

TRANSFORMATION OF ENTERTAINMENT SOURCES IN UTTARAKHAND : BEFORE AND AFTER THEATRE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the transformation of entertainment sources in Uttarakhand, specifically focusing on the period before and after the introduction of theatre. This paper delves into the historical evolution of entertainment sources in Uttarakhand. By examining the development of entertainment options in the region, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the changes that have occurred over time. The research focuses on the period leading up to the present day, tracing the roots of entertainment in Uttarakhand and exploring how it has evolved over the years. Through an analysis of historical records, archival material, and relevant literature, this study sheds light on the various forms of entertainment that have been prevalent in Uttarakhand, including traditional performances, folk arts, and community gatherings. The study also seeks to understand to the emergence of Uttarakhand regional cinema. By documenting the history of entertainment sources, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage and social dynamics of Uttarakhand.

Introduction

Journey of language, culture and cinema in Uttarakhand

Language is a fundamental medium of communication for human beings. It is nearly impossible to build a society or culture without language. However, when it comes to language in the state of Uttarakhand, there is no officially prescribed language.

The grammar of a language forms its foundation. Although various dialects are spoken here, efforts have been made by experts to standardize these dialects into proper languages. Even

today, experts and organizations are continuously working towards this goal. However, it will take some more time for these efforts to be fully realized.

Uttarakhand state is divided into two divisions: Kumaon division and Garhwal division. The districts of Nainital, Almora, Udham Singh Nagar, Pithoragarh, Champawat, and Bageshwar are part of the Kumaon division. The remaining seven districts - Dehradun, Haridwar, Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal, and Rudraprayag - fall under the Garhwal division. There are slight variations in the words used in the Garhwali language in each district of the Garhwal division.

These four languages - Garhwali, Kumaoni, Jaunsari, and Rawain - also contain a mixture of Sanskrit and Khadi dialect. Additionally, they have been influenced by languages such as Dogri, Rajasthani, and Awadhi. Haryanvi has also had an impact, particularly in the areas of Himachal state, where similarities between the Himachali and Rawain languages can be observed. Similarly, some similarities can be seen between the Jaunsari and Dogri languages. In the Kumaoni language, elements of the Khadi dialect, as well as some words from Nepali, can be heard.

Besides the languages spoken in Devbhoomi Uttarakhand, the culture here is also a subject of great curiosity. The culture of each language-speaking community is quite distinct. The influence of stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana periods can be seen in the culture of Uttarakhand. For example, the tradition of joint families in the Rawain area and the Pandava tradition that was once prevalent in Jaunsar. The dances of Devbhoomi Uttarakhand, such as Tandi, Jhumailo, and Champhala, have particularly enriched the culture here.

Research Methodology:

This study employs a case study approach to investigate the transformation of entertainment sources in Uttarakhand, specifically focusing on the transition from traditional theater to cinema. The case study methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of the cultural, social, and economic implications of this transformation within the context of Uttarakhand. This section outlines the case selection and data collection, methods employed in this study.

Data Collection:

Data collection for this case study includes multiple methods to gather rich and diverse information. Interviews are conducted with artists, performers, audiences, and industry professionals involved in both theater and cinema to obtain their perspectives and experiences. Observations are also conducted during theater performances and cinema screenings to gather contextual information.

The observations provide insights into audience behavior, cultural expressions, and the overall impact of cinema on the entertainment landscape in Uttarakhand.

Limitations:

It is important to acknowledge certain limitations of the case study methodology. The findings of this study may not be generalizable to the entire population of Uttarakhand due to the specific cases selected. Additionally, subjective biases may be present in the interpretation of data. However, efforts have been made to mitigate these limitations through rigorous data collection, analysis, and triangulation of multiple data sources.

By utilizing a case study approach and following the outlined research methodology, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the transformation of entertainment sources in Uttarakhand. The comprehensive analysis of specific cases and the diverse perspectives obtained through interviews, and observations contribute to a nuanced understanding of the transition from theatre to cinema and its impact on the cultural landscape of Uttarakhand.

Pre cinema entertainment

Bhaat chaaran

In the state of Uttarakhand, bards and bardic performances were a popular form of entertainment during the 11th and 12th centuries. Bhat Charan, who mainly emerged in Rajasthan and Gujarat, were considered bards. Legend has it that a bard from Bhuj, belonging to the Maul Bardsa clan, had nine daughters. During that time, King Siddharaj was ruling Gujarat.

Once, these nine girls went to the king's court and witnessed the disrespectful treatment of the Charan caste. In response, they took an oath not to marry within their own caste. One of the daughters, Barley, married Malvan Bhat, and their son was named Bhat Charan. It is said that Bhat Malwan was a renowned lyricist.¹

The Charan caste held a special status in Rajasthan. They would inspire the king and the army with their powerful poetry to protect the state, performing in the royal courts of various princely states. In return for their services, they were granted large estates and held an honorable position in the court. They were also referred to as Jagirdar and Thakur.²

The bhakti era

The Bhakti era dominated from the 13th to the 14th century, during which bhajan kirtan was primarily seen as a form of entertainment. In India, bhajan kirtan refers to devotional songs with religious or spiritual themes, sung in any language. Bhajan is a way for devotees to express their emotions towards God through singing or recitation. When performed in a group, it takes the form of kirtan. Even in Devbhoomi Uttarakhand, during the 13th to 14th century, bhajan kirtan was prevalent as a form of entertainment.³

Ritikal era

The Ritikal period underwent a transformation into three distinct forms and remained alive for approximately 20 to 25 years of independence.

1) Mirasi or Baadi

The word "Riti" in Ritikali is derived from "Rati," which means beauty. In this era, the artistic and aesthetic form of art emerged. Traditional dances and folk songs were predominantly seen during this period. The community here accepted this artistic form, which is also known as Mirasi or Baadi. The Mirasi community was mainly found in North India and Pakistan. In Mirasi, a male singer would sing while the female or his wife would perform the dance.

2) Dant Katha

This art form was more literary in nature rather than being primarily focused on music. Dant Kathas (oral narratives) were the main feature of this form. These stories were predominantly performed during the month of Chaitra. The storyteller is also known as "Oji" in this context.

3) Bal Nritya

During this era, children's dance performances, known as Bal Nritya, were also popular among the general public. These dances were performed in temples. The organization of these dances was primarily done by the priests.

Along with time, the arts continued to develop here. All these art forms collectively formed a diverse and vibrant cultural landscape.

Ramleela

Most of the Ramleelas performed on stage are based on the Ramayana written by Maharishi Valmiki. However, Tulsi Das' Ramayana is seen as having a more dramatic adaptation compared to the Ramayana.

It is said that the first Ramleela was organized in Nainital in 1897 by Durga Sah. In addition to that, in 1902, Ganga Ram Punetha organized Ramleela in Pithoragarh, and in 1930, Shiv Lal Shah initiated the Ramleela performance in Bageshwar. An interesting fact is that after Bageshwar, in 1931, Janakinath Joshi organized the Kumaoni Ramleela in Shimla. The Ramleela of Almora is different from all the other Ramleelas. It is presented in the form of Ramleela Geet Natya style. In addition to that, the Ramleela here also presents couplets and chaupais in a musical style.

If we talk about the Ramleela of the Garhwal region, the Ramleela of Pauri district is considered the oldest. Apart from that, the Ramleelas of Sumadi, Dehradun, Tehri, Devprayag, and Srinagar also fall into the category of ancient Ramleelas of Garhwal. It is said that in the year 1933, when King Narendra Shah was in power, the staging of Ramleela was concluded in Tehri. In that year, on the days when preparations for Ramleela were underway, Queen Indumati Shah,

the wife of King Narendra Shah, was returning from Delhi in a car. However, their car met with an accident on the way, after which the king imposed a ban on the staging of Ramleela.

In 1951, a committee named Navayuvak Abhinay initiated the Ramleela once again. The first enactment of Ramleela took place in Kandi village in 1897, then in Sumadi in 1919, and in 1965 it started in Paudi. The history of Ramleela enactment in the land of gods, Uttarakhand, is more than 100 years old. Ramleela performances are mostly organized around the festivals of Dussehra or Diwali in most regions.⁴

Theater

Acting is an art or form of entertainment as ancient as human civilization itself. A child is born perfect in the art of acting. They perform acting in front of their parents while crying, so that they can fulfill the child's desire and it reflects the innocence of the child. When a person tells a lie in their day-to-day life with the intention of succeeding in a plan or task, that is also a form of acting. Acting has four types:

- 1) Angik (physical)
- 2) Vachik (verbal)
- 3) Ahary (costume)
- 4) Satvik (mental)

Acting performed through body parts is Angik, acting through words is Vachik, acting performed through costumes is Ahary, and acting that showcases buildings is called Satvik. The combination of all these is called theater.⁵

Every year, at the end of April, a special event called Rammāṅ is organized in the Salur-Dungara area of the Joshimath block in Chamoli district. It is also a symbol of the local people's faith in the deity Bhūmyāl Devatā. This festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm by the rural community. Each caste or professional group is given different responsibilities for organizing Rammāṅ. For example, the youth and elderly perform traditional dances, the Brahmins take charge of the worship and ritual practices, and only the Kshatriya community has the right to wear half-lion and half-human sacred masks, representing the Hindu deity Narasimha. The host family of the Bhūmyāl Devatā has to follow strict daily rituals. Rammāṅ is a historical culmination of oral and written narratives, music, and a mixture of theater.⁶ The tradition of wearing masks is prevalent in Rammāṅ, which can be called mask theater.

The origin of Western drama or Western theater can be traced back to ancient Roman and Greek civilizations. Even in Roman and Greek theaters around 300-400 BCE, masks were used. There are also many other such traditions where theatrical elements can be observed.

The hill journey of the Kumaon region in the state of Uttarakhand can also be considered as an example of theater. It bears a resemblance to Ramlila to a great extent. Hill journey is one of the traditional festivals celebrated in the state of Uttarakhand, especially with great enthusiasm in the Pithoragarh district of the Kumaon region. This festival is mainly celebrated by people

involved in agriculture in the state. The origin of this festival is believed to be from the Sorar region in western Nepal, extending to the Sor Valley, and it is said to have started in the Kumaur village. Later, it began to be observed by the people of other villages in Bajethi and Pithoragarh district as well. Along with that, the Kanaalichina and Askot regions also accepted this festival as 'Hiran Chital' with some modifications. During the festival, the regional deity of the deer is worshipped wearing a white cloth. The festival takes place in three phases, and in the first phase, animal sacrifice is made along with all the rituals, while in the second phase, plays are performed for the public, and in the third and final phase, songs are sung and dances are performed. In the second part of this festival in Uttarakhand, theatrical presentations of rural and agricultural activities are made. In this tradition as well, theatrical elements can be seen.

The Beginning of Regional Cinema in Uttarakhand

If we talk about the history of theaters in Uttarakhand, the establishment of the Dramatic Club took place before 1917. Around the same time, the first Garhwali play, "Jay Vijay," was written. The playwright of this play was Bhawani Datt Thapliyal. In 1932, another play was written, which was influenced by the mythological folk tale of Prahlad. After that, we continuously witness the tradition of Garhwali plays. Swaroop Dhoundiyal and Bhawani Datt Thapliyal have made significant contributions to Uttarakhand theater. There are also several other names like Lalit Mohan Thapliyal and Rajendra Dhasmana who have made invaluable contributions to the history of Uttarakhand theater. The existence of Garhwali plays is over 100 years old. During these hundred years, the 80s and 90s saw more popularity of Garhwali plays. It was during this period that some theater artists gave birth to Garhwali cinema. There is hardly any cinema artist in Uttarakhand who has not performed in Ramleela or theater.

In Uttarakhand, theater artists like Jeet Singh Negi, Haridatt Bhatt, Lalit Mohan Thapliyal, Virendra Raturi, Rajendra Dhasmana, Purushottam Dobhal, Bhawani Datt Thapliyal, and Kanhaiya Lal Dandriyal have played a crucial role in establishing regional cinema. However, the founding father of Uttarakhand regional cinema is someone else. In the 1980s, when the Garhwali stage was at its peak, a name emerged as an artist, director, and writer. That name was Parashar Gaud, the pioneer of Uttarakhand regional cinema.

In 1965, he formed his own theater company called Pushpanjali. During this time, he wrote his first full-length play, approximately 2 hours long, called 'Ounsi Ki Raat'. The play featured three female characters. It was a challenging period for both theater and the artists involved, as they were often looked down upon. Parashar Gaur faced a major obstacle in finding the female characters, particularly an older woman for the role of the mother. Despite his extensive contacts, it proved to be nearly impossible to find an elderly actress. Eventually, his search led him to a village.

In a village called Teka near Pauri Garhwal, there used to be a community of Baddi-Baddin (traditional performers or inheritors). They made contact with a Baddi woman named Rambhakti. The woman laid a condition before them that until their play was complete, her entire family would stay with them in Delhi. Parashar Gaur, who was already facing financial

difficulties, accepted this condition due to his dreams. Finally, this play was performed in a theater on February 2, 1965, and it was well-received by the audience. Parashar Gaur has performed plays like Ardhameshwar, Ounsi Ki Raat, Adalat, Choli, Khawesh, Chatti Ki Raat, Junyali Raat, Beti Bwari, Acharyu Ku Tal, Durjan Ki Kakdi, and Kanyadan, among others. "Ausii ki raat, choli, timla timla khatya nagyak nangi dikhyaa, gwai (a play), swara, mangal, riharsal, etc., these plays were written by Parashar Gaud. After that, he never looked back and continued writing, producing, and staging plays, and people also joined him on the path of theater. It was also observed that the number of people with derogatory feelings towards the Garhwali language decreased around him. In this way, Parashar Gaud dedicated almost 25 to 30 years of his life to the Garhwali stage. However, he also participated in Hindi plays during his lifetime. Before the existence of the first Garhwali film, Jagwal, he had already performed in more than 50 Hindi and Garhwali theater plays. His Hindi plays include Dronacharya and Andha Yug, which were also selected by the National School of Drama.

But after successfully making the first Garhwali play, he shifted his focus away from Hindi plays so that he could fully dedicate himself to the Garhwali language. While actively working on Garhwali plays, he noticed that films were being made in almost every language around him. He desired to make a regional film in his own language. In 1972, he started preparing to make the first Garhwali film. It took almost 12 years for these preparations to bear fruit. In the meantime, around 30 to 40 of his songs were also broadcasted on All India Radio."

The preparations that began in 1972 finally achieved their goal in 1983. The film received so much praise that the demand for its premiere started increasing rapidly. The film "Gharjawain" was made under the banner of Shri Badri Kedar Films in the year 1986. The main credit for the success of the film goes to its producer, Vishweshwar Datt Nautiyal.

After this film, another Garhwali film called "Kauthig" began production. The pace of this film's production was quite slow. Meanwhile, the first Kumaoni film "Megha" was released among the audience. The producer of this film, Jeevan Singh Bisht, was working in a bank. In order to complete this film, he resigned from his job.

Present scenario

In recent years, some young individuals have made a special mark in the field of regional cinema in Uttarakhand. During this time, some new historical narratives have emerged in Uttarakhand's regional cinema. The Garhwali short film, "Sunpat," was showcased at the prestigious IFFI (International Film Festival of India) or Goa Film Festival. This film was directed by the emerging young director Rahul Rawat from Uttarakhand. The music for this film was provided by the renowned Uttarakhand youth band, Pandavas. It was also screened in Delhi and its surrounding areas. Most of the audience for this film comprised of young people. The film portrays Uttarakhand culture through the childhood experiences of two children. However, the film's widespread recognition among the audience is still pending.

Another film, "Paatal Ti," has also created history in Uttarakhand's regional cinema. This film was showcased at the Busan International Film Festival. Not only did it receive national acclaim, but it also gained international recognition. "Paatal" means earth or land, and "Ti" means water. The young director Santosh Rawat has adapted this film from a folk tale. The central character of the film is a child whose grandfather is in the final stages of his life. He constantly expresses his desire to drink water from a sacred and inaccessible place called "Paatal Ti." The film primarily revolves around the child's attempt to fulfill his grandfather's wish.

Conclusion: study provides a comprehensive overview of the historical evolution of entertainment sources in Uttarakhand. Through an examination of the development of entertainment options in the region, we have gained valuable insights into the changes that have occurred over time. From traditional performances to folk arts and community gatherings, Uttarakhand has witnessed a rich tapestry of entertainment forms that have shaped its cultural heritage.

The research has highlighted the significance of preserving and promoting these traditional entertainment sources, as they not only serve as a means of entertainment but also play a crucial role in maintaining the social fabric of the community. The history of entertainment in Uttarakhand showcases the deep-rooted connection between the people and their cultural traditions, reflecting their values, beliefs, and way of life.

By understanding the historical context of entertainment in Uttarakhand, we can appreciate the resilience and adaptability of the region's entertainment sources. Despite the introduction of new forms of entertainment, traditional performances and folk arts continue to thrive, demonstrating the enduring appeal and relevance of these age-old practices.

Moving forward, it is important to recognize the importance of preserving and promoting Uttarakhand's entertainment heritage. Efforts should be made to provide platforms and support for traditional performers, ensuring that their art forms continue to be celebrated and passed down to future generations. Additionally, there is a need for further research and documentation to capture the nuances and intricacies of Uttarakhand's entertainment history.

In conclusion, the history of entertainment sources in Uttarakhand serves as a testament to the richness and diversity of the region's cultural heritage. By appreciating and safeguarding these traditions, we can ensure that Uttarakhand's unique entertainment legacy continues to thrive and inspire generations to come.

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