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Folk Media As Alternative Media

by

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Folk Media As Alternative Media

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Therukkothu is a Tamil tradition and popular folk theatre. We can see the performances in the night, mostly in the harvesting periods. Theru means street and Koothu means play. It is a blend of music, dance and drama and can be singled out as the one traditional art form. We cannot see the therukkottu performances all over Tamil Nadu except North Arcot district, South Arcot district, Senkarpattu, Madras and Pondicherry. We can see two types of Therukkottu here. One is sophisticated, the other one purely for scheduled caste people.

Kunthi Kunthi Nodai Nadanthu
Kona Kirappu Vetti
Vanthaan Ithenna Paarunga

He criticise his own haircut, he thinks he cannot walk straight. He introduced himself and what he is.

Kottiankaran’s welcome song is very essential one, this is one of the conventions. There is always the Kottiankaran who is the Sootradar and Komali or baffoon. The Kottiankaran always makes some remarks about social problems. He uses the data he has collected during the day about the atrocities and injustices that have taken place or taking place in the village and inserts them spontaneously in his songs like:

Chinnanchirueellaam
Chigarettu Pidikkuthu
Chithappan Maar Kitte
Theeppetti Kekkuthu
Kazaappu Kadaiyela Kaal Vaikka Mudialle
Kaai Kari Kodaiyela Xala Neetta Mudialle
Ennamma Devi Sakkamma – Ologam
Thala Kaelaa Thongutte Niyama

The poet mocks the contemporary life by criticising that while small boys are asking match box from their uncles, the girls wearing like bangles on their ears. The unimaginable increase of prices of vegetables and meat does not allow anybody to eat anything.
The audience enjoy this and it becomes a real awakening for them. They are given an opportunity to think more deeply about their problems and uses.

Therukkottu contains many elements of the theatre which are inherently great. The music, songs, dialogues and narrations, make up costume, mugaveenai (wind instrument) mriuthangam and dolock (leather instrument) singi or chaala, Pinpattukkarar (supporting singer) actors and audience, etc, are coached in communicable and colloquial forms, capable of invoking the most delicate as well as vigorous emotions, touching the human sentiments and satirical elements like:

'Kadavul Ennum Kattaipeedi
Kandedutha Thunduppeedi'
Thunduppeedi

God is like a used cigarette and picked up from the floor. He is breaking God myth through his song. When God Siva comes, Kottiankaran never respects him. He never humour out of him.

This art form was used as our instrument to bring about a social change in the region. Therukkottu used as medium by the social awareness persons to propagate its social problems. This performances are used with some changes by the political parties. Environment awareness parties have written up plays on contemporary issues, like Castism, exploitation, dowry deaths, etc.

Not only Therukkottu but also Oyilaattam, Kummi dance, Kuravan Kurathi dance, Raja Rani dance, Bullock dance, Monkey dance, Aali(mask) dance, Dummy Horse dance, Kolattam, Oyil Kummidance, Thappu or parai dance, Samiaattam, Koruppayee dance drama, Vannaankoothu etc. Some dances are region wise, some are cast wise. Some dances are only to male and some to both male and female. Every tribe are having their own kind of dances, like Kottas dance, Toda's dance, Irulas dance etc. Most of the tribal dances are shaped in round form.

Therukkoothu has been using folk arts like Kummi, Kolattam etc. for developing behavioural and attitude changes and conveying needed information about health, nutrition, population, education and bring awareness against superstition.

In Tamil Nadu, this type of folk dance's tunes and some of the folk song lines are using for social transformation. Raja Raniattam, Kuravan Kurathiyy dance's songs are used by various social action groups and communicators to educate the people and
create a social awareness among the poor and downtrodden about their concrete situation and about their own potentialities and limitations.

(Raja Rani Dance)

Kanthuvattikku Kudana Vaangi
Karuppa Samikku Pongal Vatchen
Santhu Ponthellaan Suthurane
Samiyakkanom Othavikku
Samiya Nambi Kettathu Paathi
Boomia Nambi Kettathu Paattu
Sami Keduthucha Boom Keduthucha Sarkaar Keduthucha

A poor farmer expresses his poor and helpless condition, his toiling of thirty years. The rituals paid to all Gods of the land by selling his goats and borrowing from others have become useless. He asks who is responsible for this? The Gods of the land or the Group.

(Kuravan Kurathi Dance)

'Ada-Ethanaiyo Puthukale
Eduthurachu Chonnalume
Nitham poyi Kudikkiriye
Neeyum Oru Aambalaiyoe-Ada
Onakkum Enakkum Vambu
Ooru Sirikkappokuttu Nambu'

Alcohol creates more problems in low class families as the hard earned money spent on the same day on alcohol. Only the women folk has to face problems in the community who turns against her husband to stop alcoholism. This song explains justify each other.

(Kuravan Kurathi Dance)

'Othaiyela Poriyela-en
Athaig magaa pulla
Karpalippu Koodumaiellaam
Kandapadi Nadakkuthemma
Kaavalarum Koottu Ehernthu
Kai Korthu Nikkuthemma

The singer advises his young beloved to be careful while walking in the late evening. He brings out the social atrocities against women such as raping with the help of the police and power.

(Dalit Songs)

'Oru Kalathile Pakal Velaiyele
Nadu Veethiyile Naanga
Echi thuppa mudiyaville-enga
Echi patta nadakkum pathaiellam
This song portrays the post state of untouchability in the country. It picturises that the mere touch of an untouchable pollutes everything and he was not allowed even to spit on the floor to avoid pollution. They had to tie a pot around their necks to spit. They are entitled to have only dogs and donkeys as property and nothing else.

The song portrays the poor condition of the untouchable working women. When they work with the cattles, they were not allowed to wear blouses to cover their bodies. When they fetch water from the wells, they receive abuses from the high caste women. For their farming work, their wages were not a right to be demanded, they should accept whatever is paid for their labour. Moreover, they were seduced by the landlords by the virtue of social law.

Like this, ways having a lot of counter culture elements in the folk media (in the folk performances).

Folk media has become very prominent in Tamil Nadu now. Mass media has been uging folk media as raw material. Academic institutions are using this for research purpose. Only when you are outside institution you can use counter elements in folk media freely. Folk media and dominant culture (eloggical) are opposit to each other. In Dolit productions counter culture elements are more. This article is just begining.