree Satyanarayan is being observed in this holy land of Utkal. By the study of “Skanda Purana”, it is found that the merits of Satyanarayan Puja are vividly presented here. As depicted in the mythologies, Lord Satyanarayan Himself told Narada’ about this worship and ‘Narada’ described it before the saints living in the forest of Naimisa. Pala adopts the principles to deliberate and describe the mythological aspects, particular to Ramayan and Mahabharat.

(iii) Interpersonal relations

The members of Pala group have good relations and cooperation while performing Pala. The group consist of 5 to 6 members. The leader of the group, who is dressed

in very differently and wearing many ornaments, very big ear rings and necklaces is called “Mukhia or Mukhya Gayak”. He always sings the song by waving the ‘Chamar’(whisk) and a pen or small stick. ‘Sri Palia’ the main person who repeats the stanzas of Mukhya Gayak. He works as a main supporter of the leader of the Pala Group. The person who plays the ‘Mrudanga’ (One type of drum which is played without using sticks, only by using fingers) is called ‘Bayak’. Remain members of the group are called ‘Palia’ means ‘chorus’ because they repeat the songs and different stanzas with the Mukhya Gayak and Sri Palia. In a Pala group, Mukhya Gayak won’t play any musical instrument, Bayak plays a Murdangam and all others play ‘Jhanja’(Cymbals). The Mukhya Gayak sings songs and explains their meaning which is mainly related to Ramayan or Mahabharat. The whole team dances on different rhythmic steps as per their songs and assists each other. Thus, the good combination among these members promotes inter personal relations.

(iv) Associations

A numerous Pala-singers of this holy land have enriched the society and culture of Utkal through their sacred work of singing Pala. Among them some noted are - Gayak Ratna Harinath, Gayak Samrat Baishnab Charan Pradhan, Gayak Siromani Niranjana Kar, Gayak Sekhar Jagannath Behera, Paramananda Saran, Nari Nath, Ranka Das, Kshetrabasi Das, Niranjana Panda, Agadhu Bhanja, Mani Nath, Duryodhan Panda, Binod Barik, Keshab Kar, Banamali Rath, Krupasindhu Sarangi, Bhabagrahi Sarangi, Damodar Sarangi, Bishwanath Pattajoshi, Markandeswar Bahinipati, Arjuna Das, Dhruba Charan Sarangi, Anirudha Panigrahi, Dharmananda Dixit, Padan Nath, Narayan Mohanty, Dhaneswar Satapathy, Suryamani Behera, Sridhar Debata, Chandrasekhar Dakhinary, Kulamani Satapathy, Krushna Chandra Sahu, Laxmidhar Rout, Kashinath Das, Rajanikanta Prusty, Gayak Sudhakar Nanda Das, Gayak Tilaka Bipra Charan Das etc. They have widened the sphere of Pala in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa through their magical chantings and uplifted the socio-cultural values of Utkal. They have their association called as ‘Pala Association’. Each pala group becomes a member of the association. The association comprises president, vice-president, secretary and members. The association organizes a common meeting in each year.

(v) Trust

At the starting of Pala, all members expect the Mukhya Gayak, enter on the stage and plays very loud music by beating drum and cymbals. After few minutes the

Mukhya Gayak moves to the stage. They all together perform 'Puja' (Prayer) to the God Satyapeer. Then, they slowly enter into the main topic of the show, which is mainly extracted from Hindu mythologies such as Ramayan, Mahabharat or any others. In the show the Mukhya Galyak plays the leading role and sings songs and explains their meaning by very simple manner, by which all the audiences can able to understand them easily. They sing highly innovative songs which is full of knowledge and moral values. The members not only sing and support the Mukhya Gayak but also explain different topics with acting. Their program not only related to mythology but also they perform some good quality jokes and comedy shows in the program. Such narration and sharing of thoughts make people trust and belief.

(vi) Building Harmony

It is also observed from historical point of view that, during the reign of the Muslim Rulers, the noble saints of high position both of the Hindu and the Muslim religions tried to bring good harmony between the two religions. Emperor Akbar preached the virtues of "Din-I-Ilahi". Saint Kabir, even being a devout Muslim, also preached singularity and oneness of both the Hindu and the Muslim Gods. In later period, the Hindu Preacher Shree Chaitanya accepted many Muslim disciples and vouchsafed the great and universal qualities of Sanatan or Hindu Religion. Saint Nanak brought a religious harmony by identifying both 'Ram and Rahim' as one. This religious harmony and equilibrium and the revelation of the socio-cultural blending are vividly marked in the folk dance-Pala. So Pala culture build harmony among the community.

Conclusion

Pala carries message of Odisha culture. It is the safeguard of literature. It entertains human mind with religious thought and conscience as well as establishing communal harmony. No doubt everybody admits the important role of Pala in the development of Odisha literature, culture, society and religion. Since long past, the Pala singers had tried to keep this art alive by devoting much labour and sacrifice. They brought sensation in human heart exposing them to religion, mythologies, literature and idealism. But, with the flow of time this art is at the verge of extinction. It has lost its popularity for the widespread of electronic media and peoples' attraction towards western way of living. In spite that, the valuable discourses of truth, religion, ethics, and idealism in Pala have enriched our social life. In present times, people are

organizing Pala during the celebration of 21st day of child birth, annual birth day celebration, 8th day of institutionalizing marriage in Hindu community. Also, Civil Society Organizations, Are Community Organizations, Village Association are organizing Papa in an annual plan basis at the religious place of the locality. Now, widespread of Pala is popularized through the telecast by Television, Radio and Social media. It has impacted the in the society in revisiting the issue of mythological fact.

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