

Folk Theatre as Mean of Resistance & Social Change: A Sociological Inquiry About Inception & Need for Revitalization of Bhavai

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Bhavai is a unique folk art theatre of Gujarat that originated in 1360 AD. It is believed to be initiated by 'outcaste' nomads. Marginalization made this form of theatre to be more satirized against stigma imposed by caste system. Instead of protesting exclusion, this art form provided ground for tenacious, long-lasting and zestful ways of expressing subjective feelings of the marginalized.

The study tries to investigate, how folk theatres can become a way of expressing resistance and project desired directions for community development. It also traces periodical changes that occurred since the inception of Bhavai. An attempt is made to find out how recent commercialization diluted the original essence of Bhavai. The study sociologically approaches to understand the deterioration of this folk theatre. This form of theatre has now reduced to the symbolic identity; efforts of the state community to retain originality to Bhavai can be deleteriously observed.

ART, SOCIOLOGY AND BHAVAI

One of the characteristic traits of the existential-phenomenological tradition in philosophy is a serious engagement with the fine arts literature, poetry, theatre, music, and the plastic arts. (18) Even in sociology, there exist many scholars who believed that works of art are capable of showing us phenomena under consideration at their best in a more direct and perspicuous manner than in written works. Nietzsche and Heidegger believed that art could show us things which we couldn't otherwise see, through this individual redispense and reorient his life world¹.

Sociology since its inception has showcased its reliance on the works of art. The power of folk art or folk theatre always attracted social anthropologists and sociologists for explorations. In this regard, folk art always has superiority over philosophy because it is a product of the beliefs, cultural values, norms and most importantly its ability to provide dispositions through which humans encounter and evaluate their life world. Various Art forms in sociology were addressed in a very passive manner. Classical as well as modern social thinkers like Durkheim, Marx, Weber, Parsons, Simmel, Raymond Williams, Becker, Bourdieu, Habermas and many others have perceived art forms as a great tool to understand change, sustainability or development in and of society.

In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Emile Durkheim discusses the social structure, material culture and symbolic communication. This can be made easily compared with

¹ Heidegger's (1935-36) essay on *The Origin of the Work of Art*