

## CHAPTER X

### ART AND FOLKLORE IN THE DANGI SOCIETY

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#### I. PLACE OF ART AND FOLKLORE IN THE DANGI SOCIETY

Art in a pre-literate society like that of the Dangi is more thoroughly social in its character than art in modern society. It is utilitarian in character. Art in the Dangi society is not entirely a quality of things and objects which are otherwise prized independent of their artistic value. 'Art for Arts' sake is not much valued here.

Art and folklore in one way form the projective system of the people. Works of arts and folklore are the instruments through which the repressed desires, pleasures and pains of the people find expression. Art for Dangi is not an appendage

for of religion or economic activity nor is divorced from life. It is <sup>a</sup>part and parcel of life, an autonomous activity, integrated within the totality of social behaviour.

Folk literature projects the people's desires. It reproduces people's pleasures and pains, beliefs and sentiments. It continues and nourishes the past. Its important function is vitalising and maintaining tribal customs. It is a great agent which maintains and transmits the traditions from one generation to another. In this way Art and Folklore are the great socialising agents. The traditional beliefs and attitudes are automatically learned, accepted and integrated in one's personality. Thus art and folklore are important factors in the development of personality.

The artistic activities are divided into

- (1) Plastic and graphic Arts
- (2) Oral (folk) literature
- (3) Dance, music and performances.

## II. PLASTIC AND GRAPHIC ARTS

(a) The Dangis themselves are not adept in graphic and plastic arts, but show an artistic sense in choice and preferences of things. For example, a Dangi says that, "A well built house built with the help of a carpenter 'looks' nice and more attractive than a hut made by us". They show preferences for particular colours and designs in selection of clothes.

### (b) Handicrafts

The Dangis are intelligent in making use of bamboo for various purposes. Every Dangi man and woman is expert in plaiting, twilling, wrapping, twinning and casting the bamboo strips and they prepare many articles of use. A Dangi shows sense of proportion, harmony, fine finish and cleanliness in his work. The walls, made of bamboo strips and the ground floor are plastered with cowdung mixture, so that they look decent and also become durable. They have no sense of carving on the earthen floor as it is commonly found in our such houses.

The Dangis are very poor carpenters. They do not care for cutting properly, systematically and giving finish to the logs of teak, and bamboos, ~~that~~ they use, in building their houses. Only the bark is removed with the axe.

The Dangis never knew the art of smithy. The iron implements which they generally use like the axe, sickle, etc. are purchased from merchants. Only recently they have formed the habit of using the iron ploughs and carts, which are imported by them. There is one Dangi blacksmith in Pipaldahad, who has recently learnt this art.

The Dangi men and women take pleasure in decorating their persons. Though they are no smiths, they show choice and likings in selecting the design of the ornaments. The Dangis have an eye for beauty of person and nature and a sense of appreciation. A youth adorns his person with flowers in the ear and in the 'paghari'. A girl decorates her hair and face with flowers. They decorate their animals, cows and bullocks on certain occasions.

They do not care for cleanliness and decoration of the house in normal life. But on occasions like marriage and festivals they draw some designs and put the pictures and photos on the walls. They tie a garland of mango leaves on the front of the door.

Every Dangi man and woman has an asterisk mark tatooed in the centre of the forehead. Some get a figure of Hunuman or some design tatooed on the arms also.

### III. FOLKLORE

"I am inclined", says Boas, "to consider the folktale primarily and fundamentally as a work of primitive art".(1)

Folklore is an oral art. Oral literature includes myths, folktales, songs, riddles, proverbs, etc. The Dangi oral literature can be classified into (1) mythological stories, (2) stories told on special occasions, (3) stories about the gods and other general stories, and (4) songs.

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1. Boas, F.: Race, Language and Culture. p.480. N.Y. 1948.

(1) Myths

Myth is motivated not by subjective wishful thinking but rather by the quest for an understanding of the significance of nature and life.(2). In the list<sup>of</sup> mythological stories can be included the tales about the origin of the earth, origin of the country of Maharashtra and Gujarat, and origin of the tribes. These stories have been narrated in the earlier pages in Chapter V.

(2) Stories told on  
Special Occasions

The Dangis have special stories for the occasions of birth, marriage and death. In every village there are two or three persons who are expert story-tellers. The time for telling the stories is night time after dinner, when all the villagers gather together at a certain place.

The story-teller while telling the story plays upon a bronze dish which is prepared in a special fashion. The bronze plate is twelve to

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2. Bidney David as quoted by Elwin Verrier in Tribal Myths of Orissa, Page XV, Oxford University Press, 1954.

fifteen inches in diameter. It is put on the ground and half tola of liquid wax is poured in it. A reed stick two and a half to three feet long and three to six millimeter thick, is fixed in the centre of the dish. Then the story-teller touches the stick and smoothly brings his palm down from the top to the bottom of the stick. This touch produces a musical sound sa..... The story-teller all the while moves his palm in this manner. The shrill sound coming out of it provides a musical background to the atmosphere.

The hearers are not passive, but active. One or two persons from the audience give a response by completing the sentence or repeating the last words of the sentence spoken by the story-teller.

The story related to <sup>the</sup> birth is given here. It has great significance in building up certain attitudes of the Dangis, like the fatalistic tendency and the belief in the inevitableness of the events.

(a) 'Sati was a daughter of the king of Hotipur. The god Brahma told her that she would marry her own son. Such a thing is very unusual and shocking.

She determined to remain unmarried. Her father built a big palace for her in a forest, so that she can avoid the contact of man. The safety precautions were so fool-proof that not even an ant could enter the palace.

The Mahadeo of Dhola mountain thought to seduce her. He came to her and told her that he wanted to impart knowledge to her. He told her that a hole should be made in the wall and a pipe be inserted in it. He would blow the 'vidya' into her ears through this pipe. But Mahadev filled the pipe with Kamaras i.e. semen, and the semen through the ears went into the stomach of Sati. Sati conceived by that and after nine months gave birth to a male child. She was very much ashamed of giving birth to a child, hence wrapped the child in her saree, left him and went to her father's palace.

In that forest, after a few days came the king of Indrapur. He entered this lonely palace and finding nobody there, took the child with him. He gave it to the queen. The barren queen was very happy and brought up the child as her own son.



When the son, now the prince of the kingdom became of the marriageable age, the king sent messengers in all directions to search for a suitable bride. One such messenger came to Hotipur and found the princess Sati a suitable bride for his prince.

The prince and Sati were married. One day Sati opened the prince's box and found an old piece of saree in it. She asked the prince as to how that piece of saree came there in his box. The mother queen revealed the fact before them that his father had brought him wrapped in this piece from the palace in the forest. Sati could identify the piece as her own, and realised that she had married her own son. What was written in her fate at her birth, did happen'.

There are some changes in this story told by different persons regarding the name of the characters and how the girl conceived, but the import and the meaning of the story is same.

(b) The story of death tells that 'Death is inevitable and no one can stop it'. After death one goes to the heaven or hell according to one's own deeds in this world and gets the return for his deeds.

(c) The story called 'Rajwadi' story and the story of Rama are told on general occasions of enjoyment and merry-making. If we compare the text of the story of Rama told in different regions of India it can be seen that there are some interpolations which reflect the local cultural practices and circumstances of the people. In the story prevalent in the Dangs we find the changes in the details ~~is~~ as well as the general text.

(d) There are stories about <sup>the</sup> gods who help the needy, intervene in the domestic troubles, and set every thing right. There is a story of Goddess Bhavani who kills the cruel monster and saves her devotees from the paramour.

(e) The Story of the Sun,  
the Moon and the Earth :

The Sun - Surajdev is a god of the sky. He has three queens; one in the East, one in the centre and one in the West of the sky. During his journey from East to West he stops for an hour at each place to take rest, and then proceeds further. At night the Sun goes to the other world and next morning again rises from the East.

Chandradev - the Moon also travels in the same manner. Formerly the earth got light from the Moon. But its light was severe and burning. So as a punishment its capacity to produce light was taken away and was given to the Sun.

(f) The following is a story, one among many which explains the origin of the habits of the people. "Once God Mahadev was in meditation and his bull was keeping a watch. At that time a group of people came and requested the bull to allow them to see the God. The bull went inside and Mahadev gave him a message to be conveyed to the people that 'eat once and bathe thrice in a day'. But the bull inversed the facts and said, 'Eat thrice and bathe once a day'. And the people went away.

When Mahadev knew the mistake of the bull he was worried as to who would supply the food to eat thrice. So he asked the bull to go to the people and help them in cultivating <sup>the</sup> land. So a Dangi said 'according to the word of the God, the bull is helping the people in agriculture and we people also eat thrice and bathe once in a day.'

Some stories revealing the quick wit and presence of mind attributed to the courtier Birbal of King Akbar are known to us. Some such stories are also prevalent in <sup>the</sup> Dangis. The characters of the story are the king and his intelligent minister (Pardhan). One story is that the king asks the minister 'to get the milk of an ox'.

### 3. Folk songs :

Folk songs reflect the vitality of the people. People have a tendency to weave their beliefs and attitudes, joys and sorrows, likes and dislikes in the songs. The songs also reflect the changing situations in society. The Folk songs play an important role. Firstly, they are naturally formed, there is no conscious effort to put and sing a fact in <sup>a</sup> particular manner, so they reflect what people really are. Secondly, the songs can be sung either individually or in a chorus. There is a special charm in the voice and way of singing. Thirdly, they provide a good source for collective activity and entertainment. The folk songs <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ a 'running literature' which is never dead and in which new phrases are always added. The Dangis have a good

stock of folk songs fitting to all occasions of life, to which new songs reflecting the recent changes ~~mf~~ are added. There are songs about the childhood, marriage, religious celebrations, festivals, domestic problems etc.

(1) The mother or the sister sings while making the child asleep.

'Hindi' (swing) is tied with the poles,  
In-between is hanging a piece of cloth.

Oh, to Sajan, my son, give milk,  
Sajan fall asleep, get asleep.

Mother has gone to fetch water,  
Her head support might have fallen into  
the well,

So she must be getting late,

The crocodile in the well might have  
swallowed it,

So she requests the God, give back my  
head support,

My child is crying at home.

## (2) Marriage Songs

When the father goes in search of a bride  
for his son it is sung -

Devbai, a daughter of dev,

We go to ask for her (2)

Walking over the path,

covered with red turmeric (2)

Walking over the path,

Covered with yellow turmeric (2)

Walking over the path,

Covered with rupees..... (2)

(3) While going to the bride's village, they  
sing -

The cart is going,

Going in its way in marriage,

There is a mandap of marriage,

At five Pandava's place,

There the women sing song.

The Devi of Kuruli hills is a

friend of the bride,

The husband is from Parnera mountain,

The wife is from Sinhaldwip,

The people in marriage

Come from Kamdwip,

All go for marriage.

The mother of the bride,  
     Looks like a beautiful hillock,  
 The father looks like  
     Dhavalgir mountain,  
 Father-in-law of the bride,  
     Looks like the mountain of Takan,  
 Mother-in-law of the bride,  
     Looks like the goddess of Unai,  
 All people look like gods.

- (4) We have missed the bride's house,  
 There is a garden in front of her house,  
 Ask, ask, where is the bride's house,  
 There is a fanas tree in front of her house,  
 That is the bride's house.

- (5) Fixing the bride price is an important  
 occasion in the whole process of marriage.  
 O sister, prepare the verandah of this  
 earth and clay,  
 And people sitting on it will decide the  
                                     amount,  
 The amount if small people will curse and  
                                     taunt us,

But when the girl will be taken away,  
 Her heart will be full of emotions,  
 How would she pour out her heart ?  
 Her father will help her,  
 Her mother will help her,  
 And she will bid good-bye.

(6) It is slowly getting dark and the marriage  
 is getting late, so they sing -  
 Time of marriage is passing (2)  
 Who is making so late, who is making late,  
 Patel is getting late.

O Patel, make haste, make haste,  
 Who is making so late. (2)  
 The father is making late.  
 O father, make haste, make haste.

Similarly the mother, brother, sister, etc.  
 are included in this list.

In marriage always and every where one party  
 tries to show off that it is better than and superior  
 to the other. So it finds mistakes and drawbacks  
 in the opposite party.





- (9) Oh Patel stirr up your loins, get up,  
 Let us go to our village (2)  
 No water in this village . . .  
 No cart in this village . . .  
 No car in this village . . . .  
 No flutes in this village. . .  
 No players in this village . .

The girl is leaving her father's home to reside with the bride-groom and his people, so she feels sorry and cries. There are songs which sing the affection of the girl for her parents, advising her to establish cordial relations with the in-laws.

- (10) Addressing the new bride people of the Groom's side sing -

The girl has put on green colourful clothes(2)  
 Now give up your attachment for the father,  
 Develop attachment for the father-in-law,  
 Now give up the attachment for the mother,  
 Develop attachment for the mother-in-law.  
 Now give up the attachment for the brother,  
 Develop attachment for the (younger)  
 brother-in-law.

(11) While paying good-bye to the daughter the mother worries--

O young girl, how shall you be able  
to run your house ?

How shall you pay respect to your  
father-in-law ?

How shall you pay respect to your  
mother-in-law ?

How would you behave with your  
brother-in-law ?

How would you behave with your  
sister-in-law ?

You are too young to understand this world,

You are too young to tackle the  
difficulties of life,

You follow my advice and behave accordingly.

(12) Nandbai, the marriage party of Delhi  
has arrived (2)

Nandbai went to the in-law (2)

Mother-in-law is dear to me (2)

Nandbai do not cry (2)

Axe in the hands of Nandbai (2)

Nandbai digs the field (2)

Nandbai cries, tears flow from the eyes (2)

Nandbai, Do not cry my bosson dear (2)

Do not go with the sad face (2)

(13) The girl in her in-law's house is eagerly longing for her parents and looks in the direction of her parent's village.

'While crushing 'bhagar' your eyes,  
sister-in-law turn towards your (jog)  
village,

You don't go to Jog, Oh, sister (2)

Your father will come to take you,

Your brother will come to take you,

Your mother will come to take you,

Please don't go, don't go.

### Songs on Agricultural Activities

The agricultural season begins with the lopping of the branches.

(14) Oh, son of Kunbi, daughter of Kunbi,  
Kunbi's son lopp the branches;  
Kunbi's son spread the branches,  
Kunbi's daughter spread the branches.

Kunbi's son burn the branches,

Kunbi's daughter burn the branches;

Kunbi's son sow the seeds,

Kunbi's daughter sow the seeds.

(15) Bring<sup>the</sup> plough, and plough the field,  
 Bring the seeds and sow the seeds,  
 Bring the Ganges water, pour water,  
 Seeds are growing, one leaf is seen,  
 Two leaves are seen, Three leaves are seen,  
 Four leaves are seen, Five leaves are seen,

.....

Fifteen leaves are seen, Sixteen leaves are seen,

My cow ate up the leaves,

She conceived and delivered,

And the water liquid was thrown on the

chilori tree.

(16) The proverbial tense family relations  
 between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law  
 and the elder and the younger daughters-in-law have  
 also become the theme of the songs.

Jethani, speaks into the ears of 'Jeth',

She calls me bad names,

She harasses me in the house.

I carried the axe on my shoulders,

Digging the earth I have reduced my body,

I carried the spade on my shoulders,

Removing the earth I feel suffocated.

For her she cooks 'Kamod' rice,

for me she prepares 'Kada' rice,

Labour has exhausted my life.

(17) New changes and the reactions to them have become the theme of the songs.

Gandhi Raja brings water, solobolo, Raja

brings water,

Gandhi Raja asks for a child, solo bolo

asks for a child.

Gandhi Raja makes hot water, solo bolo

makes hot water.

Gandhi Raja takes a bath, solo bolo

takes his bath.

Gandhi Raja washes his 'dhoti', solo bolo

washes his 'dhoti'.

Gandhi Raja swings the child, solo bolo

swings the child.

Going to the school is a sort of punishment  
for the wandering child. He is troubled that—

I write one letter and forget the second one,  
the teacher will beat me (2)

Oh, the teacher why should my child come to  
your school (2)

He won't come, he shall go for fishing (2)

He won't come, he shall go for worship (2)

He won't come, he shall go for hunting (2)

Why should he come to the school ?

#### IV. DANCE

(1) Dance is an externalisation of emotional energy by means of muscular movements. It is practised not only by men in every degree of civilisation and culture but also by many types of animals, especially birds. Dance is different from the muscular activity like play and simple practical accomplishments, because it is a definite form based on rhythm and accent, repetition and contrast for the transmission of inner feelings. With the inclusion of aesthetic element, dance apart from its individual and social considerations has become an art.

Dance is an expression of surplus energy. It does not remain only a physiological activity but psychological too. For it brings changes in the emotional state and evokes sensation in the dancer. It serves two purposes, It is a vent for excitement as well as stimulates the excitement. The mental or emotional state of the dancer is translated deliberately or impulsively into movements. The onlooker who perceives the movements is also affected. In him also arise arises the sensations of muscular sympathy and these in turn associate themselves through memory with mental and emotional states. Thus ideas and feelings are conveyed from the mind of the agent to the spectator.

Dance in pre-literate and tribal societies has played an important role, social and psychological. There are group dances and individual dances, social and religious dances, dances for both the sexes together. The rhythm, harmony and joint action produce a kind of common feeling in the dancers. By kinaesthesia and empathy the feeling becomes more tense and deep in the minds and arouses a common-one state of mind. This contributes much to the unification of the social group.



Dance is the most important source of recreation and entertainment and provides an opportunity for contacts in the dry, mechanical and hard life of <sup>the</sup> Dangis. Dancing nights are cheerfully welcomed by one and all. It is the time when they can physically and mentally get absorbed in the task and become one with the atmosphere.

Dance of the Dangis is a vigorous activity. It requires energy and strength, sense of harmony and ear for music. Dances are performed always at night after supper. Any night can be a dancing night. But there are certain occasions of social and religious celebrations, visit of a distinguished guest etc. when they dance.

## (2) Dance and Musical Instruments :

Dance and music are invariably related. The musical instruments used by the Dangis are <sup>a</sup> few and simple. One type of instruments played upon by beating are 'Madal' and 'Dholaki'. The other played by mouth are 'Kahalya' and 'pavri'. There is another one called 'Dhaka'. 'Madal' or 'Dholaki' are made from a single piece of a trunk of a tree. The trunk is made hollow and the animal skin is tightly stitched

on both the ends. Thus when beats are played on the skin the vibrations produce a kind of sound. The difference between 'Madal' and 'Dholaki' is that the former is longer and less bulging from the centre than the latter. 'Madal' is played only while staging a performance, while 'Dholaki' is played in dance and 'Tamasha'.

'Kahalya' is a simple pipe instrument. There are no keys or wholes which produce different notes. It produces only shrill noise of one type. The sound produced can be controlled by deep breaths and made fast or slow. Music of the 'Kahalya' is like a rhythmic constant flow of stream water. In whatever type of dance, it is played uniformly.

### (3) Types of Dances :

There is no variety in dances nor there are different kinds of dances typical to particular occasions like, lizard dance, patalagho dance, crop dance, marriage dance, culinary dance, etc. as found among the Dublas and other tribes. Dance is a great attraction to each and every Dangi. There is no need of an invitation to dance. From wherever they hear the voice of the instruments, they are ready

and eager to go there and join the dance. There is no need of any preparation for dance. An enthusiastic pair of young boys falls out of their homes after supper. One begins to play upon the 'Dholaki' and the other on the 'Kahalya'. Within a few minutes people begin to come out of their places and meet at a spot. Automatically their legs begin to move here and there in tune with the beats on the 'dholaki'. When there is a sufficient number of companions, they form a circle and begin dancing. As the people continue to pour in, they join it and the circle becomes wider and wider. In the circle the young boys, young girls, the women with children at the breasts, old men and children form different groups. The children form an inner circle and act in imitation of the elders,

In one type of dance dancers stand in a circle holding their hands around one another's waist with a firm grip. In rhythm with the tune of the beats of the 'dholaki' they put their left leg one step forward and right leg one step backward. Then they put the right leg backward, the left leg takes the original position. With this forward and

backward movements at each step they move one step sideward towards the right. As the beats on the 'dholaki' become faster the movement also becomes swift and fast. As all hold their hands around one another's waist the movement looks as a single whole and very attractive. Sometimes instead of forming one line they form the groups of five or six persons and arrange in a circle. In the heat of the dance the movements are so vigorous that while putting the leg forward, the man also leans down from the waist. Those who are tired and unable to continue fall out for a while and the rest go on dancing.

In a second type of dance the dancers instead of holding the waist put the hand around the neck of his neighbours. In a third type of dance they keep the hands freely hanging. This type is more convenient to the children and beginners, for they have not to be dragged by others.

There is only one type of individual dance called 'Thakaria dance'. It is performed by a 'bhagat' in monsoon to propitiate and seek favour of the gods when rains fail.

(4) Holi Dances :

When the bon-fire of Holi is lit the children and youngsters clap and dance around the fire and sing the songs of Holibai. During the five days celebration of the festival the young men move from house to house of the village, singing and dancing. Similarly they in party go to neighbouring villages also. Not often women also join them. At this time they put on new dresses and decorate their persons with colours and flowers.

(5) Tamasha :

'Tamasha' means a demonstration, performance of a drama in music and songs. It is performed on the festival nights and social occasions like marriage. There are two or three, sometimes more characters which play different roles. One man plays the role of a male, some other plays the role of a female. One character puts on the dress and make-up of a joker. Intermittently, he enters, interferes and provokes laughter with his buffonery. In the script of the story songs and dance form an important part. The dialogues include much of personal and

extemporaneous element. Very often the obscene jokes are also included. The Madal and Kahalya are continuously being played. The 'tamasha' lasts for three to four hours and sometimes for longer hours also.

(6) Khel :

'Khel' is not much different from 'Tamasha'. Khel means a dramatic performance. Incidents of life like birth, death etc. have been translated into dramas in their Dangi dialect and become the items of 'Khel'. The experiences of life, for example, 'an old woman who has lost her buffalo in jungle goes in search of it' are dramatically reproduced.

The characters put the dress according to their sex and profession in the drama. A man playing a woman's role puts on a female dress and make up. A man playing a role of an animal puts on the mask of the particular animal and imitates its voice and actions. Most of the actions of the characters are symbolic and pantomimic. For example, in the scene of 'Birth' the character playing the role of the

expectant mother would lie down and take a position, a woman during delivery would take. The other character who is a nurse would make actions showing how the child is delivered. Partly by imagination and partly because of their experiences the audience would understand the meaning.

The obscene and sex element in these performances resembles those aspects of 'Bhavai' in which such sex jokes and actions are played.

'Tamasha' and 'Khel' have a great cultural and educative value. Through such performances new ideas spread among the people. Tamasha is an effective instrument for propaganda. The Khel acquaints the people with general information of events in life. For example, in this way children in the normal course get sex education.

Dance and such other performances are significant in the socialisation of children. Firstly, participation and observation of them help in reduction of the threshold of shyness. By joining the dance the child comes into contact with other children and try to show off over others by showing

skill. Secondly, an expert dancer gains a social status. He becomes an individual of significance.

## V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Dangis are very poor artists. Art for art's sake is not much valued here. The treasury of folklore consists of the folk-tales and songs. There are stories told on special occasions, e.g. the story of Sati, there are stories about <sup>the</sup> Gods, e.g. the story of Rama, and there are mythological stories, e.g. the story of the origin of the earth and tribes. The Dangis have a rich stock of folk songs fitting to all aspects of life such as the childhood, marriage, religious celebrations, festivals, domestic problems etc. For the Dangis the Dance, Tamasha and Khel are means of entertainment. The art and folklore in a way project the phantasy of the people. They represent the emotional life of these people.

The art, the folklore and the dance which form the projective system, not only reflect the inner characteristics of the people but also they are a great socialising agents. They play an important role in the development of personality. For example, the



tales among the Dangis are not simply the stories prescribed for their narrative. They provide an emotional background to the body of religious beliefs and ritual practices. The story of 'Sati' appeals to the past in justification of action in the present. It saves the individual from experiencing remorse and feel at peace by compromising. The dance, khel and Tamasha have an educative as well as socialising value.