

From Indigeneity to Urbanity: A Performative Study of Indian Saang (Folk Play) Tradition

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Abstract : In the shifting scenario of postmodern age that foregrounds the multiplicity of meanings and discourses, the present research article seeks to investigate various paradigm shift of contemporary performances concerning Haryanvi Saangs, so-called folk plays, which are being performed widely in the regional territory of Haryana, a northern state of India. Folk arts cannot be studied efficiently by using the tools of literary criticism because it differs from the literature in many aspects. One of the most essential differences is that literary works invariably have an author. Folk works, on the contrary, never have an author. The situation is quite clear: either we acknowledge the presence of folk art as a phenomenon in the social and cultural history of people, or we do not acknowledge it and argue it is a poetical or art of fiction. This paper is an effort to understand the performative tradition of Saang which is traditionally known as Saang, Swang or Svang became a popular source for instruction and entertainment in the region and neighbouring states. Scholars and critics have long been debating about the origin of the word swang/svang/saang and their relationship to the Sanskrit word -Sangit, which means singing and music. But in the cultural context of Haryana, the word Saang means 'to impersonate' or 'to imitate' or 'to copy someone or something'. The stories they portray are derived for the most part from the same myths, tales, epics and from the lives of Indian religious and folk heroes. Literally, the use of poetic sense, the implication of prose style and elaborate figurative technique are worthwhile to compile the productivity of a performance. All use music and song as an integral part of the performance so that it is also appropriate to call them folk opera. These folk plays are performed strictly by aboriginal people in the state. These people, sometimes denominated as Saangi, possess a culture distinct from the rest of Indian folk performances. The concerned form is also known with various other names like Manch, Khayal, Opera, Nautanki. The group of such folk plays can be seen as a dynamic activity and performed in the open space of the theatre. Nowadays, producers contributed greatly in order to create a rapidly growing musical outlet for budding new style of folk presentation and give rise to the electronic focus genre utilizing many musicians and performers who had to become precursors of the folk tradition in the region. Moreover, the paper proposes to examine available sources relative to this article, and it is believed to draw some different conclusions. For instance, to be a spectator of ongoing performances will contribute to providing enough guidance to move forward on this root. In this connection, the paper focuses critically upon the major performative aspects of Haryanvi Saang in relation to several inquiries such as the study of these plays in the context of Indian literary scenario, gender visualization and their dramatic representation, a song-music tradition in folk creativity and development of Haryanvi dramatic art in the contemporary socio-political background.

Keywords : folk play, indigenous, performance, Saang, tradition

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