



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.03.61>

THE CURRENT STATUS OF HARIKATHA

Ajita Kumar Muni

Utkal University of Culture

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Abstract

It was a popular Folk Theatre form of Odisha. Once upon a time Harikatha had a distinct position among all the Bhana and Vithi type of Folk Theatre forms of Odisha. The contents of Haribansha Purana written by Achutananda Das were performed in this theatre form. It was created by Guru Sri Tarini charan Patra from ancient Burma (Myanmar) during the first half of 20th century. Once upon a time it was playing vital role in the field of Odia Folk Theatre but it has already been extinct now from the cultural scenario of Odisha due to lack of performance, training and research.

Keywords: Folk Theatre, Traditional Folk Theatre, Bhana, Vithi, Galpasagar, Harikatha, Galpasagar and Natyasastra.

Introduction

Harikatha was a popular Folk Theatre form of Odisha. It was performed in Ganjam district of Odisha. Once upon a time Harikatha had a distinct position among all the Bhana and Vithi type of theatre forms of Odisha. In the field Folk Theatre and Traditional Folk Theatre Ganjam was more popular among the districts of south Odisha. Many forms of Folk theatre and Traditional Folk Theatre were originated from the cultural background of Ganjam like Danda Nata, Oshakothi, Prahllad Natka, Bharat Leela, Radhaprema Leela, Dasakathia, Galpasagar and many others. It was also created and developed from the cultural flow of Odia Folk Theatre and Traditional Folk Theatre.

Area of the study

Against this backdrop of the present study has been conducted taking to Harikatha as its population. So, some villages of prevalent districts of this theatre form have been chosen as its area of the study. A list is given bellow.

SL NO	Name of the Form	Villages under the area of the study	Prevalent District
1	Harikatha	Kabisuryanagar Kabisuryanagar Ganjam, Odisha	Ganjam
2	Harikatha	Golamundula Kabisuryanagar Ganjam, Odisha	Ganjam
3	Harikatha	Pittala Sheragada Ganjam, Odisha	Ganjam

Main objective

The main objective of the current study is to prepare a well-researched, authentic document on bellow mentioned points.

1. Origin and development Of Harikatha
2. Contents of Harikatha
3. Style of performance
4. Performance space
5. Costume, Make- up and Properties
6. Musical aspects of Harikatha
7. List of Gurus of Harikatha
8. Concluding remarks of Harikatha

Method of collecting Data

The main method which has been used in this work is field study. Other than this, qualitative method also has been used to collect data. Personal interviews of Gurus, performers and experts have been done to make the data authentic. Along with the



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.03.61>

secondary data whatever available are used for supplementing the documentation. Mainly Non probability sampling has been used in this work. Apart from these following methods has been implemented during the time of data collection.

- 1) Observation Method
- 2) Opinionative Method
- 3) Personal interview Method.
- 4) Telephonic interview Method
- 5) Study of previous research work.

Denomination of Harikatha

1. The word Harikatha was created from the combination of two words. They were Hari and Katha. The word **Hari** was used as the name of Lord Vishnu and the word **Katha** was used as the synonym of Story. The overall meaning of Harikatha was “The stories of Lord Vishnu”. So, it was named as Harikatha. *43

2. The contents of Haribansha Purana written by Achutananda Das were performed in this theatre form. And the main motto of this performance was to create devotion in the mind of viewers towards Lord Hari. So, it was named as Harikatha.

Origin and development Of Harikatha

Harikatha was a popular form of Folk Theatre. It was prevalent in Ganjam district of Odisha. But it had not been originated from Ganjam. It was originated from ancient Burma (Myanmar) during the first half of 20th century. Many migrant Odia laborers were staying in Burma to earn their livelihood. At that time Sri Tarini Charan Patra, the great expert of Odishi Music, planned to create a distinct form of Folk theatre for the amusement of Odia laborers. So, he collected the contents from the conversation between sage Suka and King Parikhita of Haribansha Purana, used the Karnataki style of singing and followed to the Bhana style dramatic presentation and created the Folk Theatre Form Harikatha. He was influenced by Bora Katha, a Folk Theatre, of Andhra Pradesh to create Harikatha. After some year he came back to Pittala, Ganjam from Burma (Myanmar). Because it was his parental village and he was born on 03 June 1901 from Gaura Patra and Jogi Amma at Pittala, Ganjam, Odisha. But he did not put his interest to lead his life by any other profession. He went out from Pittala to Boirani (Kabisurya Nagar) and founded Gandhiji Sangeeta Kala Mandir taking the support from Ramachandra Dora of Gudiali. Then he started to teach music and theatre to his students. At that time Guru Ladu Kishore Pani learned Harikatha from Guru Tarini Charan Patra as his disciple in 1954. After the completion of his training, he gave his first performance “Sita Banabasha” as the request of his friends at Boirani Sashana in 1954 and after that he performed Harikatha touring from village to village. He had promoted to it as one act play and achieved much popularity through this theatre form. He was credited to write many plays like Sita Banabasha, Amar Bilasha, Gaya Pashana, Babrubahana, Bhagyachakra, Karmakhetra, Sudama, Bhktara Bhagaban, Harischandra, Satyaban Sabitri, Papara Prayaschita, Rupakumari, Basanta Manjari, Sati Asati and others. Gradually it became very popular in Ganjam and its neighbouring districts. It was accepted officially as a form of theatre during the tenure of Dhiren Das as the chairman of OSNA. It achieved state level recognition through various Folk Theatre festivals.

Many changes had been brought to Harikatha by the efforts of Guru Ladu Kishore Pani during 1954 and after that.

1. Tradition of using literary elements of our ancient and middle era Odia literature was started. Pieces of literature from the writings of Sarala Das, Balaram Das, Jagannath Das, Achyutananda Das, Dinakrushna Das, Upendra Bhanja, Abhimanyu Samant Sinhara, Baladev Ratha were added with the main content Harikatha to attract the heart of elites.
2. It was shaped in a complete dramatic structure with a perfect starting, middle and ending.
3. Performance of Chanda, Champu, Chaupadi, Chautisha, Bhajana, Janana, the ancient ragas of Odishi Music and the Slokas from Sanskrit literature was incorporated to attract its spectators and proof his intellect.
4. Its melody and harmony could be developed through the use of Harmonium and Mrudanga.



(The Entrance of Gandhiji Sangeet Kalakendra, here Guru Tarini Charan Patra was teaching Odissi music and Harikatha to his disciples.)



The stage of Gandhiji Sangeet Kalakendra, Kabisurya Nagar, Ganjam. Founded by Guru Tarini Charan Patra. It was used for the purpose of training and performance.



(This image depicted the current status of Gandhiji Sangeet Kalakendra)



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.03.61>

Contents of Harikatha

At first the stories of Odia Haribansha Purana written by Achyutananda Das were presented as the contents of Harikatha by Guru Tarini Charan Patra. Importance was given to the conversations between sage Shuka and King Parikhita described Haribansha Purana in the performance of Harikatha. Then the contents of Bhagabata written by Bhaktakabi Jagannath Das, The Ramayana of Balam Das, The Mahabharata of Sarala Das, poetry of Kabi Samrat upendra Bhanja, Bhaktakabi Dinakrushna Das, Bidagdha Kabi Abhimanyu Samantasinghara and Kabi Surya Baladev Ratha were introduced as its contents by Guru Ladu Kishore Pani.

Style of performance and duration

It was being performed by a single actor accompanied by two musicians. At first the performer of Harikatha was paying his heart felt devotion to his adorable god Lord Narayan, Lord Ganesh the deity of success, Goddess Saraswati the deity of art and literature, his Guru and the audiences through the performance of Nandigana seeking their blessings for the success of his theatrical performance.

“Narayanam Namaskrutya Naram Chaiva Narottamam

Devim Saraswati Vyasam Tato Jayatmudirayet “!!

(The supreme Godhead: Narayana, The best humans: Nara, The Goddess of learning: Saraswati, and the great author: Vyasa. After respecting them our words and speech can be successful.)

“Gurubramha Gururbishnu Gururdeva Maheswara

Guruh Sakhyat Parambrahma Tasmei Sri Gurave Namaha”!!

(Guru (The Teacher) is Bramha (The force of creation), Guru is Vishnu (The force of preservation), Guru is Maheswar (The force of destruction and transformation), Guru is the embodiment of Param Brahma, The ultimate Godhead. We bow down to that Guru)

Then the content of performance was chosen as per the desire of audiences. Then he was performing the selected content dramatically with the skill of singing, dancing, acting and narrating. All the four kinds of acting (Angika, Vachika, Satwika and Aharya) had to be used by its performer in this form of theatre. The performer of Harikatha was using various voices as per the differences of dramatic Characters to make alive his theatrical presentation. Participation of audiences in the performance of Harikatha was also allowed occasionally as per the need of performance. At last Bharatbakya was presented at the ending of performance praying for the happiness and prosperity of audiences as well as society and it was concluded.

The duration of Harikatha performance was three hours only. Its performance was started at 9 p. m and ended and continued till midnight.



(This is the graphic image of Harikatha. It depicts the style of performance and performance space of Harikatha.)

Performance space

It was performed on the middle of village road, temple courtyard or in front of the house of village head man. The performance space was covered with a canopy supported by four bamboos in its four corners and lighted with a electric flood light. At

first it was performed in the light of traditional oil lamps. Mostly they were not using any microphones for the purpose of sound. Any kind of permanent decorated stage was not used for the performance of Harikatha.

Costume, Make- up and Properties

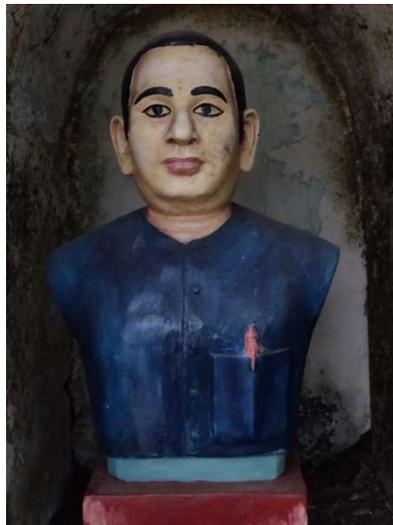
The performer of was using a single-coloured Kurta and dhoti surrounding an Uttariya on his neck as his costume. He was also wearing some malas made from Tulashi or Rudrakhya in his neck like the Pala Performers. Sometimes a muffler was used by him to perform various characters like king, minister, Fighter, Horse rider, newly married bride, queen etc. Otherwise, no additional costumes were used in this form of theatre. Very simple make-up like ministers, priests or poets of middle era was used in this theatre form. Any kind of stylized make up was not used at all. Very few hand properties were used by its performer during the performance like Sword, throne, Snake, Mace, Garland, pot, flute etc. Heavy use of hand properties was not used here.

Musical aspects of Harikatha

Harikatha was performed by the singing, dancing, narrating and acting of its performer. The content of this theatre was sung using various styles traditional Odishi music. Various Chanda, Champu, Chaupadi, Bhajan and Janana were used to present its content. Mainly a Mrudanga, Harmonium and Jhanja were used for its musical accompaniment. Heavy use of musical instruments was not seen in the performance of Harikatha. Only Ghoongura was used in the feet of performer for its rhythmic accompaniment.

List of Gurus of Harikatha

1. Tarini Charan Patra
Pittala, Sheragada, Ganjam
2. Ladukishore Pani
Golamundula, Kabisuryanagar, Ganjam
3. Shyamasundar Basantia
Sunathara (Near Taratarini), Purushottampur, Ganjam.



Late Guru Tarini Charan Patra
Kabisurya Nagar
Kabisuryanagar
Ganjam



Guru Ladu Kishore Pani
Golamundula
Kabisurya Nagar
Ganjam

Concluding remarks of Harikatha

- 1) The performance tradition of Harikatha was going to be dead during the starting of twenty first century. Because among all the above-mentioned performers Guru Ladu Kishore Pani had stopped his performance since last twenty years. Guru Shyam Sundar Basantia, Sunathar, Purushottam Pur, Ganjam was the only one performer of this theatre form of 21st century. He was not performing Harikatha regularly as his own profession.



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.03.61>

- 2) Influence of modernity could not be able to touch the content and style of this theatre form. It was performed in its indigenous style with the high moral of contents.
- 3) Because of poverty the successors of Guru Ladu Kishore Pani could not understand to both of its social and spiritual value and did not show their interest to learn the performance skill of Harikatha.
- 4) Harikatha could not compete with other forms of Folk Theatre of Ganjam as well Odisha and failed to achieve commercial success due to simplicity in its style of performance. So, it could not be spread like Pala, Bharata Leela.
- 5) Due to lack of its training, Performance and research Harikatha could not be able to achieve a highest level of popularity in our society.
- 6) Any financial assistance, support and award of both Government and private Organizations could not reach at the highly dedicated and learned performers of this theatre tradition.
- 7) They could not be promoted financially by various skims of both State and central Government.
- 8) No change was brought to its performance space, duration, costume and makeup till 2010. it had been performed under the open sky or under a canopy on the middle street.
- 9) No changes were occurred in the fields of its music. The contents of Harikatha were performed using various Chanda, Chaupadi, Bhajana, Janana of Odishi music with the accompaniment of Harmonium and Mrudanga
- 10) Some performers of this genre were also unable to satisfy their needs through this medium. They were also fighting to survive.
- 11) No initiative had been taken by any Government or private organizations to reform the dead groups of Harikatha.
- 12) Due to worldwide impact of COVID-19 the performance of both the Forms of Folk Theatre and Traditional Folk Theatre were banned as per the strict guidelines of both the Government State as well as Centre since March 25th 2000. The performance of Harikatha had been stopped.

Reference

1. Charchi Dr. Bayamanu, (2012), Ganjamara Lokanaty Parampara, Athena Books, Bhubaneswar - 2, Odisha
2. Das Dr. Hemant Kumar, (2011), Odia Loka Nataka, Grantha Mandir Binod Bihari, Cuttack - 2, Odisha
3. Das Hemant kumar, (1976), Odia Natakara Bikash Dhara, Sathi Mahal, Cuttack.
4. Muni Bharata, Translated by - Rangacharya adya, (2003), The Natyasastra, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, Rani Jhanshi Road, New Delhi, India
5. Panigrahi Dr Ramesh Prasad, (1998), Perspectives on Odishi Theatre, Orisha Sangeet Natak Akademi, Sanskruti Bhawan, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.