

Importance of Poetry in Garba and Bhavai of Gujrat

Dr. Ami Pandya

Assistant Professor, Department of Dance, Faculty of Performing Arts,
M.S. University of Baroda

Abstract

The dancing of folk and tribal people is spontaneous and true, but this does not mean that they dance anywhere, any way or any time. There is a method, a rhythm and a reason, even if not a consciously cultivated one. There are certain promptings, certain stimuli that inspire, provoke, urge or compel people to dance. And when they dance they evolve and sustain norms. Not from any written or documented instruction or direction, to be sure. But what the dancer have got from the past generations. All these things furnish the common language and grammar for the folk, tribal and ritual dances as they exist in the different cultural milieus of the country. [1] (Dancing by themselves by Mohan Khokar)

Key Words : Garba, bhavai purabia, kan gopi, kaali and brahman

Research Paper

Folk music and singing had its ever following stream in the folk-lore since age's past. [2] Where there is folk-life there has to be singing and accompaniment of instrument. Folk music and singing has its own rhythm, cadence, musical notations very peculiar and expressive. Brahmin folk-tale tellers, Charansas used to recite folk tales in chhand. However singing in folk-life is the natural outcome of their daily life, its living and its varieties of modes. "Mothers singing halardu, sisters singing lyrical songs to their younger brothers, cowherd singing Duha among hills, etc. Are the instances woven in the folk-lore". [3] A particular song may be sung in several ragas or dhal. Its mode of reciting may differ from region to region.

Folk music and songs of Gujarat contains short and simple sur, aaroh-avaroh and the taal, leheka, halak, jalak, etc. are in tune with the musical notes of songs of various types and kinds.

GARBA

Garba is a symbol of the Universe- Brahmand. It is the leading dance of Gujarat associated with the fertility cult. The name Garba is the Apabrahmsha form of the original Sanskrit name "Garbha dip", meaning a lamp in the womb. A medium sized terracotta clay pot having small holes all over contains the Dip (lamp) in its womb, i.e. Garbha-dip.

"For the nine nights of Navratri, an autumn festival, women comes out into the open with perforated earthen pots holding lighted lamps poised on their head". [4]

Lord Shiva's dance is known as Tandava, the masculine type and Mother Goddess Parvati's dance Lasya i.e. feminine. Parvatiji composed Garba dance for all devotional women. Usha the daughter of Mataji learnt this from the mother. It is known that Usha was married to Aniruddha the grandson of Lord Krishna, the samrat of Dwarika which is on the sea shore in the Saurashtra region, i.e. Gujarat. Thus Usha taught Garba to the women folks in the entire province.

When women folks take the Garba on their heads and move in the dance the light twinkles through the holes and look like stars. Garbas are played normally after twilight up to late night and twinkling Garbas are creating the feeling of Brahmand, during Navaratri. In Garba there is dance, Raas and poetry pertaining to various aspects of Gujarati Life.

The Garba is indeed a ceremony in which everyone can take part irrespective of caste or social position. The dances are accompanied by beating of the dholak and the vocal accompaniment of the women. The songs of the Garba are often of great antiquity and beauty and have handed down orally for countless generations. [5]

The poetries are as follows;

1. Prayers of mother goddess
2. Romantic- Social-Devotional
3. Family Problems& social injustice
4. Prejudices
5. Krishna, Radha & Gopis
6. Appreciation of Nature

Example:

1. Nichi Namine Namashkaar Karuchhu mara
Dungaravada Devi re.....
2. Shyam Rang Samipe Na Jaavu Maare Aaj Thaki
Shyam.....(Dayaram)
3. Sahyabaa hu re Taambaani Hele Panidaa Nahi re
Bharu.....
4. Hare Ray Banka Ranchhodray Banka.....
5. Jhulana Morli Vaagire Rajana Kunvar, Halone Jova
Jaayre Morli Vaagire Rajana Kunvar.....
6. Mehndi Te Vaavi Maandve.....
7. Ubha Rahoto KahunVatdi Biharilal, Tam mate Gadi
Mera Jatdi Biharilal.....(Dayaram)
8. **Bole chhe Zina Zina Mor Re Raja Tara Re**

BHAVAI

Bhavai is old form of Gujarati Theatre, performed in the village in temple grounds by professional communities of North Gujarat-the Taragalas, Bhojakas, etc. The word Bhavai is derived from Sanskrit word “Bhava” meaning expression of emotion.

Originally Bhavai was done by the three sons of Asait Thakar, a Brahmin poet and musician and was continued by their descendants. Asait Thakar, is said to have composed three hundred and sixty veshas(performances) of which about twenty Veshas survive in the repertoire of the performers today(incidents acted one after another). Bhavai is a performance that presents a series of events that are autonomous from one another. Each of these plays has its own plot. There are usually no structural connection between one play and the other, except that all of them are played , one after other, on the same playground during a night or for longer duration of time. The first nine days of Ashwin(Navratni) are usually the days of the performances. Janmashtami, Shivratri, Ekadashi of the

Hindu month are appropriately scared for Bhavai performances.[⁶]

The Veshas start with Ganesh, kaali(Bhamto), Juthan Miya, Kansara, Hajam, ZandaZulan, Advo, Purabio, Miya Bibi and many more.

Ultimately it came down to the faith of other communities either by fondness or by religious oath, Bhavai spread in other communities, to the extent of the so called Nagar Brahmins. And that to such a strong belief that highly educated and holding very high position in government services or even military or police department personnel also perform in Bhavai at least once a year. It is a matter of pride and satisfaction to put the chundadi (a feminine wear) over one’s head before Mataji.

The Kachhias, the Kansaras, the Kolis and the Vaghrees also have their Mandalis (groups) doing Bhavai. Now Bhavai is considered to have lots of shabish dialogues, etc. which is a discredit to this folk entertainment.

There is open criticism of various communities and casts, like unfaithfulness in married life, corruption, clean worships of some goddesses. It may be marked that Bhavai is fully dedicated to mother Goddess and is always performed in the courtyard (chacharchowk) of any Mother Goddess, and necessarily during the Navaratri celebration.

The dances with the songs are of very typical footsteps, very rhythmical. The musical instruments of the orchestra are Harmonium, cymbals (KansiJoda), Tabla and a very special instrument called **Bhungal**. This instrument is played intermittently and especially when the tempo goes very high. It is a very thin hollow and straight instrument slightly opened towards the front end. This is closely associated with only Bhavai and only some time is played with Bhajans. Costumes in Bhavai are of their associations with the casts they represent. Paghdi, Fentaas, Dhotis, Surval and Saadi, Blouse, etc.

The weapons are also common like sword, shield, stick, etc. Bow and arrows are totally absent. Heroic characters are having the Katari, bound in the waist belt. But Piston, Gun and any fire weapons are not there.

Some Veshas are based on physical exercises while some are courageous ones, like climbing a ladder having very sharp swords as steps without any footwear, erecting a pyramid with 7or 8 pots full of water over the head of a dancer, the dancer throwing skilfully a saucer with his

foot, that falls over the top pitcher and a cup thrown in the same way also falls in the saucer, the actor with having burning flames in both hands puts the flames in his mouth, etc. These actions are performed rhythmically.

Rhythm has a very important place in all Bhavai Veshas. Whenever a new character arrives in the Chacharchowk, he utters “*Aisa Re Thei Thei Ta Ta Thei, Bhalere Bhalere Bungadiya*”, “*Hey Jinni Jinni ude verai maatane re, hey Amba, Bahuchar Maatanere, Hey Jinni Jinni ude verai maatane re*, etc.

One more important matter to be taken into notice is that before anything of the Bhavai starts, every Bhavai Mandali must perform the Mujara i.e. invocation to the goddess concerned. Verai, Chandika, Amba, bahuchraji, Uma, Durga, etc. are the mother goddesses. The Bhavai as we have quoted earlier is performed in the CHACHAR CHOWK of the goddess.

The entire Mandali members, the actors, the musicians, the Bhungaliyas and the persons holding the oil torch (mostly Barbers in the old days) are included in the Mujara. They sing the prayer in praise of all Maatajis. The prayer “*Chosetha Jogani (Yoginis) maa tulajaa Bhavaani Mujara lejo maadi re! Chosetha (64) Joogani maa Tuljaa Bhavaani Mujara lejo Maadi re!*” It is believed that mother goddess keeps all of them fit and healthy during all the days of celebrations.

There are quite a few more interesting Veshas – Advo, Teja Modi & Zanda Zoolan. The three characters together make one Vesha. In the beginning the show passes in a little average tempo. Advo, a Baniya husband, and Teja his wife. Teja has something with Zanda who probably arrives here to take her with him, etc. But the most exciting part of this is the entry of Zanda. He comes from a new side and from a little more distance. Teja goes to honour and receive him. She goes up to half a distance and comes back dancing three times. Third time she returns with Zanda. The episode is made much more dramatic with fireworks and drum at times with Bhungal. Zanda when reaches the Rang bhumi holding one hand of Teja, Adva put his turban on his feet as if asking not to take Teja with him (Zanda). The last “chabola” – the statement by Zanda is “*Ham jayenge Makka aur tum jaaoge Kashi thei ta thei ta thei thei*”

Purabia no Vesh

In Purabia no Vesh, the character is professionally the lifter of the palanquin of the Gaekwads, and makes show that of a governor, a case of superiority born out of inferiority complex.

He is married to a beautiful woman who keeps relations, being alone at home when the husband is on duty away from his home town. The songs are as follows –

Sajan mein balakdi hoti re, Sajan mein balakdi hoti, balpan me te nakidho te ramti jamtithi. Paranyo maaro Mumbai thia aavyo re mare saaru paan sopaari bidu barfi nu laayo....Paranyo laave kopra ne bhaiyo laave gor, kopra khau to kunchha vade mane; garyo laagyo tamaro gor bhaiyaji, hun to tamari vaali Bhaiyaji.....Paranyo laave Dudhadaa ne Bhaiyo laave Bhaang ,Dudhadaa pivu to upakaa vare mane vaali laage tammaare Bhaang Bhaiyaji.....

Kan Gopi no Vesh

This Vesha is religiously romantic Vesha. Sri Krishna and Radha and some Gopis are acting in this Vesha (Khel). On the other side, Sri Krishna (Kan or Kanji in an affectionate way) also has a small herd of Gopas (the cow herds). One of the Gopas named Dhekhali of deformed body and face puts funny questions and humorous answers. He makes jokes of the Gopis also.

This group plays the Raas dance. The Raas means the chord and in this, there are even number of chords and are suspended in the centre of the circle of Raas players, at a little higher point, through a wooden disc.

Each player holds one chord in one hand and in another one there is a Dandiya. In the circle the males and females are in an alternate order. The dancers are moving in a clockwise and anti-clockwise manner and are creating a thicker chord held by the wooden disc. Then they again move in the opposite direction to dislocate the chords. During Raas, there is music and singing as well.

Kaali and Brahman No Vesh

To the earliest, Kali no Vesh – who comes to perform worship of Lord Ganesh, the first entry in some of the Bhavai mandalis it is one in Kali while some mandalis have separate Vesha of Bhaamato or Brahman. Dialogues are the same as when asked by the Rangacharya or Ranglo in Bhavai, in ordinary house hold costumes, an individual

who makes the Veshas run further. “Where were you, Maharaj?” The hero says, I had been to the Masjid (mosque) for performing Sandya and then I went to the Tulsikyara to perform the Namaj (the Muslim prayer). The Bhamta is so foolish and uneducated that he is unable to distinguish what prayer is done where according to what religion.

Kaba No Vesh

Another Vesha is of Kaba means a robber. He robs a Brahman – this is shown in a very skilful way. The Brahman wears a number of dhotis one over other so that each one can be snatched and the lower comes out. The last one remains on the body. In the end the Brahman fights with Kaba and Kaba dies. Then comes a group of the wives of Kaba. They sit around the body and sing a rebuking song “*Maarvo nohto ne mariyo ane maarya mohininaa baan, Kaba maaro kene maaryo?*”. This has the similarity with the popular story “Andher nagari ne Gandu Raja” in which the mother of the thieves goes to the king and lodges a complaint, saying “*Aavu ghar kevu chaniyu ke Raate khaatar Paadataa choor Dabaayaa chaar?*”....

DarjinoVesha

Khemalo Merai(the tailor) his wife and a nephew are the characters. The nephew lies in the folded feet of his aunt. The uncle Khemalo comes and the boy says that he fell from the bitter gaurd tree. Actually bitter gaurd grows as creepers and not on trees, but the uncle accepts and asks his wife to give him the Kodali to cut the tree. She corrects him – what would you do with the Kodali which is a digging instrument. I may give you an axe (Kuhadi). In this it brings out the foolishness and the private relations between the aunt and the nephew.

Dosa-Dosi noVesha

In a Dosa-Dosi’sVesha, the characters are going to Godavari on a pilgrimage. They sing a song “*Hare sangh chalyore Godavari*”. The male character speaks “*Hare mane Vali re Godavari*” where he means a woman named Godavari (dual meaning cyndrome)

There are few more Vesha’s of different professionals like Maniaro, Saraaniyo,Ramko-Ramki, Kajodo, Hijdaas and Ramdev. It is worth noting that even the Hijdaas- the Eunouchs have not escaped from the eyes of Bhavai.

Maniyaaro and Saraaniyo No Vesh

Maniyaaro is the bangle seller and Saraaniyo is the knife, scissor and sword sharpener. The Maniyaaro and the Saraaniyaro are skilled persons who run their business with the help of their mannerly speech and conversation with customers who are mainly women folks.

Ramko-Ramki No Vesh

Ramko-Ramki are the fake Sadhu and his wife. This sets bad examples to the society from their chit chat and talks. Their short costumes of just white cloth suggest that they are sadhus, which they are not. They also have red and white mark on the forehead.

Kajoda No Vesh

Kajodaa is an unsuitable married couple. At times quarrelling and at times the wife fully middle-aged takes her child husband on her waist holding him with a hand and trying to do partially amorous acts. This was actually happening in old days.

In the Vesh “Kajoda” that is young age husband, who is Thakor of a small state arrives singing a song, “*Aave sori ranga re....so...Ranga Thakor Mavadinaa re, aave maaro Idargadh no raaj, aave maaro raanijayo Rajput*”,

(fast tempo)- *Aave sori ranga re...*(according to Bhungad), *Aave sori ranga, re so ranga*(2-3 times) *Aisa Re Thei Thei Ta Ta Thei Thei.....*He asks Rangacharya-“*hey Ranglaa*”, Rangacharya-“*Hey Raja*” *Kajoda:- Aavi sabhaa maa ubhaa rahya,have paachad thi aavse hamnaa Tharaan*”.(Arrival of Thakraani) holding two “Kakadas” in both the hands. As they come closer, they stand in front of each other and holding hands and turning right and left.Song-“*Haan banaa, mera banaa, haanjo banaa re...*”(3-4 times)

Hijdaa No Vesh

Hijdaas are the EUNOUCHS. They stay in a group. Their stay is called AKHADA. They find out the newly born boy babies and approach the families asking for some 10 to 20 kgs of corn, sari and blouse-piece, and the cash, which is their right, the society has allowed. They take the child in their lap and even dance carefully. The songs they sing are addressed to mother Goddess, “*Baalakadaa maa Baalakadaa, Baalakadaa ne kaaje me maataa,*

mahadev pujiya re maa Baalakadaa- Maari re Ambaay maa pandhar,pandhar, pandhariya, Randeli ne chokraa aape maari re Ambaay maa". The Hijdaas claps are fairly loudly & with typical phonetic sound which makes them at once known. Women and children address them as Masiba, mother's sister. Some Hijdaas, not staying in the Akhada, make their earning by working as house and utensil cleaner. They fetch water from the well and so on.

Kansara No Vesh

In the Vesh of Kansara, they are metal vessel's dealers. They bring with them a dish, bowl and 2,3 vessels. They use a short stick as if they are weighing the vessels. They try to balance. Now some Fakirs land some money to these Kansaras and they sing, "*Haan re tori Haradu-Maradu se bhilavada*"(2,3 times). And then two of the fakirs hold the hands of Kansara's wife, who is sitting down. These two people sing-"Bhikhla...bhikhla...bh. ikhla" and kidnaps the lady and go away.[Fakirs are wearing check "lungis", long hair on the head and a strip is tied on the forehead, coloured kurta over with coloured jacket and tied on the waist some cloth. One or two wearing goggles also. Kansara wears Turban, Dhoti and Angarkhu.

Vaman-Madhi No Vesh

This Vesh is mainly spectacular. A construction with 3 small domes together with vey light weighted bamboo-chips and covered with coloured cloth. With a male head-paper-mash or wood is hanged in the middle of the base of set. A woman is sleeping over this with a right hand under her head, but she is bending from her waist inside the construction and legs are on the ground. She is holding little weight and walking to and fro and round. A torch is hanging on center throwing light on woman. A saree is spreaded with cleverness in such a way that the lady looks as if she is sleeping and the feet filled with cotton which looks real. During the arrival the Madhi is covered with

cloth. Madhi is discussing some philosophical topics with Rangacharya in which audience is not concerned.

Ramdev no Vesh

The last Vesh comes in the morning, as a concluding Vesh, with sober costumes and no weapons. In the dialogue of Ramdev it is all philosophy of life and wisdom through the Bhajans and very sober music. Two third of the audience has gone home, mostly youngsters. Slowly the sun rises and bowing down to Mataaji all the performers go.

So this is the artistic form of Bhavai which is now losing its originality from the folk life that came down to us since ancient times. Abusive use of language in Bhavai does not appeal to educated mass in society.[7] However; Bhavai is a unique folk art and touches the deep recesses of human hearts. If Bhavai vesh be co-ordinated properly and necessary orientation given, it could go to the civilized society together with folk people and regain its popularity.

Foot Notes:

1. Dancing by themselves by Mohan Khokar, p.14
2. Folk-art and culture of Gujarat by Joravarsinh Jadav, p.36
3. Folk-art and culture of Gujarat by Joravarsinh Jadav, p.36/37
4. Dancing by themselves by Mohan Khokar, p.63
5. Traditions of Indian Folk Dances by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, p.204
6. Folk-art and culture of Gujarat by Joravarsinh Jadav, p.58
7. Folk-art and culture of Gujarat by Joravarsinh Jadav, p.59
8. All Bhavai Vesh's – personal interview with Retired Prof. Ramesh Pandya(Faculty of Fine Arts, The M.S. University of Baroda)

Bibilography :

Traditions of Indian Folk Dances by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan
 Dancing by themselves by Mohan Khokar
 Folk-art and culture of Gujarat by Joravarsinh Jadav
 Folk Dances by David Courtney
 Celebration of Life-Indian Folk Dances by Jiwan Pani
 Folk, Tribal and Ritual Dances of Insia by Ashish Mohan Khokar
 History of Indian Theatre by M.L. Varad Pande