

Gaddika: Ritual and Reality in the Culture of Adiya Tribe

Indu V. Menon

Abstract— This paper explores the importance of the ritualistic art form, Gadika in the life of Adiya, a slave tribe of India. A special emphasis is given to the body language of the tribe during the performance of this ritual.

Gadika is like a dance-drama. and is meant for cure ailments like smallpox and chickenpox and also perform for the safe delivery of child. By Gadika ,Adiya people believe that they can drive away from illness, diseases and bad situations in their life. Gadika help them for exorcism too.

Adiya believes that all illness and problems in life is because of Gods angry and curse. After the Gadika performance God and Goddesses became happy so that they can get cure from illness. During the ritual the performer go to a trance stage and he can invoke God. He gives answers to the questions by the worshippers and suggests ways to rectify problems. This paper also tries to analyse the importance of Gadika as a Art form

Keywords— Body language, Gaddika, Ritual,Tribe,

I. INTRODUCTION

THE dance forms of tribal folks are not mere performing art forms. They are the wholesome articulation of their simple joys, life moments and rituals. They depict the essential winks of their daily life through steps so closely knitted with their surroundings. They vary as hunting steps, animal mimes and mimics of natural forces. They are often performed to cast away evil spirits and at times represent magical ceremonies. They are also meant to please tribal Hill Gods. Tribal dance forms are the concrete embodiment of their culture as bottle their lives and aestheticism is closely assimilated.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- 1) Provide an ethnographic of the art form Gaddika
- 2).To document the myths and oral narratives in the song of gaddika
- 3)To analyse the oral narratives and symbolism in tribal dancing
- 4).To explore the cultural change happened and correlation of Gaddikas little tradition with great tradition of India

III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. .Body Language

The gestures, postures, and facial expressions by which a person manifests various physical, mental, or emotional states and communicates nonverbally with others.

Indu Vallikkattu Menon, Research Scholar,Dept of Sociology, Kannur University,Kerala,India .

B. .Gaddika

It is a magico ritual as well as an shamanist dance form of adiya tribes of Kerala

C. Ritual

According to T.H.Eriksen (1995)“Ritual has been defined as the social aspect of religion. If we may define religion as a system of notions about the super natural and the sacred,about the life after death and so on,then ritual are the social process which give a concrete expression to the notions.Rituals are rule bound public events which in some way or other thematise the relationship between the earthly and the spiritual realm”

D. Tribe

“A tribe is a collection of families, bearing a common name, members to which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligation.” (D.N.Majumdar,1962)

IV. METHOD

A. The People;Adiya

Since the study is about the Gaddika, the survey was given to the Adiya Tribes.The term Adiya derived from the word Adiyaan which means slave. They are the inhabitants of Wayanad district,Kerala,India. Up to 1976 the members of the community treated as bonded labourers or agricultural slaves. There are 2576 Adiyen families in the State, of which 2570 are in Wayanad District.Adiyen population numbers 11,221 consisting of 5389 males and 5822 females, registering the sex ratio of the community as 1000 : 1082. The family size of Adiyen community is 4.35,which is higher than the state average. Now a days they are landless labourers.

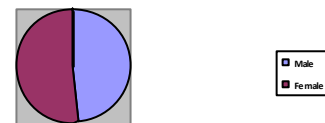


Fig. 1 Pie Diagram of Population Adiya Tribe. Source Census 2001

B. The Methodology

This paper is based on the data collected through various ethnographic techniques. These techniques included participant observation and participated in the event of Gaddika more than 30 times,in-depth interviewing with key-informants like Thammadi(Cheif artist),tribal head man and other artists. Informal and unstructured discussions and observation were done with the community members who

were the true believers of this ritual. These field works were conducted in Thrissileri and Thirunelli villages

C. Profile area of the study; Wayanad

Wayanad is situated in the Eastern portion of North Kerala in India. It is a picturesque of Deccan plateau situated 700 meters and 2100 above the sea level. The district is in the Western Ghats and on its side Tamilnad and Karnataka situated. Wayanad is a place with full of plantations, forest and wild life and is well known for its agricultural prosperity. The study conducted in Thrissilery village, Mananthavadi, Wayanad. The area is concentrated with different types of tribal communities and a large settler population and mainly have a tribal oriented culture. The aboriginal tribal communities consisting mainly of Adiya, Paniya, Kurichua, Kattunaicka, Mullukkuruma, Vettkuruma and Thachinadan mooppan.



Fig. 1 Map of Wayanad District

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In India there are different varieties of tribal dances. Iyer Krishna and Ratna Bala(1961:201) classified tribal dances in to three categories

1. *War and Hunt Dance:* It means martial dance which include all the varieties of dances like hunting dance, war dance(Wangala of Garo), sword and shield dance (Kolkkali of Urali) bow and arrow dance(Rugala of Garo).

2. *Sacred Dance:* The most common dance which devised mainly for the propitiation of and the will of God, spirit, natural forces and ancestral spirit. It include magico ritual dances (pretha of Koraga), shamanistic dances (Gaddika and Kooliyatt of Adiya tribe) and prayer dances (Chnan kali of Kanikkar and Attam of paliyans)

3. *Social dances:* It is the dances of joy or enjoyment, dances related with rite de passages etc. the two important division is marriage dances(Mangalam kali of Mavilan tribe) and funeral dances(Irula tribal dances)

A. Gaddika; the Magico Ritual Expression of Adiya tribe

Among the tribal dance forms, the sacred dances fall in an important category and it forms an integral part of tribal culture. It has some element of a social dance also. They are mainly perform to appease the dark jungle and unseen forces intimidating them and provide eloquent testimonies to the

tribals cultural antiquity. The magico ritual cum shamanistic dance of Adiya tribe; the Gaddika, is very important form of tribal dance. It is also known as Gadhiaka Madal or Mari Neekkal

Gaddika is performed to applause jungle tribal Gods when the tribe is infected with natural calamities or disease.

B. Functions of Gaddika

- 1) It express cultural identity, emotions and sentiments
- 2) It applause and worship super natural beings in hill, forest, rivers rocks and in their houses and ancestors
- 3) Gaddika will remove natural calamities illness and misfortune
- 4) It unite the community

Based on the reason, Gaddika can be divided in to three art forms viz: Cheriya Gaddika ,Pooja Gaddika , Nattu Gaddika

Cheriya Gaddika is performed when someone in the tribal community falls ill. They are enacted in the outbreak of small pox or chicken pox and also to subdue various fear fevers. When somebody is affected by one of the above his elder calls the tribal chief, 'Kanaladi' to perform Cheriya Gaddika. The dance is enacted either by Kanaladi or his assistant 'Tammadi'.reference

Pooja Gaddika is a thanks giving, ritual invocation dance when the calamities are subdued. A cock is sacrificed during the process.

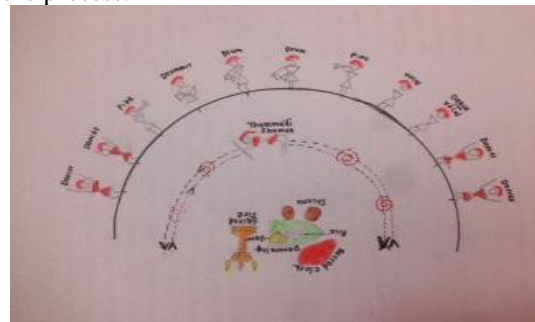


Fig. 2 The Graphical Representation Of The Presentation Structure Of Pooja Gaddika

Nattu Gaddika is carried out in order to prevent the hovering diseases which may fall upon the community in the difficult times, and its master called Janmi. Nattu Gaddika also often invoke Gods for the health of the land lord. This dance form is performed in houses of janmi and public places.

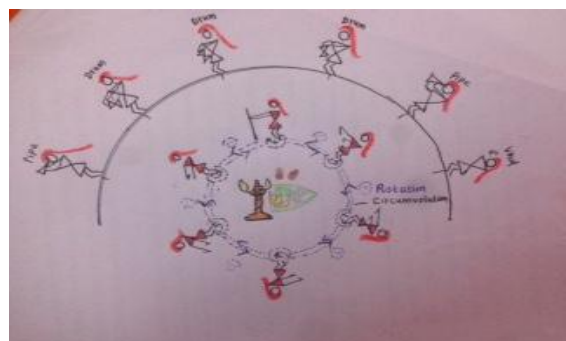


Fig. 3 The Graphical Representation Of The Presentation Structure Of Nattu Gaddika

C. Rituals

Gaddika is depicted by the tribal headman Kanaladi or the tribal priest, his assistant Tammadi. It is performed during the night in the house of the affected. Flowers, coconut rice, betel leaves and nuts are offered to God in a Copper plate in front of a lighted lamp, Nilavilaku then the dance performer, Gaddikakkaran / Tammadi begins to invoke Gods or Gaddikamadala. He wears a red head gear and ankle bells. As the tempo of the dance goes faster in the midst of beats by thudi and pipes called cheeni, female attired Gaddika dancers join the foxtrot in Circle.

D. Tammadi Transfigures to God

After invoking lord Shiva and Adiya tribal Gods as Shuvani, Malakkari, Sidhappan, Mallappan, Pookkari Magatheyyam, Tirunelli Jogiyachan, Karichathan, Chikkamma, Valuramma forefathers and departed souls 'acharaley' are exalted through hymns.

The terrible maladies like small pox and chickenpox are defined as the grand of Goddess Mariamma. So Gaddika is also known as Marineekal, ie, 'removal of mari'.

In the climax, the dancer/Gaddikakkaran carefully examines the coconut, upside down and vice versa for redress. He then goes in a state of frenzy and writhes his body and orders the evil spirits to leave the body of the affected. He then shivers, howls and waves the magical stick, breaks the coconut and chanting hymns. The above signs show that through hymns he is possessed by Goddess. He has transformed into a divine person then. The God man, then removes all the ailments, bad spirits and miseries of the affected. Meantime the spectators go to fetch the blessings and summons of the god man. The Mari, will then deliver her diction on all their miseries, ailments and evil spirits infected then. The mother Goddess showers her blessings revelations to the community then. The announcements are called 'karikambuli'. Ailments are also addressed by invoking the spirits of ancestors also.

E. Attires

The dancer, who usually a male is dressed up as a woman. He wears, blood red attire, which is the drape of Mari, the Goddess of small pox, and put on glittering ornaments. He paints his face, wears bangles and a red head scarf. When the dancer appears with all this make-ups, the onlookers believe that the Goddess, herself is before them. The male dancer exhibits 'marithali' a sacred chain, and puts on a bindi in his forehead and adorns his eyes. The assistant Tammadi usually wears a white dhoti and wrapped red shawl over it. He covers his head with a red coloured cloth, wears anklets and keeps a wand called acharavadi in his hand.

F. The Style of Dance

The dance steps are arranged in a way that the dancer could use all of his body shaking and moving and tilting the body to and forth, left and right, and waving the hands in symmetry the dance continues. Sometimes the dancers in a monotonous move and at some other time the dancers clapping hands and moving hips, arms, fingers and facial

muscles. The dancer's tongue is folded inside his mouth. The dance circles the offering materials. The movements will be in clockwise and anticlockwise direction and begin in a slow note, gathering momentum in the middle and working up to a heavy tempo. The dance is also conducted by a pair of two also.

The characteristic of the dance is neither feminine nor masculine. The style actually belongs to the third gender. The traits are obviously male dancer in the female attire and make up clear, as then dancer often does suggestive female sexual gestures.

Gaddika dance may be highly influenced by the Yellemma Culture in the Karnataka region. Goddess Yellama or Jogamma is the presiding deity of third genders. As per myth Yellama was the wife of Sage Jamadagni and the mother of the warrior sage Parasurama and his four elder brother. According to the story she was beheaded by her youngest son Parasurama by the order of her husband for violating her chastity. The elder four sons who refused to do the act, ordered by their father were cursed by him to become third gender. (Napumsakams). The killed wife of the sage later became the Goddess Jogamma or Yellama. Her four sons, who were transformed into third genders began to worship her then onwards. The male worshippers of Jogamma came to be known as Jogappans are the female followers came to be known as Jogathees. The Jogappans usually dance cross dressed as women to appeal the community and to bring prosperity.

The Mari Goddess of the Adiya tribe may be the Yellemma Goddess worshipped in Karnataka. Moreover Jogiyachan one of the prime deities who finds a place in Gaddika may be one of the cursed sons of the sage Jamadagni.

G. The Oral Narratives and the elements of universalisation of Gaddika Songs

The narratives of the Gaddika song reveals about the origin, and characteristics of their gods, the power they command, or their physical appearance, their power to heal capacities. The language use in the songs is a mixture of Malayalam and Kannada dialect, known as Adiya language and it is difficult to comprehend.

1) The Malakkari Narrative

If we closely examine the invocations to Malakkari in Gaddika song, its similarity to Kiratamurthy, as incarnation of lord Shiva is obvious. The narrations vaguely mention the tribal incarnation of lord Shiva who defeated the warrior prince Arjuna of Mahabharata.

2) Shuvani/ Chivani Narratives

The narratives tell how sky and earth are evolved. The Shuvani God was created then. Other gods like Mallappan, Bashuvappan Sidhappan and Adibali followed later. Next came humans and animals. Then later a war broke out between a snake and a rabbit. To rescue the Shuvani goddess from the terrible commotion a thread came down from the sky in the darkness of night. The fighting rabbit and a snake followed Shuvani to the sky through the dropped thread. They occupied a place in the lap of the God there. But the dispute

never ends. The snake is trying to devour the rabbit ever since

3) Pookari Magatheyyam Narratives

It is believed that the Pookari Magatheyyam was evolved from seven flowers.

4) Thirunelli Jogiyachan Narratives

Tirunelli is a temple of Adiyar Community. They believe that Jogiyachan lies like a stump of stones in PakshiPatalam, a natural rock cave formation in the midst of a thick jungle. Thirunelli Jogiyachan song reveals that the way he born in a palace made of bronze. He is a disabled, weakling. He is blind and deformed. He is born with a bronze ear ring, bangle and as ascetic waved and a pot called kamandalu. He is an opinion cater. But he is powerful. His more presence make the fowls and animals quiet. Though he is a simple, disabled wandering ascetic, he is a supreme power. He visits the houses of the sick and bed ridden with all his attire along with a pipe and a peacock feather fan and heal the ailments with mere rice flakes, coconut, and fire cast away the diseases. He could occupy all the place, where the other Gods cant venture.

Many of the oral narratives are example of cultural changes. The Adiya tribe follows little tradition and occurred a great change in their culture with the influence of the great tradition of India. This kind of cultural change in local belief and stories can called as universalisation. Some elements of puranas, epics and great tradition circulate downwards and became organic part of Adiya community and lose much in their original form in their process.

H. The Psychology of Serfdom and Over lordship

The elements of bondage can still be traced from the life styles of the Adiyas as they remained the slaves of landlords over a long period of time. Gaddika as a perfect specimen of that struggled period. Sublimation to Gods, subjugation to the male controlled society, and servility to land lords and its complications can be seen in Gaddika songs and dance.

For example Nattu Gaddika is performed for the well being of their land lord. But once the dancer transforms to a God, things change dramatically. He is powerful than his landlord then Begins as a tribal, servile dance forms, Gaddika gradually break the shackles of the gender and transform to a third gender dance expression, which liberates the sexual bondage a later denature to a godly one, which ensures all the power and over lordship over all their bondage. In fact, Gaddika is liberation. It portrays the servitude of a tribal society and their constant struggle and ward off to wade off it.

VI. CONCLUSION

Apart from all these Gaddika is a ritualistic dance form, which involves occultism, magic and mysticism. It effectively addresses fears and mental strains of a subjugated community. It builds their confidence as they pronounce gods constant assistance and benevolence.

In certain instances the dancer pours tribal antidotes to the sick. When the medication combines with psychological

approach the result is positive.

Gaddika is also a compilation of Adiya knowledge. Gaddika pours down age old believes, customs, myths and rituals of their ancestors.

Gaddika is closely connected to the various streams of believes manaim, animism and polytheism. Gaddika addresses the unrefined tribal psych and its intricacies.

APPENDIX

1) List of Informants

Late Kalan, The chief artist and headman
Kariyan
Manjan
Madhu

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Mr. Kariyan, The chief artist and headman

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Indu Menon is an Indian litterateur and sociologist. She is one of the figures in post post modern Malayalam literature.she was born on 13 June 1980. She completed her BA in Sociology and Malayalam at Zamorin's Guruvayurappan College with second rank. She then completed an MA in Sociology with third rank.

She is the General Council member of Kerala Accademy of Literature and a member of Kerala Folklore Accademy. More than 15 books and 10 research articles published and won National Award for literature by Kendra sahitya Accademy and State award from Kerala Sahithya accademy apart from several awards. She is selected as the one of the young writer in India by India Today Annual Issue. She have 11 years of experience in Tribal research and training. Now she is a research scholar in the Dept of Sociology,Kannur University.