

Importance of Music in Folk Theatre of Bhikhari Thakur

A Dissertation Submitted

To

Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy

By

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December 2022

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DECLARATION

I declare that the present M.Phil dissertation "**Importance of Music in Folk Theatre of Bhikhari Thakur**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Music to the Sikkim University under the guidance of Dr. Surendra Kumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Music, Sikkim University is my original research work solely carried out by me in the department of Music, School of Professional Studies, Sikkim University, Gangtok. The dissertation had not been submitted for any other degree or diploma in any other universities/institutions.

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CERTIFICATE

On the basis of the declaration submitted by Md Ibran, a student of M.Phil. I hereby certify that the dissertation titled- "**Importance of Music in Folk Theatre of Bhikhari Thakur**", which is submitted to the Department of Music, Sikkim University, Gangtok, Sikkim in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original contribution with existing knowledge and faithful record of research carried out by him under my guidance and supervision.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Surendra Kumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Music, Sikkim University. Under whose guidance, I completed my research. He motivated me to write a good and systematic dissertation and provided useful knowledge and sources. He channeled the torrent of his knowledge into me. As a result of which I was able to write this dissertation. I could not even imagine completing my M.Phil dissertation without him.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Head of the Department of Music, Dr. Krishnendu Dutta Sir for always helping me academically and administratively to complete this research as a Guardian.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the teacher of my department, Dr. Jayanta Kumar Barman, Assistant Professor, Music Department, Sikkim University for helping me in making the notation of Bhikhari Thakur's songs. I also thank Dr. Santosh Kumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Music, Sikkim University, and Dr. Samidha Vedabala, Assistant Professor, Department of Music, Sikkim University, for guiding me during the research work.

I express my gratitude to Dr. Amit Kumar Singh, Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism, Sikkim University, for his invaluable support and guidance.

I express my deepest gratitude to Padmashri Ramchandra Manjhi (A disciple of Bhikhari Thakur), Ramdas Rahi (Secretary of Bhikhari Thakur Ashram), Harivansh Tiwari (Director of Bhikhari Thakur School of Drama), Jainendra Kumar Dost (Director of Bhikhari Thakur Theatre Training and Research Center), Sarit Saaz (Folk Artist) and Parvez Yusuf (Secretary of Modern Theatre Foundation). You all people have provided me valuable knowledge related to my research and shared the original

tunes of Bhikhari Thakur's plays. Nevertheless, they gave me many books and magazines related to my research. I will always be grateful for your contribution to my research.

I would also like to thank Raju Rawat, Anurag Gajmer, and Akhilesh Kumar Pandey from the bottom of my heart. I got special help in writing my Dissertation from you guys. At the same time, I am also grateful to my teachers, juniors, and seniors, whose support and guidance I have been getting from time to time.

I would also like to thank my friends Asha Kunkal, Priya Kumari, Md Rabban, Lalit Oraon, Priya Krishna, Mahesh Kumar, Sujeet Kumar, and Sudha Priya. Who motivated me to write my dissertation and supported me in data collection.

In the end, I express my heartfelt gratitude to my Mother- Rabina Khatun, Father- Md Aslam, Sisters- Khushboo Khatun, and Roksar Khatun. Without whose support, motivation, and blessings it would have been impossible for me to complete this research.

Many people have helped me directly and indirectly in completing this research, whose names I could not write here. I thank all those people and will always be grateful for their help.


Md Ibran

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ABSTRACT

To imagine folk drama without folk music is like lighting a lamp without a wick because if folk drama is a lamp, folk music is its wick. Music has a special importance in all the plays of Bhikhari Thakur. He tried to make the theatrical dialogue lyrical by tying it in musical verses and using the traditional folk tunes in the plays according to the visual environment, weather, festival, situation and emotions of the characters. Shṛiangāra, Karūn, and Bhakti Rasa predominate mainly in their songs. By assimilating the popular tunes of traditional folk music like Pūrvī, Kajarī, Holī, Chaitā, Bārahamāsā, Pachāra, Sohara, Vivāha-Gīt, Jantasāra, Sorathī, Alhā and Lorikāyān, etc., he used all these as the tune of their theatrical songs.

The entire research dissertation is divided into 5 chapters-

In the first chapter, folk, folk theatre, the origin and development of folk theatre, the nature of folk theatre, and its elements have been described.

The second chapter discusses the Bhojpuri language, theatre, music, dance, and costumes of Bhojpuri folk traditions.

In the third chapter, keeping in view the various dimensions of Bhikhari Thakur and his theatre, a detailed description of Bhikhari Thakur's introduction, the social impact of Bhikhari Thakur's plays, Launda dance, Technique of theatrical performance, Costume and make-up, and Rasa-Bhava is described.

In the fourth chapter, the theatrical music of Bhikhari Thakur and its singing style has been described. Mainly traditional folk tunes, the use of verses in theatrical music, in addition to theatrical songs, all the compositions of Bhikhari Thakur, and the use of musical instruments have been described in detail.

In the fifth chapter, Interviews taken and compiled from various scholars are listed along with the research writing with the conclusion.

Mainly in this thought, the use and utility of music have been described in the play of Bhikhari Thakur. A tableau of the importance of folk music has been presented in the folk theatrical tradition of Bhikhari Thakur.

Chapter- I

1. Folk

Folk is the real identity of a particular society in a particular area. Introduction of that area, society, village, and city, the daily activities of the human living there, festivals, food, living style, attires, language, and cultural activities- music, dance, and drama which have been going on for years and years. It is going on being transferred from one generation to another, verbally and physically. Lok are related to the public, on which there is an effect of a particular area whether it is rural or urban. It can be understood in this way when we meet a people belonging to a particular area, then we can guess from their language, clothes, living style, and culture which person belongs to which region.

Have you ever wondered, without knowing anything about a person, why we call a person Bihari, Punjabi, Bengali, Nepali, or Kashmiri? Because in that person's nature, conduct, dress, culture, and language, there is an influence of the culture of that particular area, which tells that the person belongs to which particular area.

Many scholars have defined 'Folk' according to their scholarly approaches-

According to Dr. Satyendra- "Folk is that class of human society which is devoid of the consciousness or ego of elite culture, classicalism and erudition and which survives in the flow of a tradition" (Satyendra, 1971).¹

According to Dr. Vasudev Sharan Agrawal- "Folk is the great ocean of our life, in which past, present, future everything is stored. Folk nation is an immortal form. Folk is the worship of all weapons in knowledge and complete study. 'Folk' human being, the sovereign of the world and the manifestation of the world, is the spiritual science

of our life. Its welfare is the door of our liberation and a new form of creation” (Sharma, 2009).^{II}

According to Dr. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi- “The word ‘Folk’ does not mean district or village, but it is the entire population spread in cities and villages whose practical knowledge is not based on books. These people are used to a simpler and more artificial life than the people who are considered to be sophisticated and cultured in the city and produce whatever things are necessary to keep alive the whole luxury and sweetness of the people of sophisticated taste” (Kumar, 2009).^{III}

In the *‘Lokagītoan kī Sāanskṛutik Pṛiṣṭhabhūmi’*¹, Mrs. Vidya Chauhan has interpreted folk as a simple, natural, human society. In whose feelings, thoughts, traditions, actions, and beliefs the real welfare element resides (Kumar, 2015).^{IV}

The origin of the word Loka is believed to be from the Sanskrit root ‘Loka’ which means to see, that is, to gain direct knowledge. The English translation of the word ‘Loka’ is Folk while in the German language it is known as the word ‘Volk’. The word Folk has been derived from the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ language whose literal meaning is uncultured or idiosyncratic society. That is, the society and caste that live in the village and who do not have the knowledge of artificial modernity, classical, culture, and systematic way of living, they called Folk. Lok is beyond any rule and law, in which spontaneity, love, superstition, faith, trust, immobility, rudeness, customs, illiteracy, and pastoral are mixed like air. In another sense, the word Folk has been used for the entire population of the nation, whether it is related to a rural area or an urban area. One side tells us that Folk is pure the rural culture in which there is no scope for classicality, artificiality, and modernity and according to the other side, it is

¹ Book name - that is based on story telling play

known that folk is ubiquitous whether it is a rural area or urban area i.e. there is a wide range of folk and narrow meanings are obtained (Kumar, 2019).^v According to mythological texts, ‘Lok’ means the whole universe and the creatures living there. ‘Triloka’ has been discussed in Hindu scripture, according to which the whole universe is divided into three ‘Lokas’.

1. **Swargaloka/Akashloka/Indraloka**²- The Himalayas are the rounding area and the entire sky is called the region of heaven, which is the abode of the gods and goddesses.
2. **Prithvīloka**³- The upper surface of the earth, that is the entire land where there is water, forest, life, flat, and land, is called Prithvīloka, where human survives.
3. **Patāloka**⁴- Under the earth is Patāloka, whose path on the earth is a thin desert, the edge of the sea, and the river. Narmada River is also called the ‘Patāl River’. It is the abode of *Nāg*⁵, *Daitya*⁶, *Dānava*⁷, and *Yaksha*⁸.

The folk is wide, close, vast, universal, and infinite, which is impossible to be bound by any ‘*Lakshman Rekha*’⁹. Its scope is not limited to rural life only, but it is ubiquitous. Whether it is rural life or urban life, its digestion is done only by the folk tradition there. Lok is the outer cover of society in the form of the human body, from which we get to know about the history, present scenario, and lifestyle of that society. Just as we identify the human body of folk by its name, work, color complexion, dress, language, fat-slender, tall-short, and make-up of the external parts of the body

² Heaven

³ Earth

⁴ Hades

⁵ Snakes

⁶ Monster

⁷ Demon

⁸ Demigod

⁹ Boundry

and every human being, despite being a creature of 'human community', differs from each other in some way or the other in the same way the lifestyle, social and economic background, living, the culture of any country, province and society. The knowledge of these comes from the observation of folk literature. Folk Literature and Folk Arts are the study center of folk spirit, folk psychology, folk thinking, folk life, folk culture, and folklore, in which we study folk and folk life, folk dance, folk music, folklore, folk drama, folk painting, folk business, folk crafts, they do it through the process of making costumes, folk handicrafts- pottery, making paints on pots, baskets, clay, and wooden toys are all their specialties. Apart from this, customs, religious beliefs and traditions, worship, fasting, rituals, festival, magic, chanting mantras, superstitions, concepts, blessings, curses and proverbs, idioms, riddles, etc. The history and current background of any country and society can be easily known from the study of folk tradition.

Dr. Trilochan Pandey, to explain the detailed knowledge of folk tradition and all its aspects, classifies folk talks as follows-

1. **Folk literature-** Folk songs, Tales songs, Folk saga, Religious stories, Folk tales, Folklore, Folk drama, Animal stories and Bird stories.
2. **Folklore and customs-rituals-** Religious traditions, Folk festivals, Worship, Fasting, Rituals, Festivals, Processions, Fairs, Ethics, Social practices, Blessings, Cursing, Swearing, Greetings, Throwing salt, Siren milk teeth.
3. **People's beliefs and beliefs-** Scriptures, Tantra-Mantra, Chanting, Praise, Worship, Secular belief, Magic, Amulets, Auspicious-ominous related practices, Deluded planets, Superstitions-Diseases related, Superstition- related to the future

such as- Crossing the path of a cat, scoffing, someone's disturbance while leaving the house, etc.

4. **Folk arts-** Folk dance, Folk music, Folk drama, Folk crafts, Folk paintings, Folk business, Folk costumes, folk vehicles, Making bell boots, Making paintings on pots and gates, Making bamboo baskets, Making idols, Making clay and wooden utensils, Cutting spindles, Making dolls and toys, Puppet making.
5. **Folk Entertainment-** Children's games, Wrestling, Kabaddi, Gulli-danda, *Chuppam-Chhupai*¹⁰, Rope dragging, Puppet dance, Songs for babies, Grandmother's story, etc.
6. **Folk language usage-** Folk vocabulary, Indigenous words, Proverbs, Idioms, Riddles, Folk idioms, Folk etymologies, Satire, Taunts, Utterances, Streets, Naming, Local names, Commentaries, Special types of sounds, etc.
7. **Secondary subjects-** Folk symbols, Folk signs, Folk knowledge, Cosmic ideology, Swastika, playing the whistle, *Tappā*¹¹, Knowledge of weather, knowledge of trees-plants and medicine, etc. (Maheshwari, 2017).^{VI}

1.1 **Folk Theatre**

Before understanding folk drama, it is very necessary to know about the drama because without knowing drama it is impossible to imagine the folk drama. "Drama is that form of poetic art, whose taste is not only audible by the audience but also through visual poetry, that is, drama is an audio-visual poetic art whose creations are performed by actors imitating real events and presenting them to the audience on stage".

¹⁰ Hide and seek

¹¹ A folk song form

The theatrical performance performed by the villagers at the village's *Chaupāl*¹², open field, under a tree, or the door of a villager at the time of marriage, festival, planting and harvest etc., on any special occasion, is known as *Loknātya*¹³. The purpose of this is to entertain the audience by acting with music and dance. The main themes of folk drama are religious traditions, episodes related to Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana, social customs and family relations, and problems that the villagers present uniquely with limited resources in their region-specific language. Like the Sanskrit theatrical performance, there is no movement of the curtain to rise or fall, nor is there any heavy clothing to be dressed and decorated. Here, the same actor plays the role of many characters with great ease, with the primacy of humor and satire, with organic gestures, dance, music, and minimal change of clothes.

According to Dr. Shyam Parmar, “Loknatya is an ostentatious means of folk entertainment, which is relatively low from the stage of citizens but is related to the joy of a large mass of people. Since folk includes rural and urban people. Therefore, Loknatya is a platform for a mixed mass of people” (Yadav, 2013).^{VII}

According to Jagdamba Prasad Pandey- “Loknatya is that genre of folk literature which entertains the people by presenting interesting story events through dialogues” (Mathur, 2009).^{VIII}

According to Dr. Dwijaram- “Folk drama coming out of ancient times is a spontaneous expression of the folk tradition and the joy and gaiety of the people, for which folk stage is sufficient to portray” (Yadav, 2013).^{IX}

¹² Village meeting place/ Open Verandah

¹³ Folk drama

Folk drama has its distinctive feature, in which the seeds of ease and accessibility germinate. Decorate because there is no rule to perform it and accessible because you can do it with minimum resources.

A total of 11 features of folk drama have been described by Dr. Dwijaram Yadav (Yadav, 2013).^X

1. The language of folk plays is natural and vernacular.
2. Generally, the author of folk plays is not a particular person, so it is an expression of folk fantasies and feelings. Even if there is a writer of folk drama, then he expresses only the good and evils of his society.
3. There is a combination of acting, music and open theater in folk drama.
4. There is an open stage for the performance of folk drama and like in classical plays, there is no sequence of curtains falling and lifting.
5. In folk drama, sign language is sometimes used based on locality.
6. The plots of folk plays are not very tight, but the sequence of events gives pleasure to the audience.
7. In the performance of folk dramas, the same person disguises himself and plays many roles.
8. Religion and folk religious traditions hold an important place in folk dramas.
9. Folk beliefs and folk customs have predominance in folk dramas.
10. In folk plays, folk songs, proverbs, and humorous-satire dialogues are used.
11. Folk plays give a glimpse of the customs, and culture of folk life.

1.2 Origin and Development of Folk Theatre

The origin of folk drama can be considered with the origin of human on earth. When humans originated on earth, they neither had knowledge of language nor culture. In such a situation, the only medium for him to talk to his peers and share his expression with each other was 'acting'. Primitive humans must have shared their emotions, their inner expression, and the activities done in daily life, all the good and bad things with their companions only through acting. When they go hunting and when they come back after hunting, they tell their family members about all the events that happened during the hunt, be it the process of attacking the animal or the process of the animal attacking them in its defense or Be it the process of not being able to hunt the animal even after running away, all these incidents must have been told in a story by jumping and screaming and giving it a dramatic form.

In the present time, what we observe as the performance of folk drama genres being performed by us, the majority of them are not being authored by any specific person. Loknatya has been composed through the imaginations and experiences of the people, in which there is a predominance of folk world and folk conservatism, which is visible through folk life, customs, and folk culture, through popular folk songs, proverbs, and humorous dialogues (Yadav, 2013).^{XI}

Many scholars have expressed their opinion regarding the origin of folk drama-

According to **Dr. Smt. Gyanvati Vaid Mehta**- “Folk dramas originated among different concepts, such as public trust, popular folk trend, religious ceremonies and customs, heroic worship, entertainment and Manglik festival, etc. Then it was combined with dance and later completed with dialogue, which must have been the reason for the emergence of drama” (Mehata, Published year not available).^{XII}

According to **Dr. Shankarlal Yadav**- “It is a difficult task to find out the date of birth of folk drama or acting literature, but there is no difference of opinion in this matter. In the ancient era, literary drama originated in the form of folk drama broadcast on the stage. Mahamuni Bharata in his *Natyāshastra* has been called *Rupaka* is *Natyaveda*, which is considered to be the fifth Veda and which was composed by God Brahma for the enlightenment and enjoyment of all the castes. Its doors were open to women and Shudras also” (Yadav, Published year not available).^{XIII}

Shri Ramnarayan Agarwal says, “Even before the rise of the *Panchamveda*¹⁴ of drama, the folk drama or folk-righteous theatrical traditions had taken their form here, which acted as the building stone of the altar of the *Panchamveda* of drama”(Aggrwal, Published year not available).^{XIV}

According to **Padmashree Devi Lal Samar**- “The history of Indian drama is about five thousand years old. In the theatrical texts, such types of theatrical types are mentioned by the names of *Yantra-tantra*¹⁵, *Uparupakas*, *Bhān*¹⁶, *Sangītak*, *Shrigadit*, *Rāsak*, *Charchari*, etc.”(Mehata, Published year not available).^{XV}

1.3 Features of Folk Theatre

In general, from our ancestors, it has been forwarded from generation to generation that ‘Loknataka’ is the folk tradition of rural people, who are uneducated by meaning, classicalism, and untidy but love flows in it, the spirit is predominant, the ‘Ganga-Yamuna Tehzeeb’ of belongingness and brotherhood, the truth like Narmada’s ‘*Kanchan Neer*’¹⁷ and There is stillness and it is far away from all kinds of banality and urban modernity and classicalism. Our country India is a great republican country

¹⁴ Fifth veda

¹⁵ Mantras

¹⁶ A style of solo play performance, a kind of *Rupka* which is mention in *Natyashastra*

¹⁷ Pure water

whose government is elected by the people group, for the welfare of the people. Similarly, folk drama is also a theatrical tradition arising out of the sentiments of the rural masses. In which rural problems are presented in the form of drama, in front of the rural audience, by rural artists for their welfare. Its presentations are very simple, without paying attention to the impurity of language, the reality of acting, stage arrangement, dress decoration, make-up, and history-making, more emphasis is given to making the story of the play interesting to the audience. The theatrical performance of Loknatya lasts for the whole night or several nights, so the audience's interest in the play remains, so the play is made interesting by dancing or the entry of a comic character in the middle of the play. The presence of music is essential in folk drama. It is impossible to imagine folk theater without music. The music used in folk drama is taken from folk music, whose songs are sung in folk tunes like marriage music, Jatsār, Kajrī, Holī, Chaitā, Bārahamāsā, Soorthī, Tappā, Purvī, Alhā, etc., and Hindi literary verses, Chaupai, Dohā, Chaubolā, Sawaiyā, Sorthā, Kavita. The presence of music and instruments in folk drama depends on the language and region. Each region has its different language and culture, due to the different environments, different living habits, food, clothing, dress, language, music, and musical instruments, so there is a differences in the folk drama of different provinces and countries. Different folk songs and folk instruments are used. Generally in the form of folk instruments Dhol, Nāl, Harmonium, Flute, Jhal, Jodī, Bangle, Ektāra, Kartāl, Manjirā, Mandar, Nagādā, Ghungroo, Bell, Dafli, Khanjarī, Damru, Ghatam, Algozā, Pungi, Conch, etc. are used.

1.4 Elements of Folk Theatre

The Greek philosopher Aristotle described 6 elements of drama in his book 'The Poetic'. The world is omnipresent and William Shakespeare also composed

World-famous plays like Macbeth, Hamlet, Midnight Summer Dream, etc. based on these elements. These 6 elements are-

1. Plot
2. Character
3. Theme/idea
4. Language/Dialogue
5. Music
6. Dramatic aesthetic aspect

‘Bharata Muni’ has described the *Natya*¹⁸ element in detail in the sixth chapter of Natyashastra; he has considered the total number of Natya elements to be 11, which are as follows (Misra, 1988).^{XVI}

1. Rasa
2. Bhāva
3. *Abhinaya*¹⁹
4. *Dharmī*²⁰
5. *Vṛiti*²¹
6. *Pravṛiti*²²
7. *Siddhi*²³
8. *Svara*
9. *Ātodya*²⁴

¹⁸ Theatre

¹⁹ Acting

²⁰ Style of presentation

²¹ Attitude of play performance

²² Tendency of play performance

²³ Substantiation of play

²⁴ Instrument

10. *Gān*²⁵

11. *Rangamanḍap*²⁶

Describing these elements in detail, the author has considered the total number of rasas to be 8 and the total number of bhavas as 49, which is divided into three classes Sthai, Sanchāri and Sāttvik Bhavas and called its numbers 8, 33, and 8 respectively. The Abhinaya is divided into four parts namely *Angik*²⁷, *Vāchik*²⁸, *Sātvik*²⁹, and *Ahāri*³⁰. Two forms of righteousness, Lokdharmī, and Nātyadharmī, have been mentioned in detail. Discussing the four forms of Vritī and Pravritī, it is divided into Bharatī, Sātvatī, Kaushikī, Arbhatī and Avantī, Panchālī, Dakshinātya, Audramagadhī. Two forms of Siddhi were accepted as ‘Daivik siddhi’ and ‘Manushī Siddhi’. While describing Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni seven swarās and Tat, Sushir, Ghana, Avanaddha, and four Ātodya, he mentioned the five forms of the Gān Prāveshikā, Aapeshikā, Prasādika, Antara and Nishkram. He divided the ‘Rang Mandap’ into 3-3 parts based on its shape and size. From the perspective of shape, it is called *Chaturstha*³¹, *Vikrit*³², and *Triyastha*³³ and according to the size, it is called *Jeshtha*³⁴, *Madyamā*³⁵, and *Kanishth*³⁶.

In ‘Lok Sahitya Vigyan’, Dr. Satyendra has divided the theatrical elements into main 6 classes and further divided them into sub-classes which are as follows (Satyendra, 1971).^{XVII}

²⁵ Music

²⁶ Theatre house

²⁷ Physical

²⁸ Verbal

²⁹ Deep emotion with a sensation in the body

³⁰ Visual aesthetic aspect

³¹ Quadrilateral

³² Square

³³ Triangle

³⁴ Big

³⁵ Middle

³⁶ Small

1. Arena

- a) Guru or master
- b) Chief manager or caliph
- c) Singer disciple class
- d) Music composer
- e) Vaditr (Instrument players)

2. Practice

- a) Discipleship ritual
- b) Play practice rituals
- c) Process and practice of education
- d) Character selection
- e) Other things in the practice period

3. Music

- a) Musical object
- b) Musical planning of an object
- c) Language legislation
- d) Ornamentation and Rasa legislation
- e) Opinions and Messages
- f) Music Modification System
- g) Try new experiments
- h) The inclusion of theatricality

4. –

- a) Ritual of Establishment
- b) Nature of the theater

- c) Nature of backstage
- d) Stage decoration
- e) Lighting Legislation
- f) Vaditr (Instrument players)
- g) Acting type
- f) Solving errors (Propter)

5. Advertisement-Type

6. Prabandhadi

Many scholars have presented their facts and opinions on the theatrical elements and explained their use by highlighting the number of elements and the characteristics of the sub-elements. Despite the different names, numbers, and opinions, there is a similarity in the elements of all the scholars. There are two forms of traditional folk drama, traditional drama and folk drama. Although all the theatrical elements propounded by the above three scholars are suitable for both the forms of traditional folk drama. The traditional drama originated from the temples. The theatrical elements of Dr. Satyendra and Bharat Muni seem to be more meaningful for traditional drama. The performance of which requires a special kind of theatre, theatrical director/drama guru, costume, and troupe, and for folk drama, the theatrical elements of Aristotle and then Bharat Muni are logical.

1.5 Origin of Traditional Folk Drama, Public Concern, and Public Entertainment

‘Koodiyattam’ is the oldest folk drama of India, which is the remnant of the only surviving Sanskrit theatre tradition in the present time. Because it also contains some of the customs of Sanskrit theatre and craft which are invariably taken from Sanskrit

drama and some others which were purely regional and which have been adopted from the typical tribal or ritualistic accounts of Kerala. The authors of the first two plays, considered to be endowed with the characteristics of Kootiyattam, incorporated many elements of Sanskrit literature in their compositions, but also gave them such a local color and a distinctive style that made their form highly regionalized. The time is considered to be the Sangam period of South India, but due to the real and systematic promotion of the Koodiyattam tradition, Emperor Kulasekara Varman of the Second Chera dynasty has been accepted as the founder of the Koodiyattam tradition. He has written two Koodiyattam plays ‘Subhadra Dhananjayam’ and ‘Taptisavaranam’. Koodiyattam is mainly performed singly or collectively in temples by the *Deva-Sevaks*³⁷ or *Sevikas*³⁸ of the Chakyar dynasty. The main theme of whose performance is the context of Mahābharata or Rāmāyana. The theatre in which it is presented is called ‘Kutdambalam’. This is a part of the temple itself which is made in a rectangle or square form on the right side of the idol or just in front of the idol. Therefore, we can say that the Koodiyattam folk drama tradition originated from temples (Vatsyayana, 1995).^{XVIII}

From the origin of Koodiyattam drama, we can easily understand one aspect of traditional folk drama whose origin has been taken from the temple and the subject matter from Vedas, Purānas, and epics. The other aspect, which is originated by a particular person or community, focuses on the family, social, political and religious problems prevailing in the society. It can be understood through Bhikhari Thakur's theatre tradition and drama of the Nautanki style. It is originated by a particular person or community, in which the small story happening in the society and the problems arising out of drug addiction, migration, superstition, cheating, maternal

³⁷ Devotee of god (male)

³⁸ Devotee of god (female)

abandonment, wife attachment, greed, and jealousy in the rural masses is described. The play 'Bidesiyā' composed by Bhikhari Thakur is a native language drama based on the biggest problem of a rural society which is migration, in which the serious problem of the society is presented on the open stage with simple words, low resources, simple clothes, and make-up. Similarly, in the drama 'Sangeet Dakuoo Sultana' of Nautanki style, the story of a true and sympathetic dacoit of the poor is shown in the society, whose musical performance creates sympathy for 'Sultanā Dakoo' in the minds of the audience.

Based on these two aspects of traditional folk drama, two conclusions are obtained regarding its origin. 1. Originated from temples. 2. It has been created by a particular person or community according to the circumstances. Therefore, based on origin, it can be divided into two classes-

1. Traditional Drama

2 Folk Drama

1.6 Classification of Traditional Folk Drama

The extent and nature of the plot of traditional folk dramas are so vast that it is difficult to tie them together by any one parameter. To understand its dramatic subtle behavior, social importance, and theatrical storytelling of different regions, it feels the need to divide it into classes to understand the acting techniques, folk music, costumes, stage costumes, language, dialogue, etc. In 'Traditional folk drama', two words traditional and folk are associated with the word drama. Therefore, based on the origin of traditional folk drama and its subject matter, writing this whole word separately can be divided into two classes: traditional drama and folk drama.

- a) **Traditional drama-** Traditional drama is that form of folk drama tradition which has originated from temples or other religious places and whose subject matter is religious rituals, rituals, Yajna, festivals, Vedas, Purānas, religious texts, and epics such as Rāmāyana, Mahābharata., Shilapādikarma, Manimekhle, etc. For example- Koodiyattam, Yakshagāna, Rāmlila, Rāslīla, etc.
- b) **Folk drama-** For entertainment, folk drama is performed by rural artists on the occasion of various festivals, *Ropnī*³⁹ *Katnī*⁴⁰, fairs, and social activities. The story revolves around rural and family events and small celebrations and problems. The credit for its rigor goes to social orate in historical stories and stories and tales. Its presentations are usually done on an open stage. Bidesiā, Tamāshā, Bhānd, Beti-Viyog, Swānga, these folk dramas are presented for entertainment and social upliftment (Mathur, 2009).^{XIX}

Apart from this, based on the predominance of elements used in folk drama, it can also be divided into Music-based folk drama, Comedy-based, Dance-based, and Dialogue-based folk drama, etc.

³⁹ planting
⁴⁰ harvesting

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Chapter- II

2. Bhojpuri Folk Tradition

Bhojpuri folk tradition is very rich and ancient. Over the years, it has been traditionally transferred from one generation to another. These traditions include theatre, dance, music, festivals, language, dress, idioms, proverbs, folk tales, magic and abuses which are the identity and heritage of Bhojpuri culture. This is a sign of the history of Bhojpuri, whose folk songs, folk theatre, folk saga, and folklores have been merged as a huge storehouse of Bhojpuri history within themselves. The depth of the sea of Bhojpuri history can be measured only by the study of it. Its folk-song displays Bhojpuri customs in 16 rites of Indian tradition, as well as through its ethnic songs that emerged during the Vedic era, describing caste class division and its caste karma in front of the society through these songs. Caste division is a product of the Vedas, which is still prevalent in our society today. The description of Bhojpuri's history is also found in folk saga. Its story is generally based on true events that happened in history. Sorathī-Bṛujabhāna, Ālhā-Rūdala, Lorikāyāna, and Bahura-Gorin are the best examples of the folk saga. In Bhojpuri society, folklores, idioms, mantras, abuses, and sayings are common practice that depicts the life of the Bhojpuri language and culture. These proverbs, abuses, and idioms are merged in the atmosphere of Bhojpuri society in such a way that even in ordinary conversation, it automatically comes out of the mouth of the villagers. Generally, these are oral arts, which are available in the oral form in society and transferred from one generation to another. But in the present time, some scholars have tried to script it. As a result of which today among us are the literary works of Dr. Krishnadev Upadhyay's 'Bhojpurī Gīt', 'Bhojpuri Lok Sahitya' and 'Bhojapurī Grām Gīt', 'Bhojpuri Lokgāthā' by

Satyavrat Sinha, 'Bhikhari Thakur Rachnāvalī' edited by Virendra Narayan Yadav, Books like 'Bhikhari Thakur Granthāvalī' collected by Silnath Thakur and Gaurishankar Thakur, 'Bhojpuri Sanskār-Gīt' by Shri Hanskumar Tiwari and Shri Radhavallabh Sharma, 'Bhojapuri lokoktiyān' by Dr. Shashishekhar Tiwari, etc. are available.

2.1 Bhojpuri Language-

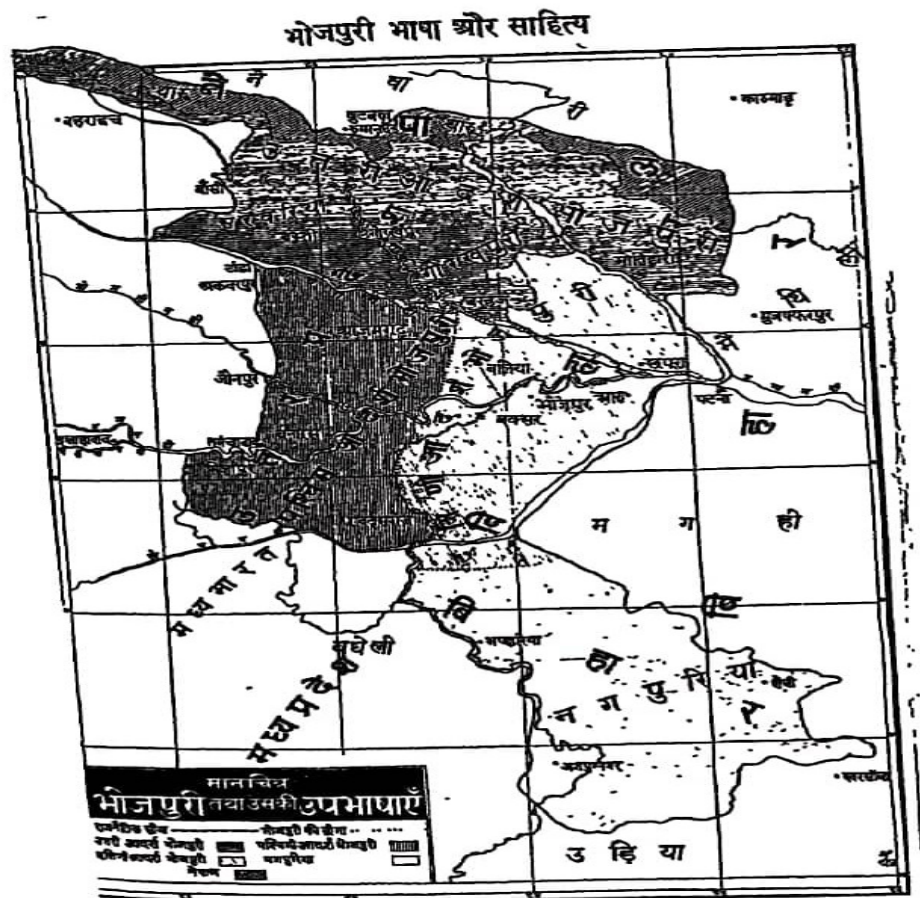


Figure-1. Map of Bhojpuri Speaking Region

(The picture of this map has been taken from the book Bhojpurri Bhāshā aur Sāhitya by Dr. Udayanarayan Tivar.)

The popularity of the Bhojpuri language extends to western Bihar and Jharkhand, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, the Northeastern part of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh,

and the Terai of Nepal. It's not only popular in India, but also foreign countries such as Fiji, Mauritius, and America. Constitutionally Bhojpuri is a form of Hindi language, but it is an independent language. Jharkhand has accepted the Bhojpuri language as a second official language. The Bhojpuri language was named after Alha, Udal and Babu Kunwar Singh's heroic land 'Bhojpur district'.

According to the Indian Language Survey, Grierson placed the Bhojpuri language under 'Bihari', the western branch of the 'Magadhi family'. Dr. Sunit Kumar Chaturjay placed it under the Western 'Magadhan family' in his book entitled Origin and Development of Bengali Language. In "Bhojapurī ke Kavi Aur Unakā Kāvya", Dr. Vishwanath Prasad placed the Bhojpuri language under the 'Bhojpuri oriental category' according to his historical and morphological studies. There is an influence of both Māgadhī and Ardhamāgadhī languages (Tiwari, 2012).^I

Dr. Udaynarayan Tiwari, accepting Grierson's views, considers the Bhojpuri language to be the western branch of the Māgadhī family (Tiwari, 1954).^{II}

Expansion of the Bhojpuri language in the present time-

In Bihar-

Patna Divisions- Bhojpur, Buxar, Kaimur, and Rohtas

Saran Division- Saran, Siwan and Gopalganj

Tirhut Division- West Champaran and East Champaran

In Uttar Pradesh-

Varanasi Division- Chandauli, Ghazipur, Jonpur and Varanasi

Gorakhpur Division- Deoria, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar and Maharajganj

Azamgarh Division- Azamgarh, Ballia, and Maus

Mejpur Division- Mirzapur, Sant Ravidas Nagar and Sonbhadra

Basti Division- Sant Kabir Nagar, Siddharth Nagar, and Basti

In Nepal- Nepal Terai region

Sub-Languages- Bhojpuri has three sub-languages- Madhesī, Thāru, and Nāgpuriyā. Madhesī in Champaran is known as the Bhojpuri region. This area lies between Gorakhpur and Muzaffarpur districts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states. As a result, the influence of the Northern Bhojpuri language of Ghaprakhpur and the Maithili language of Muzaffarpur is seen in the Madheshī language. The Thāru language is spoken by the Thāru tribe living in the Terai of Nepal, which is influenced by the mountain language of the Himalayan region and the Nāgpuriyā language is mainly spoken in the Ranchi and Palamu districts of Jharkhand, on which the influence of tribal languages Oraon, Mundri, Sargujia are reflected, etc. (Tiwari, 2012).ⁱⁱⁱ

Bhojpuri is a lyrical language, in which Bhojpuri adapted words from different languages such as Sanskrit, English, Urdu, Persian, Latin, etc. Despite the combination of many languages, it is quite different from other languages due to its distinctive talking style, lyrical rhetoric in words, use of emphasis, and uniqueness of word pronunciation. Bhikhari Thakur has also done an important job of maintaining the beauty of the Bhojpuri language by using such words in his plays.

2.2 Bhojpuri Folk Theatre

There are many streams of theatre in the Bhojpuri region. Describing the life story of Lord Shri Rām in ‘Rāmlīlā’ through various episodes of Rāmāyana and describing the pastimes and miracles of Lord Shri Krishna in the form of theatrical performance of ‘Krishnlīlā’ has been the main theme of folk culture of Bihar., Apart from this, the performance of the Ḍomakacha, Neṭuā Nācha, Dhobiyā Nācha, Goandā Nācha,

Jogīdā, Alaha, Sorāṭhī, Lorikāyan, and Bhikhari Thakur Nāṭya Paramparā is the backbone of Bhojpuri theatre.

The period of Bhojpuri Theatre can be understood by dividing it into two parts-

Bhojpuri Theatre before independence-

The names 'Devākshara Charit' (1884 AD) and 'Jangal Mein Mangal' (Around World War II) composed by Ravidas Shukla, first appear in Bhojpuri plays written before independence. On the occasion of Ramlila, the first presentation of the play 'Devakshara Charit' was performed in front of that times Collector of Ballia, D.T. Roberts. It was described by Dr. George Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India and is found in Dr. Udayanarayana's dissertation entitled 'Bhojapurī Bhāṣhā Aur Sāhitya'. The play 'Sudesia' is considered the first one-act play of Bhojpuri Theatre. It was composed by Chhangur Tripathi (Jeevan) in the year 1940 and was staged in 1942. Only after that, the play was confiscated by the British government.

Around 1858 AD, the gang of Sundari and Duniya Bai in Mirganj (Gopalganj) performed theatrically similar to Bhikhari Thakur's Bidesiyā play under the name 'Sundarī ke Gīt'. Guddar Rai's 'Swāng' and Buxar resident Ramskal Pathak's (Dwijram) 'Sundari-Vilīp' are the earlier works of Bhikhari Thakur, which is similar to Bhikhari Thakur's Bidesiyā drama. Therefore, it appears that Bhikhari Thakur's first composition Bihrā Bahār has been written by remembering the works of these eminent scholars. It was later presented among us in the form of the play Bidesiyā. Bhikhari Thakur, the Shakespeare of Bhojpuri, composed a total of 12 plays, which started a new era in Bhojpuri theatre. These plays are- Bidesiyā, Bhāi Virodha, Beṭī Viyoga, Vidhavā Vilāpa, Kalayug Prema, Rādheshyām Bahāra, Gangā Snāna, Putra-Vadha, Gabaraghichora, Birahā Bahāra, Nakal Bhāanda A Naṭuā ke, Nanad-Bhāujāi.

After Bhikhari Thakur, comes the name of Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan who gave a new identity to Bhojpuri Theatre by writing a total of eight plays around 1942 AD. Some plays are- Naīkī Duniyā, Dhunamun Netā, Meharārūn ke Duradāsā, Joanka, E Hamār Ladāi Ha, Desh Rakṣhaka, Japaniyā Rāchhachha, and Jaramanavā ke Hār Nihachala. ‘Ulṭā Jamānā’ Written by Gorakhnath Choubey, a resident of Azamgarh, is the last play before independence. It was published by Satyug Ashram, Bagdurganj, and Shahabad (Pidit, 2004).^{IV}

Bhojpuri Theatre after independence-

After independence, a lot of promotion of the ‘Lohā Singh Theatrical Series’ in Bhojpuri Theatre was done, which was a theatrical series of comedy-based radio dramas. The credit for its construction goes to Rameshwar Singh Kashyap. Influenced by these theatrical series, Vimal Kumar (Vimlesh) and Dr. Mukteshwar Tiwari (Besudh) composed many plays. Even after the plays of Bhikhari Thakur, many plays were also staged in the Kirtaniya style. Ramvachan Yadav’s song-play, Ganesh Tiwari Prashant’s ‘Tohare Par Hamaro Gumāna’, Avinash Chandra Vidyarthi’s ‘Līlā ī Shrīrāma-Shyām ke’, composed by Bhagwat Sharan and staged by Public Relations Bihar ‘Sona’, Madhukar Singh’s ‘Teen Ghasiyāra’, Kanhaiya Prasad Singh’s ‘Anand’, stage presentation of ‘Mahesh’ and ‘Parwana’ by Danapur Natya Parishad and the One-act playbook written by Manoranjan Prasad Singh ‘Kitāb mean Ego Duniya Basal Bā’ are some of the main works of Bhojpuri language. After that, the plays written with new experiments in the Bhojpuri theatrical tradition include ‘Amalī’ and ‘Māṭī kī Gādī’ by Rishikesh Shubh, a solo play written by Dr. Vasant Kumar, ‘Akasarūā’ in Bhān style, written by Ramnarayan Upadhyay and performed

by Rangashree Bokaro plays 'Birajū ke Biāha', 'Shuruāt' written by Kedarnath Pandey and 'Apnā Apnā Dar' by Dr. Tyab Hussain 'Pidit' (Pidit, 2004).^V

2.3 Bhojpuri Folk Music

Bhojpuri folk music is a reflection of the culture, feelings, beliefs, and lifestyle of the people of the Bhojpuri-speaking region. This value is based on Bhojpuri culture as well as daily life, living, tradition, dialect, work, rites, seasons, festivals, and festivals of Bhojpuri-speaking people. Bhojpuri culture can be easily known if we understand the meaning of the words used in Bhojpuri folk songs and the hidden traditions and importance of historians in it. The fragrance of Bhojpuri soil comes from Bhojpuri folk songs. The melodiousness of their melodies attracts the sutras towards themselves. Be it a wedding song, Kajrī, Purvī, and as a festival song, *Chhath's*⁴¹ song "Maravāū Re Sugavā Dhanus Se, Sugavā Gire Murazāya". There are different kinds of magic in these songs. Bhojpuri folk spirit, Bhojpuri culture, and Bhojpuri tradition are strongly related to each other. Bhojpuri folk songs have been traditionally sung on various occasions over the years, but there is no proof of its indigenous composers. These tunes are simply being transferred from one generation to the next. Although the lyrics of these songs have been modified by modern musicians according to the times, circumstances, and occasions, no changes have been made to their tunes. Presently, thousands of songs have been written and sung in Bhojpuri folk songs like Ālhā, Sorathī, Lorikāyana, Pūrvī, Viraha, Jatasāra, etc. Attempts have sometimes been made to modernize these traditional folk tunes in the name of experimentation through modern technology and new musical instruments, but even today the beauty of these songs and melodies remains the same.

⁴¹ It is a very popular festival in Bihar. In this festival, people worship the sunset and sunrise.

Bhojpuri folk songs can be divided into the following parts based on their singing occasion, theme, and singer community- (Ibran, 2021).^{VI}

1. **Sanskār Gīt**- Godabharāī Gīt, Sohara, Chhaṭṭi ke Gīt, Muandān Gīt, Janeū Gīt, Parichhāvan Gīt, Vidāī Gīt, Nirguṇ Gīt, etc.
2. **Jāti Gīt**- Dhobiyā gīt, Pacharā, Ahīroan kā Gīt
3. **Shram Gīt**- Ropanī Gīt, Sohanī Gīt, Kaṭanī gīt, Jatasār Gīt
4. **Ṛitu Gīt**- Chaitā, Bārahamāsā, Kajarī, Faguā
5. **Festival Songs**- Zaṭh Gīt, Tij Gīt, Zaranī Gīt, Shiv-Vivāh Gīt, Kālī mātā ke Gīt, Holī Gīt
6. **Gathā Gīt**- Alhā- Udal, Lorikāyana, Sorathī, Kunvar vijayamal

Bhojpuri folk songs are mainly sung in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and the Terai region of Nepal. But it is famous all over the country due to its sweetness and special singing style.

2.4 **Bhojpuri Folk Dance**

It is impossible to imagine Bhojpuri folk tradition and culture without Bhojpuri folk dance because Bhojpuri dance is present in all dimensions of Bhojpuri folk art. Be it Bhojpuri Folk Natya or Gīt, like Bhojpuri music, it is associated with every happiness, sorrow, ritual, worship, festival, karma, caste ritual, etc. Just as Sohar is sung on the birth of a boy, similarly Pamariyā dance is performed on the birth of a boy. The Dhobi song is sung by the Dhobi caste and the Dhobia dance is also performed by them. That is why it is prevalent in Bhojpuri society parallel to folk music and folk drama. Jogidā Nṛitya, Naṭuā Nāch, Lauandā Nāch, Zaranī Nṛitya, Pāmvariya Nāch, Dhobiyā

Nāch, Ziziyā Nṛitya, Kaṭaghodvā Nṛitya, Domakach Nṛitya, Kariyā Zūmar Nṛitya, etc. are mainly famous in Bhojpuri region.

A. Jogīdā Nṛitya- The Jogida dance prevalent in Bihar is mainly performed on the occasion of Holi. Hence it is also called the Holi dance. It is performed on Holi song with lyrics by Jogirā Sa Ra Ra Ra. This dance is performed by a male dancer disguised as a woman, who is called a 'Jogin'. This is done by the villagers for entertainment purposes only. This dance is performed with the lyrics of instruments like Dholak, Manjira, Jhal, etc. The dholak player plays the dhol while carrying it on his waist and everyone dances together.

B. Naṭuā Nāch- This dance is the most popular in the Bhojpuri-speaking area. This dance is performed on all auspicious occasions like marriage, festivals, puja, childbirth, etc. in which male dancers dance in the guise of women like the Jogida dance. But this dance is performed professionally by the skilled and trained dancer of Natua dance in which there is a dance troupe and Dholak, Harmonium, Jhal, Organ, Manjira, etc. are used as accompaniment instruments. This dance is performed at high speed on the beat of the dholak.

C. Lauaṅḍā Nāch- Launda dance is not only a famous folk dance of the Bhojpuri region but also it is popular in the whole of Bihar. This dance is an evolved form of Natua dance, over time there are also traces of obscenity in it. The dancer who performs the Launda dance is called 'Launda'. Two streams of dancers performing the Launda dance were prevalent in the society- the '*Darwari Launda*'⁴² and the common Launda. Darwari Launda was given shelter by the landlord and rich farmer. The Landlords used to keep Launda in their own house.

⁴² Court Dancer

He used to physically abuse him along with watching the dance (Tiwari, Interview).^{VII}

D. Zaranī Nṛitya- This dance is performed by the Muslim community on the occasion of Muharram. This dance is performed by 10-20 dancers in a circle. All the dancers dance collectively while playing a special type of instrument made of bamboo. This instrument is called ‘Jharni’. This dance is performed on the Jharni song in which compassion is predominant. ‘Jharni Gīt’ is mainly dedicated to Hassan and Hussain. They are the grandson (Nāti) of Navi Mohammad Saheb.

Zaranī Song

Hāye hāssssya, sonā ke piyālā⁴³ le ke ammā robe jarabejāya;

Pī le ho bītā dūdh ke sarabatavo jī /

Hāye hāssssya, kaise piyābāū dūdh ke sarabatavo ge ammā;

Moro sir kaṭāū dusamanamoan jī /

E. Pāmvariya Nāch- In the folk dances of Bihar, the Pamwariya dance has special significance in terms of birth rites, which are mainly done on the birth of a son. Its main dancers wear Kurtā, Ghaghra, and Anklets on their feet and peacock feathers are tied on the head by tying a yellow Gamchhā. This dance is mainly performed on the song of Sohar in which there is mention of seeking, blessings and wishing for good health and the future of the child. Dholak, Khanjari, Jhal, Manjira, and Sarangi are mainly used as musical instruments in this dance.

F. Dhobiya Nāch- Dhobia dance is performed by the Dhobi community. Earlier this dance was performed by the Dhobi community as a hobby for their entertainment. But gradually, they became a professional dancer. The song in this dance mainly praises the Dhobi community and describes their livelihood. The main dancers

⁴³ Bowl

dance with *ghungroos*⁴⁴ on their feet, turbans on their heads, and *kartals*⁴⁵ in their hands. Along with another dancer, a well-equipped horse made of wood, tied around his waist, dances like a horse. Some male dancers disguise themselves as women and dance in groups. Mandar, Jhal, Bel, Dedh Taal, and Ransinga instruments are mainly played in this dance.

G. Ziziya Nṛitya- This dance is performed by a group of women on the occasion of Vijayadashami. This dance is performed by unmarried women in a circle. The main dancer has a pitcher with a hole in her head and a lit lamp is placed on the top of the pitcher. This dance is performed with equal footsteps on the beat of clapping. In this, the story of King Chitrasen and his queen is sung. Usually, this dance is performed at night, which makes it look very captivating.

H. Kaṭaghodvā Nṛitya- The Kaṭaghodvā dance was one of the most popular dances across Bihar during the 90s and was organized by the rich people on the occasion of the marriage ceremony. It was performed by a professional dancer, who danced with a well-equipped horse made of wood tied around his waist. Dancers often do this dance with a jump and fast body movement. Now it is slowly fading away. In this, instruments like Casio, organ, dholak, jhal, etc. are played.

I. Domkach Nṛitya- This dance is performed by a group of women, whose spectators and players are all women. In rural society, all the men go to the wedding procession of the boy. Due to this, there is a danger of theft in the house. Therefore, on the night of the wedding, the women of the groom's house stay awake all night and dance to the Domkach. In this, the woman becomes the man and presents the character of husband and wife in this dance. It is a humorous

⁴⁴ Anklet bells

⁴⁵ A kind of cymbal

dance, in which women openly joke and have fun as its audience is only women. It is forbidden for men to watch this dance.

J. Kariyā Zūmar Nṛitya- This dance is performed by rural girls for entertainment.

No special occasion or musical instrument is required to perform this dance. Girls do this dance with their friends in the rural game. This is a special dance for women. In this, the girls walk in a fast circular motion holding each other's hands and singing the song of Kariyā Zūmar.

2.5 Apparel

The dress of the Bhojpuri region is very simple but attractive. You can recognize at first sight that the man with the scarf around the neck, the mustard oil in the hair, the muslin kurta, and the Pān in the mouth is from Bihar. *Gamachhā*⁴⁶ or Gamchhī has special significance in Bihar. The elders say that the Gamachhā is very beneficial and is used in many works. If it is sunny while working in the field, put it on your head, if you are sweating, then wipe the sweat, if you go while working then lie down under a tree, if you feel cold, then tie it to your ear. If there is an injury or something is cut, then tie it there. In the Bhojpuri region, it is said about Gamachhā, “*Ek Panth*⁴⁷ *Anek Kaam*”.

Like the whole world, there are two classes in Bihar- upper class and lower class. The lower classes are economically weaker, the men-wearing lungi, gamchhā, slippers, and cotton cloth kurtā and the women- wearing Sarees, petticoat, and Blouses.

Dhoti, Kurtā, Mirzai, Salemsahi, and Turban are worn on the head, also known as ‘Safa’. In the Bhojpuri region, the yellow color has special significance in marriages,

⁴⁶ A kind of towel

⁴⁷ Cult

religious rituals, festivals, and worship. Therefore, all of them generally wear yellow-colored clothes on the auspicious occasion.

The woman keeps a dupatta and sari on her head in the form of a veil and wears a Sari, petticoat, Blouse, Lehengā, Choli, Kurti, Pajamā, Dupattā, Phadok, etc. Women have a special kind of attachment to jewelry and in Bihar jewelry is considered as ‘*Stridhan*⁴⁸. The women here especially wear Anklets, Nettles, Bangles, Bracelets, *Nthia*⁴⁹, *Bulki*, *Besar*⁵⁰, *Kanthi*⁵¹, Armband, Waist Belts, Rings, *Bindi*⁵², *Kanphool*⁵³, *Jhumkā*⁵⁴, *Kānbali*⁵⁵, *Kundal Pajaniyā*⁵⁶, *Mangtika*, *Chandharhar*⁵⁷, etc. Hair make-up is also more important in women. She adorns the hair in different ways and applies clips, ribbons, and carrots to the hair to enhance its beauty. *Godanā*⁵⁸ is a tradition in Bihar. Godana is done only by a particular community. They sing a special type of song while they doing Godanā, which is called ‘Godanā-Gīt’. The tattoo is the modern form of Godana, which is very much in vogue among the youth in the city today. Youth today wear tattoos on their bodies for fashion (Patel, 5th Sept. 2016).^{VIII}

2.6 Proverb

The proverb has been of great importance in the Bhojpuri region. It describes through its proverbs Bhojpuri’s history, geography, living habits, policy and public behavior, caste, public world, and the then economic, social, political, and administrative condition of Bhojpuri. Defining a proverb is difficult, but it can be easily understood

⁴⁸ Wealth of women

⁴⁹ Nose ring

⁵⁰ Nose pin

⁵¹ A kind of necklace

⁵² A decorative mark worn in the middle of the forehead by Indian women

⁵³ Ear pin in the shape of a flower

⁵⁴ Earring

⁵⁵ A kind of earring

⁵⁶ Anklet

⁵⁷ Silver necklace

⁵⁸ Tattoo

by keeping its symptoms in mind. Keeping in view the form, meaning, and episode, the following characteristics have been given (Tiwari, 2012).^{IX}

1. The proverb is a concise and formulaic statement expressed in a freestyle.
2. The meaning of the proverb is both a sentence and a satire, but in terms of numbers, there are more sarcasm-dominant proverbs.
3. The expression style of most of the proverbs is touching and eloquent.
4. The language of proverb is usually ornate and lyrical.
5. The vocabulary and syntax of proverbs are mostly based on the actual and practical language of colloquial speech.
6. The subject matter described in the proverb is based on the common awareness and direct knowledge of the people.
7. The proverb is accepted by the entire public community.
8. The use of proverbs is to inform, instruct, invoke and nurture a fact, belief, or situation as it may be.

Some Proverb prevalent in the Bhojpuri region which indicate the history, economic, social, political, religious, and nature of Bhojpuri culture and its trade are as follows-

Based on social life-

1. Jāisan desa, oisan *bhesa*⁵⁹

Meaning- One should dress according to the country.

⁵⁹ Guise

2. Sās nā nanada, ghar apane annada ।

Meaning- Without a mother-in-law and sister-in-law, the home is happy for the daughter-in-law.

Based on economic life-

1. Uttam khetī je *har gahā*⁶⁰, mādhyam khetī je sanga rahā;

Je pūchhe har gail kahān, tekār ghar din dupahare jarā ।

Meaning- The best cultivation belongs to the one who plows himself. Moderate farming belongs to him, who lives with plows and whoever sits in the house and asks where is my plows, his house gets burnt in the day-afternoon, that is, it gets destroyed.

Based on religious belief-

1. Jaisan karanī, oisan bharanī ।

Meaning- What you will do, get the same.

Based on practical life-

1. Nekī ke nek raha, vādī ke bad raha ।

Meaning- The way of good is good and the way of evil is bad.

Based on history-

Ghode par haudā, hāthī par jīna;

Jaldī se bhāg gail vāran heanstīna ।

Meaning- Warren Hastings ran fast away by placing the hound on the horse and the gene on the elephant

⁶⁰ To plough the field

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Chapter-III

3. Bhikhari Thakur and his Theatre

The vibrant and dynamic, *Janakvi*⁶¹, playwright, musician, singer, dancer, actor, or simply a shop of all dimensions of performing arts, Bhikhari Thakur was born on 18 December 1887 in a barber family in Kutubpur village on the banks of Gangā in Saran district, Bhojpuri region of Bihar. He was an art lover since childhood. With the intensity of his art, he gave respect to Bhojpuri literature in the country and established Bhojpuri Theatre on the world stage with his wonderful creations. Seeing his phenomenal contribution to the field of theater and literature, Jagdishchandra Mathur called him an artist of Bharatmuni tradition and Acharya Nalin Vimochan Sharma compared his theater and literary works to Shakespeare and called him Shakespeare of Bhojpuri. In the year 1947, at the literary conference held in Saran district, Gopalganj's Mahapandit Rahul Sanskritayan called him a person with a precious unidentified diamond and in 1940 he was given the title of 'Rai Bahādur' by the British Collector of Shahabad's War fund (Rahi.2019.156).¹

Bhikhari Thakur was very simple and decent. His childhood was spent in poverty. He had four cows in his house, which he used to graze regularly, and playing with friends, he used to make an atmosphere by sweet singing with his little melodious throats.

He has described cow grazing in one of his songs as follows-

Man mean vidyā tanik nā bhāvata / kuchh din firālān gāya charāvata / /
Gāiyā chār rahī ghar māhān / tehi ke nit charāvan jāhān / /

⁶¹ People's poet

Bhikhari Thakur was born in a poor family where there was a great lack of education. The status of his caste in society is almost the same as that of the Dalit Community, who is surviving by working for the upper class and spending their whole life in their service. His father Shri Dalsingar Thakur was a very gentle and calm person who used to do the work of shaving as well as giving letters and messages in the village itself. His mother was a skilled housewife like most women in an Indian rural environment whose life was devoted to the service of her family.

Since childhood, Bhikhari Thakur was not interested in studies. Like ordinary children, he loved to have fun, cow grazing, play games with friends, as well as watching dancing and listening to *Satsang*⁶² and the hymns of Lord Shri Rām and Krishna. Due to living in poverty, he got the opportunity to go to school at the age of 9, but he was not interested in books at all, even after going to school for a year, he did not understand the alphabet. He has started work with his father as a barber and messenger of the village. Nevertheless, when he felt that education was very important, he made a *Baniyā*⁶³ named Bhagwan Das of his village as his guru and worked very hard in the presence of Guru Bhagwan Das to understand the alphabet and even learned tables from 1 to 10.

Even though Bhikhari Thakur did not like books, he was a man of knowledge. He was God-gifted with such a miraculous mind that he could remember things only after listening and his mind was very sharp since childhood. The willpower to know and understand things later inspired him to create so many wonderful creations. Whenever questions came to his mind or wanted to know the meaning of a verse or couplet, he used to ask the meaning of it from the great and talented Mahatma and the saints. He

⁶² Associating with good people for a spiritual path, where scholars give lectures about god

⁶³ It is an occupational community of merchants, bankers, money lenders, and owners of commercial enterprises.

used to listen to the stories of Lord Shri Ram and Krishna from childhood. He loved going to the Satyasang and attending the *Ārtī*⁶⁴ of Lord Rama and singing his hymns. He considered Lord Shri Ram as his ideal and Ramcharitra Manas as the basis of his poetry. This is the reason that despite having only alphabetical knowledge, he remembered the entire Ramcharitra Manas. It was his unwavering faith in Lord Shri Ram that he dedicated dozens of hymns composed by him at the feet of Shri Ram. He writes in the praise of Lord Shri Ram-

'Sī' kahe siddha hotā hai, 'tā' kahe tar jāya;
'Rā' kahe rāhat dhare, 'ma' kahe mamilā ban jāy (Yadav, 2005).^{II}

Bhikhari Thakur always wanted to help his family. He wanted to solve the financial problem of his family, so he went to Kharagpur to earn money by doing his family profession as a barber in 1807. There he started working in a shop to cut hair and beard. There he once got an opportunity to see Rāmlīla in the Medinipur district while doing work as a barber. The performance of Rāmlīla liked his mind so much that whenever Rāmlīla performed there, he used to go to see Rāmlīla after finishing all the work. Gradually, he started to understand its nuances, which impressed him so much that he ended his family work, returned home, and established a dance troupe with some *'Dalit people'*⁶⁵ in 1812 (Ramdas Rahi, 2022).^{III} Although, his dance troupe was not for any particular caste or class, still, most of the artists in his dance troupe belonged to the downtrodden class. From this, it can be inferred that dance and spectacle were seen by dignified and upper-class people with inferior and petty eyes. Bhikhari Thakur himself used to go dancing in the early days hiding from his family members.

⁶⁴ Hindu ritual of worship, it's a kind of prayer

⁶⁵ Downtrodden people

Which he described as follows-

Tīs baris ke umir bhaila / bedhalas khub kālikāl ke maila / /
Nāch mandālī ke dhari sātha / lekhar dihiān jaya kahian raghunātha / /
Barajat rahalan bāpa-mahatārī / nāch mean tūan mat rah bhikhārī / /
Chupe bhāg ke nāch mean jāī / bāt banāke dām kamāīan / /

In his biography, Bhikhari Thakur has tried to save the story of his entire life in one song. Every small and big thing of his life, which he remembered, has threaded every single incident from one end to the other in a sequence so that a tableau of his life can be presented in front of us-

Gīt

Nau baras ke jab ham bhailī / bidyā paḍhan pā⁶⁶ṭ par gailī / /
Varṣha ek tak jabadal⁶⁷ mati / likhe nā āil rāmagati / /
Man mean vidyā tanik nā bhāvata / kuchh din firālīan gāya charāvata / /
Gāiyā chār rahī ghar māhīan / tehi ke nit charāvan jāhīan / /
Jab kuchh lagālīan māth kamāve⁶⁸ / Ttab lāgal vidyā man bhāve / /
Māth kamāīan nevatīan chiṭṭhī / Vidyā mean lāgal rahe diṭhī⁶⁹ / /
Baniyā guru nām bhagavānā / Uhe kakaharā sāth paḍhanā / /
Alpakāl mean likhe lagālīan / Tekarā bād khaḍgapur bhagalīan / /
Lalasā rahe je baharā jāīan / Chhurā chalākar dām kamāīan / /
Gailīan medanīpur ke jilā / Ohīje⁷⁰ kuchh dekhālīan rāmalīlā / /
Ghar par āke lagālīan rahe / Gīta-kavitta katahūan kehū kahe / /
Artha puchhi-puchhi ke sīkhīan / Dohā chhanda nij akṣhar likhīan / /
Sādī-gavanā rahue bhaila / Likhe mean pahile bhor⁷¹ par gaila / /
Sādhu paṇḍit ke ḍig jāhīan⁷² / Sunī shlok ghokhī man māhīan / /
Nijapur mean karike rāmalīlā / Nāch ke tab banhalīan silasilā / /
Tīs baris ke umir bhaila / Bedhalas khub kālikāl ke maila / /

⁶⁶ School

⁶⁷ Totally closed

⁶⁸ Make money by shaving

⁶⁹ Attention

⁷⁰ Where

⁷¹ Morning

⁷² Bragging

*Nāch mandālī ke dhari sātha / Lekchar dihīan jaya kahian raghunātha / /
Barajat⁷³ rahalan bāpa-mahatārī / Nāch mean tūan mat rah bhikhārī / /
Chupe bhāg ke nāch mean jāī / Bāt banāke dām⁷⁴ kamāian (Dosta, 2019).^{IV}*

3.1 Theatrical Tradition of Bhikhari Thakur

Folk poet and dramatist Bhikhari Thakur, who became the voice of the people and talked about the people, was a good theatrical composer, theatrical director, musician, and a skilled dancer of ‘Natuā dance’. His knowledge skills were greatly sharpened by the experience of living in difficult conditions. From childhood, he started to do family business like shaving and delivering letters with his father due to poverty. In the rural environment, the people of the barber community, as a messenger, have to reach the message of all the religious rituals, rites, and festivals happening in the village to all the villagers and their relatives, for which they used to get a little grain only and nothing else. There is only a barber community in the rural society, which is associated with every custom of the society, religious ceremony, marriage, worship, sacrifice, and sacrifice done by women in the name of religion and tradition. This is the reason that Bhikhari Thakur got a chance to see and understand the internal problems of society and the oppression, suffering, and high-low, gender discrimination of women in the male-dominated society, which inspired him to compose theatrical and folksongs. Expressing his anguish caused by caste work while working as a rural traditional messenger, Bhikhari Thakur himself wrote:

⁷³ Scold

⁷⁴ Money

(Gīt)

Chhūrā chhūṭal nāch kā jar se || ṭeka ||

Māth kamāī dīanhi bolahaṭā chhūṭe nā kāianchī kar se |

Khāyak⁷⁵ majūrī māange kā beriyā⁷⁶, zagadā hot nāri-nar se || chhūrā ||

Jahān rel ke subahit⁷⁷ rāstā bhārā nā māangī ḍar se |

Grīṣhma tāp mean chiṭhī nevatī gire pasīnā gatar se (Yādava, 2005).^v

In ‘Bhikhari Thakur-Parichay’, Bhikhari Thakur wrote through a song, that when he was doing work as a barber in Kharagpur, he got an opportunity to see Rāmlīla. It was only after watching Rāmlīla that the spirit of dedicating his life to the theatre was awakened in his mind and only after that he returned home to Kutubpur and established a Nāch troupe with the help of rural youths. His best friend Ramanand Singh had a great contribution to establishing the Nāch troupe. Theatrical performances were practiced by the Nāch troupe on the *Dalan*⁷⁸ of Ramanand Singh. In the initial days, he only performed Rāmlīla and for this, he had to struggle a lot. Because, neither he had proper training in acting, singing, dance, and theatrical direction nor did he have experience in it, and at the same time doing Drama, Nautankī, Tamāshā, and Nāch was a very inferior job in the eyes of the distinguished rural people. This is the reason that his family members did not want him to go to the Nāch program. He used to go for Nāch, hiding from his parents. With time, the Bhikhari Thakur gave birth to a new theatrical tradition from his experience and gradually he started writing plays based on the problems prevailing in the family and society. He had a connection with rural life and the problems occurring there since childhood. He made these problems the subject matter of his play and wrote a total of 29 books with 12 plays that worked to make popular of Bhojpuri theatre in the world.

⁷⁵ To eat

⁷⁶ On occasion

⁷⁷ Convenient

⁷⁸ Hallway

The world was unaware of Bhojpuri theatre but the creation of these plays and their emergence of a new folk theatrical tradition made Bhojpuri theatre reach from floor to floor.

3.1.1 Literary Works of Bhikhari Thakur

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Birahā Bahār | 16. Yashodā Sakhī Samvād |
| 2. Rādheshyām Bahār Nāṭak | 17. Bhikhārī Chauyugī |
| 3. Beṭī-Viyog Nāṭak | 18. Bhikhārī Jai Hinda Khabar |
| 4. Kalayuga-Prem Nāṭak | 19. Bhikhārī Pustikā Sūchī |
| 5. Gabaraghichor Nāṭak | 20. Bhikhārī Chauvarṇa Padabī |
| 6. Bhāī-Virodh Nāṭak | 21. Vidhavā-Vilāp nāṭak |
| 7. Gangā Snān Nāṭak | 22. Bhikhārī Bhajanamālā |
| 8. Putravadh Nāṭak | 23. Būdhshālā ke Beyān |
| 9. Nāī Bahār | 24. Shrī Mātā Bhakti |
| 10. Nanad-Bhāujāī Sambād | 25. Shrī Nām Ratan |
| 11. Bhāanḍa ke Nakal | 26. Rām Nām Mālā |
| 12. Baharā Bahār Nāṭak | 27. Sītārām Parichaya |
| 13. Navīn Birahā Bāṭak | 28. Nar Nav Autār |
| 14. Bhikhārī Shankā Samādhān | 29. Ek Aratī Duniyā B har ke |
| 15. Bhikhārī Harikīrtan | |

He brought name and fame to Bhojpuri literature, Bhojpuri traditional folk theatre, and folk music all over the country and the world too. With his talent, he made Bhojpuri folk drama popular all over India as well as in Mauritius, Fiji, Sri Lanka, Burma, and European countries. Satisfied with the uses of easy, accessible, musical, and Launda dance of the Bhojpuri language, “Bhikhari Thakur Theatre Tradition” has been established all over the world. To save and preserve his biography, his list of

compositions, people's doubts, and every one of his works and experiences, he has successfully done the work of writing it by tying it in the tunes of traditional folk songs. Bhikhārī Pustikā Sūchī, Bhikhārī Chauvarṇa Padabī, Bhikhārī Bhajanamālā, Būdhshālā ke Beyāna, Shrī Mātā Bhakti, Shrī Nām Ratana, etc. are the result of this. In this sequence, he has tried to recite all his book compositions by writing them in a couplet-

Dohā

Surū se ākhir likhat bhikhārī sab kitāb ke nāma /
Shrī gaṇesh ke charaṇ kamal Mean karī-karī ke praṇāma / /
'Bīrahā bāhara' pratham maian gavā / Tab 'kalayug bahāra' sudhi āvā / /
'Rādheshyām bahāra' ho gailana / 'Beṭī-viyoga' ke charachā bhailana / /
'Kalayug prema' ho gailan pachhe / 'Gabar ghichorana' lagalan āchhe / /
'Bhāi virodha' sodh ke gavalān / 'Sirī gangā āsanāna' banavalī / /
'Putra badha' pustak parachāra / 'Tajabij kariha' 'nāi bahāra' / /
'Nanad bhaujī' kar sanvādū / 'Bhād ke nakala' ke buza' sanvādū / /
'Baharā bahāra' ke barabas dekha' / 'Navīn virahā' nīkhe pārekha' / /
Bhail bhikhārī nāṭak jāri / Jemean nakal bā chāri prakārī / /
Tab 'bhikhārī sankā samādhāna' / Sāthe-sāthe kar sunahu bakhānā / /
Ohi avasar 'bhikhārī harikīrtana' / Prem lagāi ke kariha' niratana / /
'Jashodā sakhī sanvāda' suhāvana / Tab 'bhikhārī chauyugī' pāvana / /
Chhapal 'bhikhārī jaya hinda khabara' / Vikarā ke neg sarādh jabara / /
Tab 'bhikhārī pustak ke sūchī' / Kharīdanihār ke jaisan ruche / /
Puni 'bhikhārī chauvaran padavī' / 'Vidhavā vilāpa' maniha' adavī / /
Padh' 'bhikhārī bhajan mālā' / 'Dudhsālā' ke chhapan bā hālā / /
Rrām nām mālā' padhi līje / 'Sītā rām se parichaya' kīje / /
'Nāva-avatāra' kahālā nar ke / ek 'Aratī' bā duniyā bhar ke (Yadav, 2005).^{VI}

3.2 Critical Analysis of the Impact of Plays of Bhikhari Thakur on Society

Bhikhari Thakur was a Bhojpuri villager, a poor folk welfare artist who was a part of this poor society. He saw, understood, and experienced their pain and suffering closely and for its welfare, composed a total of 12 plays, which strongly scoff at

social evils, rudeness, directionless, and drug addiction. These 12 plays play an important role in the progress and development of society, which is completely dedicated to the welfare of society. In the play Bidesiyā, the problem of migration and the pain of 'Swami Bin Birhani'⁷⁹ in the house have been shown passionately. In the play 'Beti-Bechwa'⁸⁰, the age disparity in marriages presented the unforgivable crime of marriage and daughter selling, in 'Gangā Snān' the misconduct committed by the daughter-in-law with the old mother, the serious problem of drug addiction in 'Kalyug Prem', etc. tried to make the general public aware which played an important role in building a clean, healthy and prosperous society.

These plays are as follows-

1. Bidesiyā
2. Bhāi Virodh
3. Beṭī Viyog
4. Vidhavā Vilāp
5. Kalayug Prem
6. Rādheshyām Bahār
7. Gangā Snān
8. Putra-Vadh
9. Gabaraghichor
10. Birahā Bahār
11. Nakal Bhāanda a Naṭuā ke
12. Nanad-Bhāujāi

⁷⁹ Wife without husband presence

⁸⁰ It is Bhikhari Thakur's play name and its literal meaning is daughter seller

3.2.1 Bidesiyā

The most famous and popular drama Bidesiyā written by Bhikhari Thakur is not only famous in Bhojpuri provinces but the entire Bihar, Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh. This play, written by Bhikhari Thakur in 1917, was performed by Bhikhari Thakur Natyā Mandal for 19 consecutive years, and finally, this play was published in 1936 (Mishra, 2014).^{VII} It is that play that facilitated Bhikhari Thakur's journey from barber to Bhojpuri Shakespeare. Almost all the elders, youth, and children of Bihar province are heartily familiar with the story of Bidesiyā drama and the theatrical songs used in it. The reason for this is that there are a lot of stage performances of Bidesiyā drama at every small and big festival. It is the love and heartfelt connection of the people that they even gave the name Bidesiyā drama to the Bhojpuri folk drama genre, although it is not logical to call a play a theatrical genre. It is a matter of great pride for both the play and the writer to get the name of Bidesiyā drama as a theatrical style. The play Bidesiyā is based on the biggest problem of Bihar which is based on the migration of the people, which Bhikhari Thakur immortalized with his writing. Bidesī, Pyārī Suandarī, Baṭohī, and the second wife (*Randī*⁸¹) are the main characters of the play, which Bhikhari Thakur is compared to Lord Shri Krishna, Radhā, *Udhoji*⁸², and *Kubdi*⁸³ respectively. The play begins with an invocation, after which it is shown that the protagonist of the play 'Bidesī' brings his wife 'Pyārī Suandarī' to his home and leaving behind her, he goes to Kolkata to work despite the consent of his wife 'Pyārī Suandarī'. After going to Kolkata, forgetting his home, his wife, his duty, and his responsibilities, he starts living a household life with a prostitute, and here in the house, the lovely beauty waits for her beloved for years and years. Protecting her body from the malevolent society with social contempt and filthy mentality follows

⁸¹ Prostitute

⁸² Friend of Lord Krishna

⁸³ Servant of kansch- kansch is uncle of lord krishan

'Pativrata Dharma'⁸⁴ and sings in her compassionate voice, lamenting because of the heart disorder caused by the pains and sufferings of her husband's separation-

Gīt- Pūrvī

*Kari ke gavānāvān bhavānāvān⁸⁵ mean chhodī kara,
Apane paraila purūbavā balamuān |
Ankhiyān se din bhar gire lor dhara-dhara,
Baṭiyā⁸⁶ johat din bitelā balamuān (Vidyārthī, 1979).^{VIII}*

A villager passerby is compared to Udhoji by Bhikhari Thakur in this play. He is going to Kolkata to earn money, with which Pyārī Suandarī expresses her grief by saying her heartache and requests that she should take the news of 'Bidesī' and make him feel his duty and responsibility by telling him her sorrow and pain and sending him back home. Batohi goes to Kolkata and meets Bidesī. He tells him about the misery of the Pyārī Suandarī and after persuasion sends him home. After Bidesī, his second wife (Randi) also reaches the village and then Videsi happily lives in the village with both wives. Bhikhari Thakur mixed the melodiousness of folk tunes, the agility of Launda dance, and theatrical songs in the melodious tunes of the folk saga, in such a way that the audience was forced to cry even if they laughed.

Bhikhari Thakur made lakhs of people aware of the problem due to migration through the performance of the Bidesiyā play and motivated them to contribute to the development of the village by staying in their village. But the situation of migration remains the same in Bihar even today. Even today, there is hardly any state in the country where there is no *Bihari*⁸⁷. Not only in the country but also abroad the maximum numbers of laborers are from Bihar. The people of Bihar are very

⁸⁴ To support husband in adversity

⁸⁵ House

⁸⁶ Raad

⁸⁷ Peoples of Bihar

hardworking, passionate, friendly, and *jugaru*⁸⁸, they mold themselves according to the situation. It is the misfortune of Bihar that despite being so hardworking, and dedicated, today the students of Bihar have to migrate to other states of the country for good education. Thousands of laborers have to leave their homes, their village, and their country to earn their livelihood and go to Kolkata, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Assam, Dubai, Nepal, and America. Ten decades ago, Bhikhari Thakur showed the social plight resulting from this serious problem to society and the government through the play *Bidesiyā*. But still, the problem of migration has always remained the same as it was ten decades ago. We and our government should reach the root of this problem and try to solve it so that our society can become self-reliant and prosperous.

3.2.2 Bhāi Virodh

Bhāi Virodh is a family drama in which three brothers; Upkari, Upadar, and Ujagar are the main character of this play. The Nature of all three characters is similar to his name. Upkari is the elder brother who is very intelligent and a little educated and keeps the family tied in one thread. The three brothers live happily together with love, affection, and intimate attachment, away from hatred, contempt, and jealousy. But *Upadar Bahu*⁸⁹ is a woman of greedy and evil character, who under the guidance of a village devious old lady, gets all the property divided and lives separately. The younger brother Ujagar, who is still very young, does not have a good understanding of right and wrong, binds him in the thread of his love and carries it with him. Upadar's wife, the mistress of cruel feelings like greed, deceit, and jealousy, in the greed of wealth, conspires for the death of her younger brother-in-law and kills him

⁸⁸ Makeshifter

⁸⁹ Updar's wife

along with her husband. But those who think badly of others become bad of themselves. A proverb is very famous in this context in Bhojpuri-speaking areas-

“Par dhan bānhe kapadā fāṭe” (Tivārī, 2012).^{IX}

Meaning- By tying the property of others, one's cloth is torn.

That's exactly what happened with Upadar, his wife threatens him that if he brings a lot of jewels and gives it to them, then she will stay with him otherwise she will leave him and go somewhere else. In wife's love, Upadar has to steal the valuables but he was caught. The calm and generous-hearted Upkar takes all the blame on himself to save his brother. But the constable comes to know the truth that the culprit is Upadar, from which he takes custody of Upadar again after leaving the 'Upkar' and fines Upakar, and locks him in jail. When Upkar and his wife came to know that the younger brother was murdered by Upadar and his wife, they both mourn the disconnection of the younger brother Ujagar's death and the drama finally comes to an end.

Both good and bad feelings arise in the human mind. Sometimes the bad feelings overpower the good feelings of humans and force them to do bad things. In this play, Bhikhari Thakur gave the message of living with love, affection, and mutual companionship by abandoning the cruel buildings created due to attachment, greed, and jealousy. According to him, a joint family is a happy and prosperous family so we should live together in a family with love and care.

3.2.3 Beṭī Viyog

The main five characters of this play are- Lobha (Bride's mother), Chatak (Bride's father), Upato (Bride), Jhantu (Groom), and Panditji. Chatak is a poor farmer and father of a young daughter who is under a marriageable age. While taunting Chatak

and his wife, people always ask the same question: The daughter has grown so old, when will you get her married? But they have nothing to answer this question as they do not have enough money to get their daughter married by giving a 'dowry'. So to find a solution to this problem, he gets his daughter married to an old rich man with the help of 'Pandit ji'. For this, he also gets a lot of money from the old rich man. Marrying a daughter for money is like selling a daughter to an old man; hence this play is famous among villagers by the name of '*Beti-Bechwa*'⁹⁰. The wife has some ambitions towards her husband that an old husband can never fulfill. So, after a few days of marriage, due to a lack of happiness, Upato comes back home after quarreling with her old husband. After that, his old husband also comes to her house to pick him up but Upato does not want to go back. There have a lot of fighting between both the bride's and groom's families. *Panch*⁹¹ comes and due to Panch's decision Upato has to go to the in-law's house with the old husband. The argument given by the 'Panch' is that "after marriage, the bride's responsibility is to serve the husband which is the ultimate duty of the wife, and also the Groom's house is also her house".

Watching this play makes it very easy for us to understand why Bhikhari Thakur's plays are called feminist plays. Most of his works have written on women's problems, which is probably the reason why Bhikhari Thakur is called the forerunner of Bihar's feminism. The main theme of the play is age-difference marriage, where a daughter is married off to an old man by taking money, in simple language, the daughter is sold in the name of marriage for money. But no any father can get his beloved daughter married to an old man. After all, why is the mother who has irrigated her fetus with blood for nine months forced to kill that newborn baby before it comes into the

⁹⁰ Daughter seller

⁹¹ Head of Village

world? In Indian culture, a daughter is called *Lakshmi*⁹², she is considered a boon of God, but what is the reason that today the girl has become a curse, not a boon of God? The biggest and main reason for this is the ‘dowry system’. Although taking and giving dowry is a crime in the Indian legal system, it is the biggest irony of our society that the lawmakers and the defenders of the law also have to give dowry in the marriage of their daughter. Bhikhari Thakur sarcastically writes in the context of selling his daughter-

Chaupai

Beṭī beancha ke dhāila’ māla | Toharā sir par chadhāl kāla | |

Chadhāl bansa ke pānī gaila | Jab se tohār jabānā⁹³ bhaila | |

Aisan bansa mean jamala’ kūra⁹⁴ | Dayā-dharam ke kaila’ dūr (Yadav, 2005).^X

Beti-Viyog play makes a strong attack on the big problem of society like dowry and all the other problems arising out of it and raises questions on Indian law and order.

3.2.4 Vidhavā Vilāp

This is the next part of the play *Beti Viyoga*. Playwright Bhikhari Thakur, taking forward the story of *Beti-Viyog* drama, has tried to show the ill effects of getting married to an old man by taking money. The main heroine of this play is a childless widow, who is the bride (Upato) of the *Beti Viyoga* drama. After a few months of marriage, his old husband died due to illness. A childless widow, who had just entered the threshold of youth, is forced to lead a widow’s life. For any young woman, there is hardly any problem in this world greater than this problem. The helpless and childless widows take care of their property with one of their poor *Gotia*⁹⁵ ‘Udbas’ and his wife, who is the widow's descendant. Udbas and his wife do a lot of service to

⁹² She is a goddess of wealth

⁹³ Goddess Lakshmi- Goddess of money

⁹⁴ Wicked

⁹⁵ Family of husband's brother

the widow Upato. Due to this, she entrusts ‘Udbas’ and his wife all the responsibilities for her property and handovers the keys of the granary and money box. Both of them, having found their dominion over the property of the childless widow, start thinking of themselves as the owners of their house and property. As a result of which the nature of both the husband and wife changes towards the widow and they both start interfering in her every small and big work. The childless widow had not been allowed to spend a single penny with her mind, even after being the owner of so much property. One day a monk comes to the widow's house and the widow donates some money. The Udbas's wife did not like this at all and is enraged by this. She along with her husband hatches a plan to kill the widow on the way by sending her on a pilgrimage. Udbas, along with his friend Updes, takes his widowed aunt to the forest on the pretext of a pilgrimage and in the night he comes out with a weapon to kill his widow *Kaki*⁹⁶. She starts crying loudly out of hoarseness and tearfulness in the mixed Sattvik expressions of disharmony and tearfulness-

Vilāp Gīt

*Maralasi re daiyā mor jāna, pāpī nīradaiyā*⁹⁷ ।

*Pati surapur patanī*⁹⁸ kalapat ban hokha’ bhagavān sahaiyā,

Gahanā-kheta-makān le lihalasi jāut māla-rupaiyā (Yadav, 2005).^{XI}

Hearing the mourning of the widow, a pity-hearted saint arrives there and seeing him Udbas and his friend Updes run away from the spot. The widow thanks the monk for saving her life and spends the rest of her day with the hermit, reciting bhajans and kirtans in devotion to the Lord. The curtain falls with the hymns of Lord Shri Krishna and the play ends.

⁹⁶ Aunty

⁹⁷ Cruel

⁹⁸ Wife

Attacking age disparity in marriage, Bhikhari Thakur has tried to show its result through the play of Vidhava-Vilap. According to him, for thousands of Indian widows like Upato, 'widow life' is a curse given by their relatives in the form of marriage in the greed for money, which burns an innocent life in the fire of hell. Living a widow's life in society is not less than a curse for a young woman, because our society harasses her by saying that the widow is an inauspicious, sinister. Even today, participation and entry of widowed women are prohibited in many social and religious auspicious works. The root of all these problems is age disparity in marriage, whose cruel and heart-wrenching result has been shown by Bhikhari Thakur in the play Vidhava-Vilap.

3.2.5 Kalyug Prem

Through the story of the famous folk play 'Kalyug Prem', Bhikhari Thakur showcases the social evils in the public mind by the name of '*Piya Nisail*'⁹⁹. The biggest problem of any modern society is narcissism and prostitution, which originated from the metropolis and reached the raw corridors of the village through the wide and long roads of the cities. The village elders, who occasionally plowed the fields and worked hard, used to consume 'toddy' to relieve the fatigue of their lifeless and tired bodies. Now, this form has expanded to Alcohol, *Ganja*¹⁰⁰, and Cigarettes and its addictions are completely ruining in the youth. By presenting the ill effects of this deadly problem from the cities, Bhikhari Thakur, through the play 'Kalyug Prem', inspired thousands of rural people of Bhojpuri province to avoid visiting a prostitute house, drug addiction and leaving these bad habits.

⁹⁹ Drunken husband
¹⁰⁰ Weed

It is the story of a rural man named Nisail engaged in alcoholism and prostitution, who has two sons and a beautiful, gentle, and generous-hearted wife. Due to being completely based on the life of alcoholic Nisail, people gave the name of this play 'Piya Nisail'. It is shown at the very beginning of the play that Nisail has sold all his property due to his alcohol addiction. His wife runs the house with great difficulty. Drunken Nisail sometimes lies in the village drain and whenever he comes home he fights with his wife for money for liquor. Disturbed by all this, the eldest son quarrels with his father and goes to Kolkata to work. A wife who is polite and considers her husband's service to the extreme of her responsibility, always requests her husband to give up alcohol, but Nisail's habit gets worse and worse day by day. When he does not get the money, he sells the door, window, door frame of the house, and even his wife's sari. He even breaks the head of his son to take the bangle given by the grandmother (Nani). The poor childless have to earn every rupee and it becomes difficult to get two times of bread. Many nights she has to sleep without eating food. One day Nisail brings the prostitute along with him to his house. His wife falling at the feet of the harlot pleads with her and also tells her son that she is your second mother, pray to her and begs her to leave your father's addiction to alcohol. But the prostitute makes fun of him and behaved annoyingly. In the next scene of the play, the elder son comes from Kolkata earns a lot of money, and starts living happily with his mother and younger brother.

In this play, Bhikhari Thakur tried to convert a pot of raw clay into a strong pot with great skill. An attempt has been made by the author to show the rasa of humor and compassion flowing parallel to each other in the play. While the character of Nisail infuses humor in the play with his antics, his wife becomes the goddess of compassion, pouring an ocean of tears from the eyes of the audience. In this play too,

the author has tried to express the pain of the child through folk drama songs by referring to the oppression of women and by making a theatrical form of the problem of drug addiction and prostitution in society, by making people aware of its consequences. Every effort has been made to save him from this bad addiction.

3.2.6 Rādheshyām Bahār

Bhikhari Thakur composed the tableaux of Lord Shri Krishna's child life in lyrical verse and presented the most captivating and breathtaking scenery of the play Radheshyam Bahar on the beats of the folk songs and drums. Most of the dialogues of this play are composed in music. He has made this play attractive with the use of verses like Dohā, Chaupāi, Savaiyā, Kavitt, etc., and traditional folk tunes like Birhā, Purvī, Jhumar, etc. Mainly in this play, Lord Krishna's childhood life, Rasleela with the *Gopis*¹⁰¹, banning and breaking the pitcher on carrying water from the Yamuna River, complaining to Mother Yashoda by the Gopis, etc. have been performed. The author has given a fascinating description of the complaint of *Bal*¹⁰² Shri Krishna by the Gopis to Yashoda *Maa*¹⁰³ and the false answer of Bal Krishna in her defense.

Balakrishna's complaint to Yashoda Maa by the Gopis-

Kavitta

*Mohan ke chālākī sunīan, najar karake bānkī,
Nit kankar¹⁰⁴ chalā-chalā ke gagarī par mārelana /
Aisan bepānī kabahūn dekhālīan nā bhailīan hama,
Chuna-chun ke gārī¹⁰⁵ sab sakhiyan ke pārelana /
Aisan bariyārī kehū kaise sahī jasodā jī,
Hātha-bānhī kari-kari ke cholī-sārī fārelana (Vidyarthi, 1979).^{XII}*

¹⁰¹ Young girls

¹⁰² Child

¹⁰³ Mother

¹⁰⁴ Pebbles

¹⁰⁵ Swear-word

Balakrishna's answer in his defense-

Pūrvī

Kahat bānī bāt kholī ke, sab sakhī¹⁰⁶ mili-juli ke;
Pani bharat gailī jamunā mean ho maiyā!
Ham gailīan ghāṭ para, sāthe-sāth haladhara;
Bachharū charāi ke piāve jal ho maiyā!
Ek sakhī bansī lelī, hāth zakazorī delī;
Ek sakhī chhinalī pītāanbarī h maiyā!
Kehu bole lāgal sekhī, bālak nādān dekhi;
Kehū kahe chhīnab ham kachhaniyān ho maiyā!
Moravā mukuṭ kehū, bānchal rahal sehū;
Dhūthe hāthe sir se utarālī ho maiyā (Vidyarthi, 1979).^{XIII}

In this play, Bhikhari Thakur has tried to explain the relationship between man and woman by describing the pastimes and miracles of Lord Shri Krishna. The relationship between man and woman has been going on for eternity like the Rasleela of Shri Krishna and the Gopis and will continue for as long as the world exists.

3.2.7 Gangā Snān

Bhikhari Thakur composed the play 'Gangā snān' to show the pain of the old mother and the devotion of young children towards their mother and to inspire society for maternal devotion. There is a special significance to bathing in the Ganges in the provinces of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In *Kartik*¹⁰⁷ month, all the small and big rivers of Bihar take the form of the holy river Ganges in the eyes of the villagers and they immerse all the sins of their life in mother Gangā by bathing in the Ganges. This day is like a festival for the villagers. A fair is held on the banks of the river. Along with dancing and singing, a program of folk drama is performed, in which villagers come from far and wide to see and shop at the fair. This play has been made attractive and

¹⁰⁶ Friend

¹⁰⁷ Name of the Hindi month

inspirational by presenting it in this form. Like the Sanskrit drama, this play begins with the worship of Lord Ganesha. After the 'Purvaranga Vidhi' is over, it is shown that the rural women plan to go to the Ganges bath but they disagree with taking the elders with them because the old people get tired quickly and the other young women can't do openly fun in front of the elders. Malechhu's wife gets ready to go to the bank wearing jewelry and new clothes, keeping the food items like *Thekua*¹⁰⁸, *Sattu*¹⁰⁹, Chilli, Salt, Pickle, etc. Malechhu also takes his mother along with him for a bath in the Ganges, due to which Malechhu's wife forwards the loads to her old mother-in-law to carry them. Due to excessive filth on the bank, the feet of the old mother slip, and all the clothes and food items fall into the mud and become dirty. Seeing this, Malechhu's wife becomes furious and makes Malechhu beat her mother and the old mother-in-law goes to a lonely place to bath in the Ganges. After bathing in the Ganges they all enjoy the fair. At the fair, Malechhu's wife is tempted towards a thug (Monk son), who took away all her jewelry and money, leaving her in a secluded place. Malechhu's wife, frightened by this accident, cries a lot and finds her husband, and tells the whole story. They realize that they treated their old mother very badly and left her alone in the fair, perhaps that is why all this happened. They both started searching for the old mother who is begging under a tree. They both apologize to him for their bad behavior and take her to home with great love and hospitality.

By focusing on maternal devotion, Bhikhari Thakur made the problem of superstition prevailing in rural society the subject matter of this play. In this play, dominated by female characters, he told the reason for the exploitation of the woman to the woman and tried to understand that the exploitation of the woman is done by the woman only in the form of the daughter-in-law, the form of mother-in-law, and also in her sister-

¹⁰⁸ It is a revered Prasada, offering To God, during Chhath Puja in Bihar

¹⁰⁹ It is a type of flour, which consists of a mixture of roasted ground pulses and cereals.

in-law. Although in this play the exploitation of the mother-in-law is shown by the daughter-in-law, an attempt has been made to show the reflection of all the aspects of this problem happening in society.

3.2.8. Putra Vadh

It is the story of a rural householder whose theme proceeds with the predominance of feelings of greed, hatred, jealousy, anger-cruel, etc. Based on love ornaments, the whole story is presented with the help of the Patākā and Prakārī. In the making of the story, the author has given special importance to the music composition along with the strength of the story, showing agility. The play begins with Lord Ganesh's *Vandanā*¹¹⁰. The protagonist of the play is 'Chapatram' who has two wives, *Badakī*¹¹¹ and *Chhotakī*¹¹² respectively. 'Chetram' is the son of Badakī who is an idealistic, calm nature, hard-working and obedient son who considers motherly devotion as his ultimate religion, He also considers Chhotakī as his real mother. One day on the birth of her brother's son, Badakī gives all the responsibility of the house to the Chhotakī and goes to the maternal house. A jealous, crooked old lady wasn't happy with the happiness and peace of Chapatram's family and was immensely waiting for the interrupting into the happy life. As soon as the elder goes to the maternal house, the old lady starts ratting out the Chhotakī. Influenced with greed, enchantment, and craving and greed to get jewellery and under the guidance of a crooked old lady, Chhotaki makes a physical relationship with a goldsmith (Vendors) who was selling jewelry in the villages by roaming heither and either. Chetram knew these things. So, she makes him a criminal in front of her husband by accusing her of being characterless. Trapped in the device of his wife, he plans to kill his son. Chhotakī

¹¹⁰ Prayer

¹¹¹ Older wife

¹¹² Younger wife

sends Chetram to the forest on the pretext of bringing deer meat, where Chapatram was already ambushed and as soon as Chetram arrives, he strikes him from behind. The son, injured by his father's blow, falls unconscious there. Thinking of death, Chapatram leaves him there and tells Badakī that Chetram had gone to the forest to get the deer's meat and is not there yet. The elder goes to the forest in search of her son and there finds her son in a dying stage. With the grace of a saint and the service of the mother, Chetram recovers and tells all the truth to his mother. After knowing the cruelty of their husband and the deceit of their second wife, they start worshipping God by staying in the forest with the sage there. Now Chapatram was the only deterrent in the meeting of the vendor and Chhotakī. To overcome this problem, Chhotakī sent Chapatram to the forest to get the plant that sings. There he meets the same monk who saved Chetram's life. After understanding the whole thing, the monk says that the singing plant is hidden in your house itself. When Chapatram comes home, *sonar*¹¹³ (Milanuan) catches up with his wife in the house. At the same time Saint, Badakī, and Chetram also reach home and the whole truth comes out.

Bhikhari Thakur has embellished this play with various forms of folk songs- Kajrī, Jhumar, Chaubolā, Chaupāī, and Bhajan-Kirtan. This drama shows love, greed, jealousy, hatred, deceit, and prostitution among women, showing the showy competition between women for good items of jewelry, clothes, and make-up which society should be aware of these problems. According to them, the desire to get something quickly without hard work takes us on the wrong path and compels us to do gruesome and cruel things, which can never prove beneficial for us, our family, our society, and our country.

¹¹³ Goldsmith

3.2.9 Gabarghichor

Gabarghichor drama is a unique example of women's empowerment. In the play Bidesiyā, Bhikhari Thakur has shown a woman, lamenting while waiting for her husband, and performing her 'Pativart Dharma' for the rest of her life. At the same time, in the play Ghabarghichor, the heroine of the play was presented as a strong and self-supporting woman. Like in Bidesiyā *Natak*¹¹⁴, Gabarghichor's heroine does not wait for her husband, who has gone to Kolkata to earn money. Rather she makes physical relations with another man for the sake of the child, who can take care of her during her old age.

Like the play Bidesiyā, the protagonist of this play, Galiz also leaves his wife and home and goes to Kolkata to earn money. After leaving to earn, he forgets to be with his family. The destitute wife takes care of herself by working hard. After 15 years, Galiz returns home and takes over Gabarghichor. He wants to take her with him to Kolkata, which leads to a fight between Galiz, Galiz's wife, and Gadbadiyā. A *Panchayat*¹¹⁵ meeting is called on. Expressing his authority over the three, Gabarghichor presents his argument in front of the panch.

Gadbadiyā- *Rāh mean pavalān khālī jālī*¹¹⁶ / *khajat ailan ego kuchālī* / /
Ropeyā dhāilān lelān nikālī / *le jā tūan khalihā jālī* / /

Galīz- *Gāchh lagavalān koanhadā ke, lattar*¹¹⁷ *gai pachhuāra* /
*Fara*¹¹⁸ / *parosiyā ke chhappar para, se ha' māl hamāra* /

Galīz's wife- *Ghar mean rahe dūdh pānch sera*¹¹⁹, *kehū joran*¹²⁰ *dihal ek dhāra* /
Kā panchāit hokhat bā, ghū sāfe bhai hamāra (Yadav, 2005).^{XIV}

¹¹⁴ Drama

¹¹⁵ Judicial meeting of the village

¹¹⁶ Purse

¹¹⁷ Plant propagation

¹¹⁸ Fruit ripening at neighbour's house

¹¹⁹ Kilogram

¹²⁰ Small amount of curd

After listening to the arguments of the three, the ‘Panch’ decides that after dividing the child into three equal pieces, one piece should be given to all three. Galīz’s wife does not happy with this decision. She starts crying and pleading with Punch saying in a compassionate voice- Don't try to hurt my child, Give to any of these two, I don't mind, just don't kill my child. Seeing the mother’s desire for love, compassion, and kindness, ‘Panch’ hands over the child to the mother, and with this, the play ends.

Bhikhari Thakur has tried to present the problem of migration as the main theme in this play too, but the problem of migration appears to be secondary in this play. The theme of this play is not only focused on the problem of migration like in Bidesiyā play but more emphasis has been given to the problem caused by it and at the same time, an attempt has been made to explain it through the judicial process that love, kindness, compassion and love relation is the deepest and largest. Relationships made for their selfishness have no existence. Bhikhari Thakur empowered the female character in this play and gave her special rights and gave the message of women empowerment to society.

3.2.10 Birahā Bahār

It is a dialogue drama performed in the Dhobiā dance style. In the decade of 80s and 90s, Dhobiā dance was very prevalent among the rural masses, and the Dhobi community used to sing and play along with the dance to remove their fatigue. Earlier, this dance used to guide people with the intellectual, knowledge, and poetry present in its subject but in the present time gradually, it has become obscene.

The washerman community keeps us and our society clean and healthy by cleaning our dirty and old clothes and making them new again. In the play, he compares his actions with the works of Lord Brahma and says that due to human emotions, greed,

jealousy, attachment, lust, and anger, the human still mind becomes impure. By devoting to god through Bhajan, Kirtan, and Saga, by listening to Satsang and the teachings of the saints, one becomes purified again by the grace of Lord Brahma. Similarly, clean clothes become dirty with dust, and the kitchen becomes dusty with oil vapor, dissolving these clothes in washing soda with soap and getting clean by slapping them on the plate.

This play without the content of the story has been threaded in the verse dialogue of washer man and washerwoman. Bhikhari Thakur has worked with great skill to carry forward the dialogue of the play by making it entertaining with the help of the harmonium's vocals, the rhythm of the chord, and the tinkling of the Jhāl, connecting it from one episode to another. In this musical drama, the special importance of musical instruments is seen. The loud beats struck by the player on the drums of the Dholak create a musical vibration in the atmosphere which generates enthusiasm in the mind of the narrator and a thrill in the heart of the listeners to listen and watch the performance with high concentration.

Bhikhari Thakur has tried to preserve the intellectuality, knowledge, Purānas, and utility of the epic, which does give impact on audience's mind through this play to maintain the authenticity of real work. The story before Ram's marriage and the small incidents of Purānas and epics were used in the form of Dhobi-Dhobin theatrical dialogue, describing the importance of Karma as well as the worship of God as an important duty of human life. It also gave the message of devotion to God.

3.2.11 Nakal Bhāṇḍa A Naṭuā Ke

Nakal Bhand and Netua Naach are two different folk dance-drama genres prevalent in Bihar, which Bhikhari Thakur has presented through the play ‘Nakal Bhāṇḍa A Naṭuā ke’merging these two genres by making it free from humour, romance and obscenity and tried to preserve it through the form of a healthy society, welfare and entertainment.

Nakal Bhand Ke- Bhand, the musical theatrical genre operating in Bhojpuri province can be compared with a metaphor called ‘Bhan’ described in the Natyashastra. Similar to Bhan, it is a one-act play, speech, and music-oriented theatrical mode, in which the instrumentalist and the musician have a special role in theatrical performance. They contribute to the narrative of the main protagonist of the play ‘Bhand’ and at the end of each verse end the verses with satirical sounds of Wah! Wah! Bhikhari Thakur has made family, social and religious problems the subject matter of this play and has depicted greed, jealousy, family differences, drug addiction, female oblivion, and dissatisfaction with the devotion of God. In the form of instruments, Dhol players, Harmonium players, Sarangi players, Gopi-Yantra players and Jhal players make accompaniment by making a semicircle.

Nakal Natua Ke- This is a unique method of dancing at a fast pace by a male dancer disguised as a female dancer, which is mainly a folklore dance. The dancers dance with sharp jerks in the waist, high jumps, and vigorous strikes on the floor of the stage. The Jamffar and the sparkly veil are the main costumes of the dancer. Generally, they keep the scarf around their neck and keep it on their essence while acting as female characters. The performers and the spectators who perform it are

usually simple and ordinary. Therefore, it is organized by the lower class community on the occasion of worship, marriage, and other festivals (Yadav, 2005).^{XV}

3.3.12 Nanad-Bhājāi

In the heart of women living in a rural environment, along with the feelings of frustrated psychosis of Shringar Rasa, by tying the free thoughts of *Nanad*¹²¹ - *Bhabhi*¹²² into one thread, by incorporating the problem of child marriage in itself, it exposes the longing for a 'Husband love' in the mind of the young woman. This is the shortest play composed by Bhikhari Thakur with a strong plot, whose heroine 'Akhjo' is child-married. She is married at such a young age that she does not even recognize her husband, but as soon as she steps onto the threshold of youth, the longing for her husband's love in her heart starts trembling in her heart like the tide rising in the sea. She shares the disorders arising in her mind with her sister-in-law. All my friends have gone to their in-law's houses after getting married. You are also in my age and you have come to my house after marrying with my brother. When I see you laughing and joking with my brother and when my friend talks about her husband, I also feel anxious for my husband. When I go out, people look at me with bad eyes, whistle, lure me and frustrate my mind by striking my youth with their sharp words. That's why I also want to stay with my husband. Please, talk to my brother, and send me to my in-laws house soon. If this does not happen, I will go to the forest and become a saint and I will live without my husband for the rest of my life. Taking advantage of their sister-in-law's magical relationship, the sister-in-law ridicules Akhjo and then explains to her with great love and advises her to be patient. Marriage is a social law, all the customs are done according to the social tradition and it is natural to have such thoughts in mind at this stage of youth. We should make a balance between these two

¹²¹ Husband's sister

¹²² Brother's wife

and move forward with the vehicle of our life. Due to the abundance of humor in this play, its plot is drenched in humor. The main focus of the beauty of this play is its theatre songs, which tempt the mind of the audience through the musical theatrical performance of the play.

By depicting the beautiful relationship between Nanad and Bhabhi, Bhikhari Thakur has tried to strengthen this relationship by dissolving sweetness in the relationship between Nanad-Bhaujai play. He has expressed her views in front of society and said that Nanad and Bhabhi are generally of the same age. Due to this they openly share their thoughts and curiosity in front of each other. In such a situation, Bhabhi must satisfy Nanad's curiosity about the truth of family and married life, and at the same time provide her education according to her experience to make a good, happy, and prosperous married family.

3.3 Launda Dance

Launda dance and the folk dance of Bihar are synonymous with each other. Whenever we talk about the folk dance of Bihar, the first thing that comes to our mind is the motion picture of the Launda dance. It is the oldest and most famous folk dance of Bihar among Bahujan Samaj. Launda Nāch consists of two words Launda and Nāch. 'Launda' refers to the dancer of this folk dance who performs this dance by disguising as a woman and 'Nāch' is the indigenous word of the dance. 'Launda Nāch' is a traditional folk dance style performed by male dancers of '*Bahujan Samaj*'¹²³ in Bihar province celebrated on various occasions of happiness and enthusiasm. This dance is famous for its special way of dancing. The dancers dance to the rapid rhythm of folk music by raising both their hands in the air and flexing the waist with flexed jerks. With high speed and high jumps, the stage made of 'Chowki' (Wooden bed, villagers

¹²³ Scheduled Castes

used to sleep) starts vibrating with the beat of the feet on the stage, hence this dance form is also known as ‘Chowki Tod Dance’ by the rural audience of Bihar.

This dance has always been the most important form of entertainment for the lower castes of society and its performers generally belong to the Bahujan community. This genre and its artists have always been looked down upon by certain caste-specific sections. The reason for this may be the obscenity prevailing in it, but after the establishment of ‘Bhikhari Thakur Nāch Mandali’ in 1917, Bhikhari Thakur freed it from obscenity and made it watchable for all sections of society. He presented the different problems prevailing in society in front of people of all castes by making them the subject matter of his dance. Though Bahujan Samaj was already involved in this dance form, Bhikhari Thakur made them a part of his dance troupe. By adding socially, economically, and religiously weaker sections- Bind, Yadav, Lohar, Nai, Kahar, Musahar, Kumhar, Gond, Dusadh, Pasi, Bhand, etc. to their dance group, they tried to strengthen their economic condition. This is the reason why Bhikhari Thakur never used to do any program without money (Dost, 10 July 2020).^{XVI} He streamlined the dance and made the content of his music worth watching and listening to all castes and communities without hurting any individual or community as a whole. Many scholars do not consider Launda dance to be a part of the Bhikhari Thakur Natya tradition because according to them, before the theatrical performance of Bhikhari Thakur, the dances were performed in Purvaral. It was the ‘*Bhava Nrityā*’¹²⁴ in which, mainly a mixed form of traditional folk dance like Natuā dance, Gonda dance, Dhobiā dance, etc. was presented. After the death of Bhikhari Thakur, due to the re-introduction of obscenity in dance, its status was lost in society and it was only considered marginalized by the upper castes. It is mainly organized by the villagers on

¹²⁴ Expression based dance

marriage, birth, worship, festival, and other small and big occasions. In the present time, the popularity of this mode has become completely secondary and due to the movement of reality, this dance form now seems to be standing only on the margins. But still, some dance troupes are doing a unique job of keeping this dance form alive through their painstaking efforts.

Costume- Usually, dancers wear jamffar and pajamas and put a scarf around the neck, which is used according to the need i.e. sometimes in the waist, sometimes in the neck, and sometimes in the construction of the scene. In the early days, dancers used to tie a black scarf on their heads which symbolized hair.

Instrumental Instruments- Dholak, Casio, Harmonium, Naal, Jhal, Khanjari, Manjira, Jodi, Tabla, Gopichand, Sarangi.

3.4 Play Performance Techniques

Bhikhari Thakur systematically arranged the techniques of his theatrical performance. Theatrical performance technique can be easily understood by dividing their entire program into two parts-

1. The part before the start of the play- Purvarang
2. Part of theatrical performance- Play performance

Like Sanskrit drama, Bhikhari Thakur's drama performance also follows the law of Purvarang. Wearing clean dhoti, kurta, and turban, singers and instrumentalists come to the stage and create a musical atmosphere for theatrical performance by playing *Lehra*¹²⁵ with Dholak, Tabla, Sarangi, Harmonium, Jhal, Gopi-yantra, etc. There is also a provision for a dance performance in the same Purvarang whose time duration

¹²⁵ It is a kind of musical wave

was decided according to the demand of the audience but once the play started there was no scope for dance. At the end of Purvarang, Bhikhari Thakur used to come to the stage with his hands folded, and with invocation, bhajan-kirtan, and exhortation, the story of the whole drama was briefly presented to the audience in emotional voices. They used to prepare the atmosphere according to the play and then the play started (Rahi, 20129).^{XVII}

The play usually started after 8 o'clock in the night because by 8 o'clock the women would have finished all the household chores and everyone would reach 8 o'clock comfortably after taking dinner. Bhikhari Thakur's dance program went on for the whole night. His dance program does not just mean theatrical performance. Before the play and after the play, there was also a program of music and dance, which was an important part of the Bhikhari Thakur dance program. Sometimes, even two or three plays were staged in one night.

Bhikhari Thakur used to find talented artists from the village and get them into his dance troupe. He used to prepare them for theatrical performances by giving them proper training in music, dance and acting. In his dance troupe, there were mahants and masters, who used to train the new artist.

Bhikhari Thakur uses simple language in his plays more than the importance of linguistic grammar. He has highlighted the usefulness and importance of indigenous words in his plays. With this, the common rural audience also easily understands the importance of the theme of the play. The narration of the play is very flexible and the organizers are free to create the stage. This is the reason why actors are free to make their entry and exit through a different kind of platform. Generally, an open stage is used for theatrical performances. Organizers used to organize his dance program

according to the capacity of the audience by making a stage in the village *Chaupal*¹²⁶, door, temple, or at the open ground.

His drama is musical. Dholak, Sarangi, Harmonium, Tabla, Gopichand, Jhal players sit with the chorus on the back and sides of the stage, which highlights the importance of music in the play with its art proficiency. All the actors in his play were good actors as well as skilled singers who used to sing songs during the acting. The play begins with the worship of Lord Ganesha and the entire play progresses in the melody of the music. The secretary of the folk artist Bhikhari Thakur Ashram 'Shri Ramdas Rahi' in his book "Bhikhari Thakur's Bhakti Bhavna Mein Lok Mangal Ke Dimension" has called the plays of Bhikhari Thakur as 'Sangeet Rupaka' (Rahi, 2015).^{XVIII}

In an interview with Shri Harivansh Tiwari, director of Bhikhari Thakur School of Drama, he said, "In the early times, plays of Bhikhari Thakur were written in verses. Later in the day, the prose was also used to reduce the monotony of the music and to make the drama more powerful".

In the early days, there was also a provision to perform 'Ramkalive' before the play. In which the family of King Dasharatha used to come on one side of the stage and the family of King Janak on the other side of the stage, and the dance program of Bhikhari Thakur started with the singing of Ramkalive songs. But it gradually faded with time.

¹²⁶ A place in village, where villager get together

3.5 Costume and Make-up

In most traditional folk and mythological dramas, the story of the king, queen, and deities is outlined. Therefore, their clothes and decorations are also very expensive, furnished, and attractive like kings and queens and gods and goddesses, and their heroes and heroines are adorned with ornaments and beautiful clothes. Wearing a crown on the head, shoes on the feet, a waistband on the waist, armbands on the arm, coils in the ears, *Jaridar*¹²⁷ kurta, pajama or ocher colored dhoti, the entry of a king or a godman on the stage is the normal dress and form of traditional folk drama. There is decoration, which can be commonly seen in traditional folk drama performances like Ramlila, Rasleela, Yakshagana, Koodiyattam, Jatra, etc. but Bhikhari Thakur, apart from all this, in his plays, the daily life of the villagers, social and family problems, high and low caste, the pain of women, and the reality of the rural scenario are depicted and used in his plays. He has tried to embellish it with the daily uses of costume and make-up.

The actors of his play used to wear clothes according to the scene of the play and all the actors had their different clothes. One artist did not wear the clothes of another artist. Some of the main actors had more than one outfit in the play, which they wore according to the scene of the play. For example- At the beginning of the Bidesiyā play, Bidesi is dressed as a simple villager in a Dhoti, Kurta, Gamachha, and as a new bride, the lovely beauty is dressed in a red *Bihauti*¹²⁸ Saree, necklace, and anklets in her legs, bangles in her hand and vermilion on the mang and when Bidesi leaves for Kolkata, she is shown wearing urban attire, a colorful kurta, pajama, and a cap. At the same time, Randi is shown wearing a brightly colored Bengali Saree and jewelry, and

¹²⁷ Studded

¹²⁸ The materials of at the time of marriage

the Pyari Sundari is shown in a cotton sari and no make-up-ornaments as she is disconnected while waiting for her husband.

In his play, the role of a female character was also played by male actors and female characters mainly used as a drama costume like saree, petticoat, blouse, salwar, suit, etc. at the time of the play. But the decoration of clothes was selected according to the economic, social, and political status of the character. Time, place, circumstance, and age also played an important role in the choice of costume. For example, in the play *Beti Viyog*, Upato is first shown as a poor rural young woman. She is shown in a salwar suit before marriage, as a bride in a red Bihauti sari at the time of marriage and as a widow in the next part of the same play and in the play *Vidhva-Vilap* in a white saree.

The costumes of the Labar (Joker) and the dancer were completely different from the other characters. Labar was dressed in black and white. The design of the cloth was slightly different as the audience used to laugh when they watch. Since the dancers of his play were only men who used to dance in the guise of women, they have worn jamffar and tied one scarf around the waist. Also, in the beginning, they used to wear a black scarf on their heads, which was considered as a symbol of hair, but gradually the dancers started using fake hair in its place and wearing lehenga, choli, and sometimes sari instead of jamffar.

The Naach artists of Bhikhari Thakur did not use modern make-up rather, at that time they used indigenous techniques for decoration. They used to grind the 'Murdashankh' on the stone and apply it on the face. He used to mix vermilion in the powder of Murdashankh and apply it on the face as per the requirement. For example, more vermilion was used in the decoration of female characters, and very less

vermilion was used in the decoration of male characters. Kajal was used for black color. By applying red-black paint on Labar's face, he was made a clown. In later times, they started to use powder, kajal, bindi, lipstick, bangles, necklace around the neck, earrings, etc. Like the costume, the make-up also depended on the time, scenario, place, and age of the character. At the time of marriage, the girl was decorated like a bride. Imitation jewelry was also used for anatomy along with make-up. All the characters in his play belonged to the village and the play was known only as the rural events. Therefore, according to the incident that happened in the rural scenario, all the characters of the play used make-up and dressed up.

3.6 Rasa-Bhava

No art can be created without emotion. Art's real meaning is the expression of the creativity of the mind by giving it an art form, which the artist expresses through his art skills by imitating the events happening around him and society.

Bhikhari Thakur is also an artist who made drama writing and its performance a medium of expression for the upliftment of the problems prevailing in society and guided the society with his writing. In his plays, all the small and big problems prevailing in rural society have shown the mentality, laughter-happiness, sorrow-pain, attachment-pleasure, favor, craving, pity, hatred, etc. Although in his plays there is an abundance of nine Rasa propounded by Dhananjay with Sthai, Sanchari, and Sattvik expressions, in his plays the predominance of most of the Shringar, Karun, and Bhakti Rasa is found.

Bhojpuri litterateur Shri Ramdas Rahi wrote the book "Bhikhari Thakur's Bhakti Bhavna Mein Lok Mangal Ke Dimension" after seeing the strong feeling of devotion of Bhikhari Thakur towards Lord Shri Ram ji. The compositions written by Bhikhari

Thakur for Lord Shri Ram Bhakti, Shiva Bhakti, and Mother Devotion have been described. Lord Shri Ram used to reside in his mind. He used to imagine that I wish if I could find such an artisan who wrote Sītaram's name inside his body, on top of his body and every breath.

Bhikhari Thakur writes in this context-

“*Jīv*¹²⁹ ke aandar rām nām likha' jīv ke baharī rāma ।
Kahe Bhikhārī swās swās mean sītārām ke nāma” (Rahi, 2015).^{XIX}

Bhikhari Thakur has strengthened the female voice in his plays. The folk songs used in his plays mainly express female anguish, in which the predominance of Karun and Shringar Rasa is mainly found. He has shown the pain of the woman and her status in society through his plays. He made the problems of the lower caste an important part of his poetry.

When we want to talk about the community and caste being inflicted by society in our writings, first of all, we assess the social status of the exploited community and caste. Bhikhari Thakur was a part of this exploited-spirit community who not only saw these problems but also felt them. What was the status of women and lower castes in the then society? How were they tortured? What was the attitude of society towards them? How were more of these abused? Bhikhari Thakur tried to present all these problems dramatically in front of society through his plays. When we outline any exploited-poor man, community, and caste in our compositions, then the primacy of Karun Rasa automatically starts showing.

Observing the plays of Bhikhari Thakur, it is known that he was a feminist playwright, who composed many plays and folk songs to strengthen the status of

¹²⁹ Body

women in society. To quote the Bidesiyā drama, one aspect of it shows the problem of escape, and the other side is the pain of the Pyari Sundari. In a male-dominated society, the woman has to bear the consequences of the wrong decisions and bad deeds of the man. When the story is of a woman living in such a society, then it is natural for her to flow ‘Karoona Rasa’ from her sorrow, pain, and suffering and ‘Shringar Rasa’ from her unconditional husband-love. There is also an abundance of humor in his plays because, without humor, the drama lacks entertainment and the audience gets bored. To solve this problem, he introduced a character named ‘Labar’ in his plays like a Vidushak of Sanskrit drama. The main purpose of this is to make the audience laugh without destroying the quality of the play.

Therefore, in the plays of Bhikhari Thukar, almost all the expressions are present, due to which all the 9 Rasas arise in the heart of the audience. But due to the stability of the expressions of sadness, love, humor, and faith in his plays, the emergence of Karoona, Romance, Humor, and Devotional Rasa is highest in the heart of the audience.

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Chapter-IV

4 Bhikhari Thakur's Theatre Music and Its Singing Style

Folk Drama and Folk music are complementary to each other. Where there is a discussion on folk drama and folk music it may be considered as two wheels of a chariot, just as if one wheel of the chariot gets damaged, it is difficult to move the chariot forward and in the same way, imagining the performance of folk drama without folk music is like lighting a lamp without a wick. If folk drama is a creature, then folk music is life, if life is taken out of the creature, then there is no existence of the dead body of the creature. Similarly, if music is taken out of the folk theatre, then folk theatre performance will cease to exist.

In all the plays of Bhikhari Thakur, music has been predominant. He has also tried to tie the theatrical dialogues into musical verses. How he has put the dialogue of *Devar*¹³⁰ and *Bhavi*¹³¹ in a delightful verse in Bidesiyā play, the meaning of the whole scene becomes clear in a few lines.

Dialogue of Devar-Bhavi- (Yadav, 2005).¹

Dohā

Devara- *Bhāujī sunahū bāt eka, bhāiyā gaye paradesa /*
 Nā jānī kehi hetu se, bhejat nahīan sanesa¹³² / /
 Bhejatā nahīan sanesa, bhes¹³³ tab lāgat nipaṭ udāsā /
Katahūn se jatan karab ham abahīan, pākā mānā bisavāsā / /

¹³⁰ Husband's younger brother

¹³¹ Brother's wife

¹³² Message

¹³³ Guise

Chaubolā

Bhābhī/suandarī- *Bisavās kehūan ke karav kaise, dhokhā deke piū¹³⁴ gaye /*
Bisavās sukh sohāg piū ke sāthe-sāth chale gaye / /

Chaupāī

Devara- *Bhaujī mānā kahāl hamārī / nahīan t karab turat bariyārī¹³⁵ /*
Asal bāp ke hāīan bīṭā / tean n sahabe ek chameṭā¹³⁶ / /

Chaupāī

Bhābhī/suanda- *Nā kuchh paībā marabā jāna / pāchhe hoibā khūb halakāna¹³⁷ /*
Socha-samaz ke chalā devara / chāhe le lā tan ke jevara / /

Bhikhari Thakur has used theatrical music in his plays according to the visual environment, weather, festivals, circumstances, and behavior of the characters. Most of the folk songs written by him have love, compassion, and devotional rasa. He has given a special place in his poems to maternal devotion, as well as he was a great devotee of Lord Shri Ram which is why he dedicated hundreds of hymns at the feet of Lord Shri Ram, that is, in his hundreds of hymns, he praised Lord Shri Ram. His devotion towards Lord Rama was such that even after not having full knowledge of the alphabet, he had memorized the entire Rāmcharit Mānas just by listening.

All the songs composed by him are tied only in rhythm and ascension, untouched by the rules of classical music. Due to this, artists can create channel through their lyrical songs easily to enter into the hearts of the listeners. He assimilated the popular traditional tunes of folk Kajarī, Holī, Chaitā, Chaubolā, Bārahamāsā, Sohara, Vivāha-Gīta, Jantasāra, Sorathī, Alhā, Pacharā, Bhajan and Kīrtan etc. and has composed

¹³⁴ Husband

¹³⁵ Forcefully

¹³⁶ Slap

¹³⁷ Worried

hundreds of songs with the help of these tunes. By using folk songs in his plays, he beautified his theatrical performances.

Bhikhari Thakur did not have a good understanding of poetry because he had only alphabetical knowledge. Therefore, he used the songs composed by him in the poetic composition Chaupāī, Dohā, Kavītā, Savaiyā, and Chaubolā, etc. He emphasized more on the rhythm, speed, pose, and use of *Laghu*¹³⁸, and *Dirgh*¹³⁹, more than their classical grammar (Yadav, 2005).¹¹

*Desaj*¹⁴⁰ words have been used in the songs written and sung by him, which they do in their daily routine or feel around.

4.1 Traditional Folk Tune

Traditional folk tunes are the tunes that make the hearts and minds of the dying rural people tremble in the air, which is being played by the rural people for years and years. These tunes are associated with their rituals, festivities, wedding ceremonies, and caste rituals in such a way that they have been unintentionally transferred from one generation to another for thousands of years. There is no written proof of who made these tunes, and why they were made, but people belonging to different communities and different castes have certainly put their pains, joys, and compassionate feelings in words on different occasions. We must have tried to hum which gradually transformed into traditional folk tunes these days. Kajarī, Holī, Chaitā, Bārahamāsa, Nirguna, Birahā, Pacharā, Jatasāra, Pūrvī, and Zūmar all these folk tunes are the beauty of our Indian culture, and on different occasions, the villagers sing and dance in their joyful rhythm and tunes.

¹³⁸ It is an indicator of one quantity of Mātrā

¹³⁹ It is an indicator of two quantities of Mātrā.

¹⁴⁰ Rural

Bhikhari Thakur understood the importance of these folk tunes and tried to present the problem of social evils, superstition, orthodox perceptions, caste discrimination system, and female oppression in front of the people through these tunes. As a dramatist, he made the scene of different stages, situations, festivals, rituals, and rituals interesting for the audience and captivated theatrical performance through popular traditional tunes of *Sanskār Gīt*¹⁴¹, *Jātī-Gīt*¹⁴², *Ritu-Gīt*¹⁴³ and *Shram-Gīt*¹⁴⁴ in his plays. This Bhojpuri folk tune is the main center of his drama, which attracts the art lover to himself and compels him to make a clean and beautiful society by accepting the evils of his understanding through musical drama.

4.1.1 Classification of Folk Tunes

Bhikhari Thakur has tried to see society from all the windows of the musical palace in the form of traditional folk tunes. Each window is the door to different festivals, rituals, beliefs, customs, rites, and superstitions of the society and their folk music defeats its path with the help of these windows which are Zūmara, Chaitā, Bārahamāsā, Kajarī, Parichhāvana, Gurahathi, and Nirguṇa-gīt. With the help of the tunes of these songs, sometimes in the form of a marriage song, sometimes in the form of a seasonal song, sometimes in the form of a caste song, and sometimes in the form of a labor song, it expresses the feelings of the people. If one has to observe the social and political background of a rural area and to be aware of the condition of life of the villagers living there and their tradition, then it becomes very necessary to know and understand the traditional folk tunes of that rural area. By understanding these tunes, the festivals, rituals, wedding rituals, religious significance, living habits, dress, language, weather conditions, harvest time, and the right time of harvest,

¹⁴¹ Sacrament song

¹⁴² Cast song

¹⁴³ Seasonal song

¹⁴⁴ Labor song

remain there. And the importance of community, division of labor and its importance and the mood of the villagers can be easily understood. These folk tunes have been classified according to the occasion, time, and communities of the singer so that their utility and specialty can be easily understood. Here, keeping in mind only the theatrical songs composed by Bhikhari Thakur, I have classified the folk tunes used by him into Sanskāra-Gīta, Jātī-Gīta, Shram-Gīt, Rutu-Gīt, and Other songs-

Sanskār Gīt-

a) **Vivāh Sanskā-** Parichhāvana Gīt, *Gurahathī*¹⁴⁵ Gīt, and Vidāi Gīt

b) **Āntyeshṭī Sanskā-** Nirguna

Jāti Gīt- Birahā (Āhīra), Pacharā (Dusādha), Dhobiyā-Gīt

Shram Gīt- Jatasār Gīt, Ropanī Gīt

Mausamī/Ritu Gīt- Kajarī, Bārahamāsā

Lokagāthā Gīt- Lorikāyāna, Sorathī, Ālhā

Other Sons- Purvī, Zumara (Ibrāna & Kumar, 2021).^{III}

4.2 Sanskār Gīt

Hinduism is considered to be a very old religion, which is also called ‘Sanātan Dharma’. According to ancient texts, Sanātan Dharma emerged after the arrival of the Arya in India, who considered the Vedas as the basis of living life and lived their life according to the Vedas.

In the Hindu religion, the time of children from coming to the mother’s pride to death is bound by the periphery of rites, as a result of which virtues, worldly knowledge, and the ability to work are included in the life of children. In ancient times, according to Gautamsmriti, a total of forty and according to Maharishi Angir, there is a mention

¹⁴⁵ The Offering of clothes, jewelry and make-up materials to the bride by the elder brother groom.

description of twenty-five sacraments. At present, its number has been reduced to sixteen. Conception, Punsavan, Seemantonnayan, Jatikarma, Naamkaram, Garbhādhāna, Puansavana, Sīmantonnayana, Jātakarma, Nāmakaraṇa, Niṣhkramaṇa, Annaprāshana, Chūḍanākarma, Vidyāranbha, Karṇavedha, Yajnyopavīta, Vedārambha, Keshānta, Samāvartana, Vivāh, and Antyeṣṭi are the sixteen sacraments and for each of these sixteen sacraments, there are many Sanskār songs in our society also available today. It is sung and played in the celebration of these rites.

Bhikhari Thakur has given a special place to some of the main folk tunes of Sanskār Gīt, marriage ceremonies, and funeral rites in his theatrical songs and has sung dozens of his folk songs in the tunes of Nirgun folk songs of the Marriage ceremony, Gurhaathi and farewell and funeral rites. He has used it as his theatrical song.

4.2.1 Parichhāvana Gīt

Marriage music has a special significance in Sanskār songs because there is a long chain of rituals in the marriage ceremony which fills human life with joy and gaiety. Bhikhari Thakur has gladly used the traditional folk tunes of marriage music in the form of theatrical music in his theatrical performances and the presence of these melodies is very helpful for the rasa in the soul of the audience present during his theatrical performance.

‘Parichhāvan’ is a ritual in which, when the bridegroom reaches the Bride’s house in the marriage, women apply curd and *akshat*¹⁴⁶ vaccine and perform ārti of the groom with betel leaves, vermilion, Lodha, and lamp or camphor. Through this whole process, a special type of song is sung which is called Parichhāvan Gīt which is a form of marriage music (Tiwari, 1977).^{IV}

¹⁴⁶ Unbroken and wet rice used in worship and rituals etc.

Notation

Bhatkhandey System

Tala- Kaharwa (Hindustani Tala)

Chhand -4/4

Lyrics

Parichhāvana-Gīt (from the play Beti-Bechwa)

*Chalani¹⁴⁷ ke chāla¹⁴⁸ l dūlhā sūp¹⁴⁹ ke zaṭakāral he,
Diakā¹⁵⁰ ke lāgal bar duāre bājā bājal he ।
Āmvā¹⁵¹ ke pākal dūlhā zānvā¹⁵² ke zāral he,
Kalachhul¹⁵³ ke dāgal bakalolapur ke bhāgal he ।
Sāsu kā ankhīyā mean aanhavaṭ¹⁵⁴ bā chhavāl he,
Āi kar dekhā bar ke pān chabhulāval he ।
Ām lekhā pākal dūlhā gānv ke nikālal he,
Aisan bakalol bar chaṭak devā ke bhāval he ।
Maurī lagāval dūlhā jāmā pahirāval he,
Kahat bhikhārī havan rām ke banāval he.*

Sthai

| - - R P | P - D - |
s s Ch La | Nī s Ke s
x 0

|| M - P P | M G R G | S R R R | G R S S |
Chā s La L | Dūl s Hā s | s s Sū P | Ke s Za Ṭa
x 0 x 0

¹⁴⁷ Sieve- Grain cleaning equipment

¹⁴⁸ Grain cleaning through sieve

¹⁴⁹ Grain cleaning equipment

¹⁵⁰ Termite

¹⁵¹ Clay pottery furnace

¹⁵² Black brick

¹⁵³ Ladle

¹⁵⁴ Darkness

| R - R R | G S R - | - - S N. | (D.) - N. S |
 Kā s Ra L | He s s s | s s Di A | Kā s Ke s

| R - S R | S - S - | - - R R | G R S - |
 Lā s Ga L | Bar s Du s | s s Ā Re | Bā s Jā s

| R - R R | G S R - | - - - - | - - - - ||
 Bā s Ja L | He s s s | s s s s | s s s s

Antara

|| - - R P | P - D - | M - P P | M G R g |
 Ām s | Vā s Ke s | Pā s Ka L | Dūl s Hā s

| S R R R | G R S S | R - R R | G S R - |
 s s Zān s | Vā s Ke s | Zā s Ra L | He s s s

| - - S N. | (D.) - N. S | R - S R | S - S - |
 s s Kal s | Chul s Ke s | Dā s Ga L | Ba s Ka s

| - - R R | G R S - | R - R R | G S R - ||
 s s Lol s | Pur s Ke s | Bhā s Ga L | He s s s

Note - a) Next remaining lines have the same notation.

b) Tune taken from Sarita Saaz through an interview.

4.2.2 Gurahathī Gīt

Almost all the major traditional folk tunes of marriage have been incorporated by Bhikhari Thakur in the play *Betī-Bechavā* or *Betī-Viyoga*. The *Betī Bechavā* play *Vemel*¹⁵⁵ - marriage and the big problem like selling a daughter for the greed of money, as well as makes us aware of every small and big ritual of traditional marriage in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Gurathī is one of those rituals which are followed by the

¹⁵⁵ Mismatch

procession. Gurhathī means the offering of clothes, jewelry, and make-up material to the bride which is performed by the elder brother of the groom. On this occasion, a special type of song is sung by the *Sarāthī*¹⁵⁶ i.e. the women of the Bride's house which is called Gurhathī-Gīt. This is a kind of abusive song in which the elder brother of the groom is insulted and it is said that whatever you have brought for the bride, everything is not up to the mark. This is a humorous song that is sung with a joking tone.

Gurahathī-Gīt (from the play *Beti-Bechwa*)

*Eh sudhar bhasur ke kaise deihoan gārī he,
Siyā jog le ailan kusum ranga sārī he /
Goṭā-pāṭī¹⁵⁷ jadidār subhag kinārī he,
Aancharī jarākāsi¹⁵⁸ gāanṭha zazakārī he /*

4.2.3 Vidāi Gīt

The last marriage ceremony is at the Bride's house in which both union and separation are seen together. Where on the one side the bride is getting away from her home and on the other hand, she is joining her new home with her in-laws. But the 'Farewell' ceremony is the name of separation, so separation is predominant in the farewell song, in which the Mother's love for the daughter, the Brother's love for the sister, and the elders with the blessings of the newly-weds give a compassionate farewell to the bride. Angling from the point of view of acting and visual costume, the farewell ceremony is very effective for the emotion that arises in the mind of the audience while watching the theatrical performance. Perhaps that is why Bhikhari Thakur used the folk tunes of the farewell song in his play and that made the feel of the theatrical scene of the farewell more impressive and attractive.

¹⁵⁶ Bride's friend and family

¹⁵⁷ The embellishment on the side of the cloths

¹⁵⁸ Gld and silver wire decoration

Vidāi-Gīt (from the play Beti-Bachwa)

*Girijā-kumāra! Kar dukhavā hammar para,
Dhara-dhar dharakat bā lor mor ho bābūjī /
Paḍhala-gunal bhūli gailā, samadal¹⁵⁹ bheandā bhailā;
Saudā besāhe¹⁶⁰ mean ṭhagailā ho bābūjī /*

4.2.4 Nirguṇa Gīt

Mainly at the funeral i.e ‘Antyeshti Sanskār’, Nirguna songs are sung with great compassion, in which there is a sense of pain in line with or even more than the farewell song. The two streams of this song, God’s grace and Man’s karma, are merged into one stream, in which heaven-hell and the good and bad deeds of man are described together. Nirgun Gīt secretes a stream of compassion, which arises from lamentation due to separation; hence the separation of lover and beloved has also been themed by Bikhari Thakur through this Nirguna Git. This song is mainly sung in the *Taar*¹⁶¹ and *Madhya*¹⁶² octaves. There is a special way of singing this song, each sentence begins with ‘Aho Ram’ or ‘Hey Ram’ words and ends with a special type of alap on the word ‘Ho Rama’ (Ibran, 2021).^V Bhikhari Thakur has used the melody of Nirguna songs in the separation of hero and heroine in many of his plays. The disconnection of Pyārisundari for her beloved ‘Bidesi’ in the play ‘Bidesiyā’ is beautifully depicted in the song Nirguna.

Nirguna-Gīt (from the play Bidesiyā)

*E kiyā ho more Rāmā, jab se parades mean bādn rahal ho rāma /
E kiyā ho more Rāmā, tanī nā sohāt¹⁶³ bā kavanoan ṭahal¹⁶⁴ ho rāma /
E kiyā ho more Rāmā, rahi-rahi ke manavān jāṭ bā dahal¹⁶⁵ ho rāma /
E kiyā ho more Rāmā, kavanī beyariyā¹⁶⁶ āi ke bahal ho rāma /*

¹⁵⁹ Drunk

¹⁶⁰ Purchase

¹⁶¹ High pitch

¹⁶² Middle pitch

¹⁶³ Pleasure

¹⁶⁴ Work

¹⁶⁵ Restless

¹⁶⁶ Air

4.3 Jāti Gīt/Cast Songs

India is a secular country whose constitution provides equal opportunity to all Indian citizens to freedom and protects religious freedom. The word secular has also been mentioned in its preamble as the soul of the constitution. Secular means to provide equal opportunity to all religions, castes, tribes, and communities living in India and to maintain its dignity and prestige. This is the reason that today hundreds of castes and tribes in our country are very happy in this country with their own distinct culture, customs, language, dress, food, music, and special way of living. All these castes and tribes celebrate the festivals and liberty in different ways with different names with their caste community and the customs of performances which are also different from each other. For example, if the marriage ceremony itself is taken, then a special kind of difference can be seen in the marriage ceremony of all castes and religions. Nepalese, Bhutia, Lepcha communities of Sikkim; Oraon, Ho, Santhal tribes of Jharkhand; The Barbers, Brahmins, Dusad castes of Bihar or Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Judaism and Buddhist religions of all India, all of them have completely different marriage ceremonies.

On different occasions, a special type of song is played by these castes, which is called Jāti-Gīt, such as Birhā-Gīt by Yādav or Āhir caste, Pacharā-Gīt by Dusādh, Nāi-Gīt by Barber, Santhāli-Gīt by Santhali, Oraon-Gīt by Oraon, and Nepali-Gīt by Nepalese. Bhikhari Thakur made similar Jāti-Gīt a part of his theatrical songs and has used Jāti-Gīt extensively in his plays as well as in other songs. Bhikhari Thakur belongs to the Bhojpuri provinces of Bihar state, so he has used only the tunes of the caste songs of Bihar, especially Bhojpuri province, as his theatrical songs in which Birhā, Pacharā, and Nāi songs are special.

4.3.1 Birahā Gīt

Birahā is a folk song of a serious nature which is sung by pulling the last words of each sentence of the song in masculine singing with heavy voices. Usually, this song is sung by men, but sometimes these songs can be heard from the soft throats of women also.

Birahā is a caste song sung by a particular caste. This song is started by the Āhir or Yādav community on different occasions or whenever they get a chance to sing these folk tunes. This is such a folk tune in which songs of joyful happiness and sorrow, love for her beloved, and the valor of farmers are all sung. Although this tune can be sung at any time, mainly the Āhir community sings it during marriages, festivals, religious rituals, and while grazing the cattle.

Bhikhari Thakur made these customs, religious rituals, Bhojpuri rural culture, women's harassment, and the problems of lower caste the subject matter of his folk drama and folk songs. He has always underlined the sufferings, psychosis, joy, and generous heart of the common rural people in his compositions, then how could a popular tune like Birahā, which is the heart of the rural masses, especially the Āhir community, remain untouched by this? He made his plays more popular with the rural audience by using popular tunes like Birhā in his plays.

Birahā-Gīt (from the play Birahā-Bahār)

Sādhu ke darabār mean nis¹⁶⁷ din hājir hoyā /

Kahat 'bhikhārī' ihe var¹⁶⁸ mangahu, juṭal bā sab koyā / /

Var mangahū prahlād se, marajī hoi jarūra /

Kahat 'bhikhārī' māf bhail saba, jo kuchh kailān kasūra / /

¹⁶⁷ Daily

¹⁶⁸ Husband

4.3.2 Pacharā

Since the Vedic period, there has been an effect of magic and ghosts in India. Since childhood, we have been hearing dozens of stories and tales related to ghosts from our grandmothers. Sanātan religion was established by the Āryans after the *Harappan*¹⁶⁹ culture and after the invasion of the Āryans in India. The Vedic period started, that is, the propagation of the Vedas in India was done by the Aryans only. In the early times, the Ṛigaved was spread, followed by Sāmaveda and then Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. These four Vedas are the holy religious texts of Sanātan Dharma, which inform them about the way of living. Atharvaveda is the only one in the series of these Vedas, in which the detailed character of magic and ghosts is found. Pacharā Gīt deals with this magic and ghosts. In the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh of India, there lives a cast named Dusādh, who for years worked to ward off ghosts and spirits by chanting magic and mantras. Those Dusadhas who do the work of exorcism are called exorcists. They are worshipers of the goddess Kali and Lord Shankar. They sing a special type of song called ‘Pacharā’ to please their deities. It is a caste song that is sung and played by a particular caste ‘Dusādh’. In this song, devotion and fearful rasa predominate, but this traditional folk tune has been used by Bhikhari Thakur in the form of different scenes to make his play interesting.

Pacharā (from the play Bidesiyā)

*Dūlhā bani ke gailā biāh kare, banhi ke māthavā par mauriyā*¹⁷⁰ /

*Hathavā dhadke lei ailā banāi lihal bahuriyā*¹⁷¹ /

Tekarā ke chhod ke parāilā ailā babuā des dūriyā /

*Khāye ke nā ghar mean havahis java*¹⁷²-*maṭara-masūriyā*¹⁷³ /

Hamarā se kahalī je jāke kahihā, kavan kailān ham kasūriyā /

¹⁶⁹ First civilization of India

¹⁷⁰ A type of turban, which is worn by the groom in marriage

¹⁷¹ Wife

¹⁷² Barley

¹⁷³ A kind of lentils

4.3.3 Dhobiyā Gīt

It is a type of Birhā singing style which is similar to Birhā but it has its special way of singing which makes it different from Birhā singing. It is sung collectively along with dance to the beat and rhythm of the instruments.

In the play ‘Birha Bahār’, Bhikhari Thakur has described the works of the washerman and linked him to God. Just as our soul becomes filthy by lust, anger, attachment, greed, jealousy, love, lust, etc., and by going to the feet of the Lord and atonement, the Supreme Soul purifies our soul again. In the same way, the washerman washes out the dust, dirt, oil, and stains from our clothes and makes our dirty and old clothes clean and pure again. Bhikhari Thakur used the Dhobīyā-gīt as the melody of his theatrical songs by the name of Shāyarī Birhā and ‘Birhā Shāyari ke laya’ which means, “The world of heroism defeats the enemy” (Yadav, 2005).^{VI}

4.4 Shram Gīt/Labor Songs

The history of the Hindu Varna division is also related to the Vedic period. The one who worships and gives knowledge is in the rank of Brahmin, the protector means the soldier who protects us and the king is in the category of Kshatriya, the one who does business is in the category of Vaishya and those who work for all these means and their comfort, those who made goods useful for them were placed in the category of Shudra. Till the early Vedic period i.e. Rigvedic period, this division was done only and only according to the deeds, due to which people of all four caste-category could sometimes be seen in one family. This time was completely untouched by family or dynasty, only then did the elder brother become Shudra and the younger brother became Brahmin by his deeds. But after the Rigveda, the dominance of family and

dynasty was established, as a result of which Brahmin's son Brahmin, Kshatriya's son Kshatriya, Vaishya's son Vaishya and Shudra's son remained Shudra.

It is clear from the name 'Shram-Gīt' that it is a song of laborers i.e. laboring people who belong only to 'Shudra Varna'. Workers sing these songs while doing their work to remove their fatigue and entertain themselves and concentrate on work. This song acts as an ointment on the pain caused by the fatigue of the workers, which they sometimes sing with glee and sometimes they lament with a compassionate heart. Whether it may be a song of rasa and emotion, it gives pleasure to the worker. He expresses his happiness and sorrow through these songs and remains engrossed in his work.

4.4.1 Jatasāra Gīt

Jatasāra is a labor song that is sung by women on a deserted night i.e. it is sung on the third watch of the night while grinding the mill. The group of these women mainly consists of newlywed women who sing this song, remembering their husbands and mourning their separation after leaving home by their husbands. The words of this song describe the joys and sorrows of household life. In ancient times there was a lack of flour mills. At that time only the women of the house used to grind pulses, wheat, Sorghum, and millet all in a 'Jāta mill' and prepare food. Grinding pulses and grains in 'Jāta Chakki' was a very laborious job, but women could easily do these tasks by singing Jatsāri songs with joy. Although this song is compassionate, which these women lament but still it gives these women a special kind of energy to work, in which they forget all their tiredness. It is sung in the deserted night, so its voice is heard far and wide at night (Upadhyay, 1770).^{VII} A unique way of singing this song

generates deep compassion in itself which makes any listener cry. This is the reason why Bhikhari Thakur used it as a lament song in his plays.

Notation

Tala- Dadara (Hindustani Tala)

Chhand- 3/3

Lyrics

Jatasāra-Gīt (from the play Bidesiyā)

Ḍagariyā johat nā, bītat bāṭe āṭh pahariyā ho Ḍagariyā johat nā /

Dhotī padh dhariyā¹⁷⁴ dhai ke kānhāvā par chadariyā ho /

Babariyā¹⁷⁵ zāri ke nā, hoiba' kavanā sahariyā ho babariyā zāri ke nā /

Ekaū nā bhejavala' khat katahūn¹⁷⁶ se khabariyā ho /

Nagariyā dekhi jā nā, naikhān khojat baṭasariyā ho nagariyā dekhi jā nā /

Kei hamarā jariyā mean bhiravale bāṭe ariyā¹⁷⁷ ho /

Chakariyā¹⁷⁸ dari ke nā, dukh mean hot bā jatasariyā ho chakariyā dari¹⁷⁹ ke nā /

Sthai

|| S S R | R S S | S S - | - - - |

Ḍa Ga Ri | Yā Jo Ha | T Nā s | s s s

x 0 x 0

| S S R | M - M | M M G | R G S ||

Bī Ta T | Ba s Ṭe | Āṭh Pa Ha | Ri Yā Ho

Antara

|| S - - | - - - | - - - | - - - |

Dho Tī Padh | Dha Ri Yā | Dhai s Ke | s s s

¹⁷⁴ Padded dhoti

¹⁷⁵ Head hair

¹⁷⁶ From somewhere

¹⁷⁷ Wood cutter

¹⁷⁸ Mill

¹⁷⁹ Grind grain

| P D P | P P M | M M G | R S - |
 Kān Hā Vā | Pa Ra Cha | Da Ri Yā | Ho s s

| R R G | G R R | S S - | - - - |
 Ba Ba Ri | Yā Zā Ri | Ke Nā s | s s s

| S S - |

Hoi Ba s

| M M M | - G G | R G R | S - - |
 Kā Va Nā | s Sa Ha | Ri Yā Ho | s s s

| R R G | G R R | S S - | - - - ||
 Ba Ba Ri | Yā Zā Ri | Ke Nā s | s s s

Note - a) Next remaining lines have the same notation.

b) Tune taken from Videsiyā movie (1963).

4.4.2 Ropanī Gīt

Ropani's song is mainly sung during the sowing of crops. Usually, this song is sung in the process of sowing paddy. To make their hard work easier, the farmers sing the song of the plantation while having fun. The theme of the song is domestic ridicule and the suffering of a virtuous woman. Women farmers joke among themselves while singing and sometimes they lament while singing. Bhikhari Thakur used Ropani's songs in his theatrical song. The prime example of this is the song from the play Bhai Birodh-

Ropanī Gīt, Purvī (from the play Bhāī-Birodh)

*Jahiyā se ailān piyā toharī mahaliyā mean,
Sab din rahalān ṭahaliyā¹⁸⁰ mean piyāvā /
Ghar mean ke sab kāma, karata-sūkhal chām¹⁸¹
Sukhavā sapanavān bhail hamarā piyāvā /
Harāvā jotat saianyā toharī pirālā paiyā
Rūpayā ke mūnh ham nā dekhālī ho piyāvā /*

4.5 Ritu Gīt/Seasonal Songs

Seasons have a special significance in India. Where a special festival is ensured on the arrival of each season, but in the Bhojpuri provinces, from the musical point of view, the arrival of the rainy season and the spring season means synonymous with the musical atmosphere. Especially in the spring, a fair is held for festivals like Vasanta Panchamī, Holī, Rāmanavamī, Baisākhī, etc. In the rainy season, when the melodies of paddy and Kajrī songs dissolve in the raindrops and rain on Bhojpuri soil, every particle of the earth gets thrilled. The gusts of wind swaying with the drops of rain give coolness to the human mind, as well as satisfy the womb of Earth with its nectar rain, which brings life to the dead seeds put by the farmers in the fields and greenery in the fields. And smiles appear on the faces of the farmers.

There is a total of six seasons in India, which brings a lot of love to us. A new season comes along with lots of joy and happiness. These six seasons and their festivals are-

1. Spring- Chaitra, Vaishākha
2. Summer- Jyeshṭha, Aṣhādh
3. Rain- Chrāvan, Bhādrapada
4. Sharad- Ashvin, Kārtika

¹⁸⁰ Service

¹⁸¹ Skin

5. Hemant- Mārgashīrṣha, Pauṣha

6. Shishir- Māgh, Fāgun

With the arrival of the seasons, the arrival of festivals in India is natural and the importance of music in these festivals is the same as the arrival and departure of the cycle of seasons. There are some such traditional folk tunes in our Indian society which are sung not at any festival but at the onset of seasons. Such seasonal songs which are sung only in a particular season are called 'Ritu' or seasonal songs.

4.5.1 Kajarī

Starting from the first drop of rain and ending on the last drop of rain, Kajarī is a traditional folk song that is the musical identity of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. It makes the rainy season even more pleasant. The spiritual bliss we get from singing this song by swinging in the drizzle of rain makes us feel like heaven. Generally, this song is sung by a group of newly married women. At this time women stay at their maternal home and sometimes swinging with their friends and sometimes swinging in fun and singing this song with joy. But sometimes she gets sad while singing this song because in these songs she describes the love affairs of her beloved as well as the grief and the pain of separation. Therefore, in this song, there is a predominance of romance and compassion rasa.

Keeping the life of Kajarī traditional folklore alive, Bhikhari Thakur has used Kajarī folk songs in the form of his theatre, using Kajarī folk songs according to different scenarios in his plays. But he sometimes used the rhythm of Kajarī for many other occasions as per the need of the scene of the play to further enhance the utility of the play.

Kajarī (from the play Putra-Badha)

*Ab ham chalālīan naihara, dekhīhā āngana-ladīkā-ghara,
Jab aihan sauhara¹⁸², kahi dīhā hāliyā |
Dīhā loṭā mali ke jala, karihā swāmī ke ṭahala,
Māni savatīyā ke kahala, chaliyā nīman chaliyā | |*

4.5.2 Bārahamāsā

Bārahamāsā, as the name suggests, refers to each month of the year. It is the only folk traditional tune in which each month of the year is described with its specialty. In this folk tune, twelve months of the year are described, so it can be sung at any period, but the beauty of this folk tune shines more than singing in the rainy season. It does not require any special occasion or celebration to be performed.

It is a piece of Birhā-dominated folk music in which *Birhani*¹⁸³ in her compassionate voice depicting the beautiful hues of each month compares herself to her and feels incomplete in the disconnection of her beloved. Drops of rain in Asādh, Krishna Janmāshtami in Bhādo, Holi in Phāgun, the sweet speech of cuckoo in Chaitra, Baisākh, and the celebration of marriage in Jeth, all reach her heart, because all these festivities, golden moments seem incomplete to her without her husband. In the Bārahamāsā song, love, sorrow, waiting, lamentation, incomplete, unrest, etc. emotions are predominant, which are absorbed in love and compassion (Upadhyay, 1960).^{VIII}

In the play *Bidesiyā*, Bhikhari Thakur gracefully ties the separation of the beloved beauty and the wait for her husband to the rhythm of the song Bārahamāsā, which makes the whole scene emotional.

¹⁸² Husband

¹⁸³ Childless Woman

Bārahamāsā (from the play Bidesiyā)

*Āvelā āsādh māsa, lāgelā adhik āsa,
Barakhā¹⁸⁴ mean piyā ghare āitan baṭohiyā /
Piyā aitan buniyān¹⁸⁵ mean, rākhi lihatan duniyān mean,
Akhadelā¹⁸⁶ adhikā savanāvān baṭohiyā /
Āī jab mās bhādo, sabhe khelī dahī- kādo¹⁸⁷,
Kṛisna ke janam bītī asahīan baṭohiyā /
Palanga bā sūnavān, kā kailīan egunavān se,
Bhārī h mahinavān fagunavān baṭohiyā /
Abīr ke ghorī- ghorī, sab log khelī horī
Rangavān mean bhangavā¹⁸⁸ paral ho baṭohiyā /
Koili ke mīṭhī bolī, lāgelā kareje golī,
Piyā binu bhāve nā chaitavā baṭohiyā /
Chadī baisākh jaba, lagan pahunchī taba,
Jeṭhavā dabāī hamean heṭhavā¹⁸⁹ baṭohiyā /
Mangal karī kalola, ghare- ghare bājī ḍhola,
Kahat 'bhikhārī' khoj piyā ke baṭohiyā /*

4.6 Lokgāthā

There are two words contained in 'Lokgāthā', first 'Lok' which means common people, his living style and village culture, and the second is 'Gāthā' which is a combination of story and lyric. It is the complete story of an event, which the artist presents through storytelling and singing. It is synonymous with the English word 'ballade' which is derived from the Latin word 'Blare' which means to dance. In the present time, it is interpreted as a combination of dance, singing and storytelling. Defining this, Dr. Krishnadev Upadhyay writes, "The folk songs found in Indian languages are divided into two parts. The first part deals with the Songs which are

¹⁸⁴ Rain

¹⁸⁵ Rain drop

¹⁸⁶ Feeling bad

¹⁸⁷ Mud

¹⁸⁸ Discoloration

¹⁸⁹ Small

small in size, lyrically, lack plot and the main feature is the rhyming while the second part deals with large (larger in lyric size) songs, in which along with the primacy of the plot, there is also poetry. In the language of poetry, they can be called ‘Muktak’ and ‘Prabandha Kāvya’¹⁹⁰. All the songs related to rituals and seasons come in the first category and the songs of Lorīk, Vijaymal, Nayakatā-Banjārā, Bhartharī, Gopīchand, Sorthī, Hīr-Ranjhā, Dholamāru, Rājā Rasālu, etc. come in the second category”. Dr. Kailash Chandra Agrawal defines it more concisely and clearly, “Lokgīthī is that genre of folk literature in which a story is described lyrically. It has the qualities of both story and song. The inclusion of the story’s part-plot, character, dialogue, etc” (Published date and Author name not available).^{IX}

It resides mainly in folk vocals, which are traditionally transferred from one singer to another orally, that are why its author is usually unknown. Its singing focuses on ease rather than beauty and it is sung with familiarity among the audience under the dominant sentiment in the regional language. The main feature of folklore is to enthrall the audience with the use of ghosts, magic tones, worship, and divine miracles and change the story, period, and landscape.

According to the predominance of *Veer*¹⁹¹, *Romanch*¹⁹², *Shringar*¹⁹³, and Karun Rasa, Satyavrat Sinha has divided the folk saga into four parts-

Heroic Folk Saga- Ālhā and Lorikāyan

Romantic Folk Saga- Shobhanaya and Banjārā

Thriller Folk Saga- Sorathī and Bihulā

Yogic folk Saga- Rājagopichanda and Bharṭṛuhari

¹⁹⁰ Poetry

¹⁹¹ Heroic

¹⁹² Thrill

¹⁹³ Romantic

4.6.1 Lorikāyan

Lorikāyan is an ethnic folk saga of the Āhir community prevalent in the Bhojpuri province, which is also known as *Lorik*¹⁹⁴. It is sung by the Āhir community with joy and gaiety at various festivals, weddings, and other occasions of joy. The main protagonist of this saga is Lorik, by whose name this saga is also known as Lorik. The story of his heroic life is displayed through this ballad rendition. The main purpose of his life was to strengthen the life of Indian women and to make every possible effort to get them their rights, which they were also successful to a great extent. The entire saga of Lorikayana is divided into four sections and each section has its special significance-

1. Marriage of Sanvaru
2. Lorik's marriage to Manjari
3. Lorik's marriage to Chhanwa
4. Lorik's marries to Jumani

This Bhojpuri folk saga is sung by solo singing in a very fast rhythm. Singers sometimes use Dhol according to their convenience to sing the tunes of Lorikāyan and sing this folk saga with trepidation on the beat of the dhol, keeping the feelings of enthusiasm in the mind. Although the beat of the dhol is not used in the sequence of singing the ballad, it is used for a short pause after the end of each stanza in the song. Even after signing in a very fast rhythm, after every three or four lines, a long alap is taken like a Birha song, which gives a pause in its rhythm and which makes this ballad different from other ballads (Sharma, 2009).^X

¹⁹⁴ Hero of Lorikāyan

Lorikayan's rhythm (from the play Bidesia)

Janiyān¹⁹⁵ makaniyān mean hani¹⁹⁶ ke kevariya¹⁹⁷ dahakat¹⁹⁸ bādī bārambār /

Piyā gahare ahitan rjavana-javan chahitan kahitan karitī taiyār / /

Manavān bhavanavān aanganavān mean lāgat nāikhe; kab milihan samāchār?

Kahat 'bhikhārī' nāī¹⁹⁹, pyārī ke charit gāi; kāi karihan kartār?

4.6.2 Sorthī

The Sorthī folk saga is named after its main heroine, Sorthī. The inaccessible and tortured journey of the union of the main hero Vrajbhan and the heroine Sorthī of this folk saga has been described excitingly. Vrajbhan marries Hevanti by participating in a *Swayamvara*²⁰⁰ in Hevanchalpur as per the orders of his Guru Gorakhnath. In the same marriage Swayamvara function, as he meets Sorthī and they both are fascinated to see each other. Sorthī tells Vrajbhan if I will marry you only otherwise I will remain unmarried for my whole life and Vrajbhan also promises Sorthi that they will come to his palace one day to marry you and make you my bride. The road from the kingdom of Vrajbhan to the palace of Sorthi is very difficult and tormenting. This journey full of many elusive powers, demons, sufferings, and pains is of 12 years. It is impossible to reach the palace of Sorthī but still, Vrajbhan walks towards Sorthi's palace to get him. Facing the dangers step by step, he keeps on moving forward. Eventually, he dies on the way, but Hevanti, with the help of seven Apsaras, through his *Pattivartadharmā*²⁰¹, gets his leaf revived and at the end of the story, Vrajbhan reaches Sorthi's palace and is reunited with Sorthi. Sorthī singers present this tortured and struggling journey with great excitement in the form of folk saga songs sung in front of the audience. Although this adventure is a Rasa-dominated saga, in this, the

¹⁹⁵ Wife or Women

¹⁹⁶ Close tightly

¹⁹⁷ Door

¹⁹⁸ Weeping

¹⁹⁹ Barber

²⁰⁰ Husband selection through the competition

²⁰¹ To support husband in adversity

love and compassion of Heaventi's pativrtdharma and Sorthī's love and compassion also flow equally. It is sung by two singers in a fast rhythm and they use a Khanjari and a Bell as the main instruments. Singers sometimes use traditional folk tunes like Bhajan, Sohar, Jatsār, etc. in a mixed form in the course of singing the ballads. This song is not sung by any particular caste community, but the people who sing it generally belong to the lower class. In the initial period, the entire staging of the story of this saga was completed in 13 nights, but now it is slowly coming to an end (Sinha, 1957).^{XI}

In the tunes of singing this folklore, the fervent in the heart of *Virahan*²⁰² to find his lovers, the vibrations on the lips, the tears in eyes waiting for him, and the hope of the seeker to get him, Bhikhari Thakur make these weapons as tools for their theatrical songs. He used its melodies in his plays and made them famous in the public mind by writing many songs in the tunes of Sorthī and singing in big plays like Bidesiyā.

Notation

Bhatkhandey system

Tala- kaharwa (Hindustani Tala)

Chhand -4/4

Lyrics

Sorthī rhythm (from Bidesia play)

Piyā kahalan baharā jāib, kuchh din me laut ke āiba /
Ekiyā ho more Rāma, sukavā²⁰³ ugal tab gailan bhāgal ho rāma /
Jāye nāhīan dīhitīan kabahūn, lākho tarahe kahitan tabahūn
Ekiyā ho more Rāma, pahile se rahitī tanī²⁰⁴ bhar jāgal ho rāma /
Tab se nā nāanda āvelā, ghar n āanganavā bhāvelā
Ekiyā ho more Rāma, rahī-rahī ke mānavān hot bā pāgal ho rāma /

²⁰² A disillusioned woman

²⁰³ Venus- morning star

²⁰⁴ Little bit

Kahat 'bhikharīdāsa', ḍiarā mean ghar h khāsa

Ekiyā ho more Rāma, sānvalī suratiyā bā manavān mean lāgal ho rāmal

Notation

|| - - S M |
Pi Yā
0

| M M M M | P P D n | D - D P | - - P D |
Ka Ha La N | BA Ha Rā s | Jā s I Ba | s s Ku Chh
x 0 x 0

| M - G - | S - R G | R - S S | - - S M |
Din s Me s | Lau s Ṭ Ke | Ā s I Ba | s s Pi Yā

| M M M M | P P D n | D - D P | - - P D |
Ka Ha La N | Ba Ha Rā s | Jā s I Ba | s s Ku Chh

| M - G - | S - R G | R - S S | D. S S S |
Din s Me s | Lau s Ṭ Ke | Ā s E Ki | Yā Ho Mo Re

| S - GR - | - - - - | R G R S | M M M G |
Rā s Ma s | s s s s | s s s s | s s Su Ka

| M - M G | R S R G | R - S S | S S R G |
Vā s U s | Ga L Ta B | Gai s La N | Bhā s s s

| R R S - | S - S - | - - - - | - - - - ||
Ga L Ho s | Rā s Ma s | s s s s | s s s s

Note - a) Next remaining lines have the same notation.

b) Tune taken from Sarita Saaz through interview.

4.6.3 Ālhā

In the Bhojpuri region, ‘Ālhā’ folk saga has a special place in the folk saga of heroic Rasa. This is a ‘Bundeli folk saga’, in which the description of the heroes of two brave Ālha and Udal of ‘Mahoba’ province is found. He fought many wars for ‘King Parmaldev’ and won. The author of this folk saga is believed to be ‘Jagnik’ but there is no written proof of this. Due to the influence of the Bhojpuri language on Bundeli, it spread equally in the Bhojpuri region of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, which is why ‘Ālhā’ got famous in both the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It is sung in the rainy season. Ālhā singers sing it in a group of two or more singers with the *Dhol*²⁰⁵ on their shoulders. They believe that its singing causes rain. It is sung aloud and sometimes lines of prose are spoken rapidly to the beat of the drum and a special type of alap is used. Its main feature is the tone that fluctuates according to the plot. The singing of this folk saga with heroism, love, and compassion is so impressive that the scene of the battlefield is depicted in the heart of the audience (Sinha, 1957).^{XII}

The description of the valor of Ālhā and Udal is generally heard and seen in Āalhā singing, but Bhikhari Thakur used the tunes of Ālha folk ballad singing in his plays according to the theatrical scene for the performance of Veer, Shringar, and Karun Rasas in his theatrical singing.

Ālhā rhythm (from the play Bidesiyā)

Rām rasāyan tohare pāsa, derī hot bā mahābīr jī /
Jāi ke ahirāvan darabāra, kālī-kavar se rāmachandra ke /
Lihalan chhan mean jān bachāya, khusī bhail bā bānara-dal mean /
Osahī pati ke mati da’ fer abhī milā da’ ghara-gharanī se /
Kahat ‘bhikhārī’ dou kar jora, shyāmasuandar mean surat lāgal bā /

²⁰⁵ Drum

4.7 Other Songs

4.7.1 Pūrvī

In the traditional folk songs of Bihar, the tune Pūrvī of the famous folk songs is sung in melodious voices with great playfulness with soft vocals. Despite the predominance of Karun and Shringar Rasa, it is sung and played in a pulsating rhythm. Due to the pulsation of the rhythm, its words push each other forward and sometimes the rhythm of the song is stabilized and the rhythm of the tala is added to the melody of singing pūrvī folk songs. This is the main feature of singing pūrvī folk songs. Like Birha *gāyan*²⁰⁶, it hides the agony and sorrow of Birhan, but due to its special type of singing and frequent changes in the rhythm of the tala, its singing is melodious, which attracts the listeners in particular (Kumar, 2019).^{XIII}

Bhikhari Thakur used the rhythm of folk songs in his play, mainly to present the misery of Birhan in a musical theatrical form. Apart from the drama songs, he also composed many songs in Pūrvī folk tunes.

Notation

Bhatkhandey system

Tala- kaharwa (Hindustani Tala)

Chhand -4/4

Lyrics song-1

Pūrvī (from the play Bidesiyā)

Piyavā gailan kalakātāvā e sajanī!

Turi dihalan pati-patnī-nātāvā e sajanī,

‘Kirin bhītare parātavā’²⁰⁷ e sajanī! Piyavā ...

Godvā mean jūtā naikhe, siravā par chhatavā e sajanī,

Kaise chalihan rāhātāvā e sajanī! Piyavā ...

²⁰⁶ Singing style

²⁰⁷ Before sunrise

Sthai

|| D. S S - |
Pi ya Vā s

| - - D. - | D. S - R | PM - M G | R - GR S |
s s Gai s | Lan ka s La | kā s Tā s | Vā s ss s
x 0 x 0

| - - R G | S R S S | S - - - | D. S S - |
s s E s | s S s Ja | Nī s s s | Pi Ya Vā s

| - - D - | - D - P | D - - - | - - ND P |
s s E s | s S s Ja | Nī s s s | s s ss s

| - - P D | - P - M | M - - G | R G SR S |
s s E s | s S s Ja | Nī s s s | s s ss s

| - - R G | S R S S | S - - - | D. S S S |
s s E s | s S s s | Nī s s s | Pi Ya Vā s

Antara

|| - - D - | D - P D | D D - - | S' D - - |
s s Tu s | Ri s Di Ha | La N s s | s s s s

| - - P - | D P D M | M - M G | R - GR S |
s s P s | Ti Pa Ta Nī | Nā s Tā s | Vā s ss s

| - - R G | S R S S | S - - - | D. S S S |
s s E s | s S s s | Nī s s s | Pi Ya Vā s

| - - D - | D S' S' S' | S' R' - - | - - G'R'S |
s s Tu s | Ri Di Ha La | N s s s | s s ss s

| G' R' G' S' | D S' S' - | - - - - | - - - - |
Tu Ri s D | Ha La N s | s s s s | s s s s

| S' D S' D | P P P - | - - - - | DP M - - ||
Tu Ri s Di | Ha La N s | s s s s | ss s s s

Note - a) Next remaining lines have the same notation.

b) Tune taken from Harivansh Tiwari through interview.

Notation

Bhatkhandey system

Tala- Tivra/Teora (Hindustani Tala)

Chhand – 3/2/2

Lyrics song 2

Gīt-pūrvī

*Kahā jaiba' bhaiyā ? Lagāva' pār naiyā tū,
Mor dukh dekhi la nitar²⁰⁸ se baohiyā /
Suna' ho gosaiyā, parat bānīan paiyā,
Rachi-rachi kahiha bipatiyā baṭohiyā /
Chhor kar gharavā mean, bīch mahādhārāvā²⁰⁹ mean,
Piyavā baharavā mean gailan baṭohiyā /*

Sthai

|| Ṣ Ṣ - | Ṣ - | Ṣ - | Ṛ Ṣ N | D P | D P |
Ka Hān s | Jai s | Ba s | Bhai s s | Yā s | s s
x 2 3 x 2 3

| P P D | P - | M - | M - G | R G | R S |
La Gā Ba | Pā s | Ra s | Nai s s | Yā s | Tū s

| M M - | M - | M - | P M G | R G | R S |
Mo R s | Du s | Kh s | De Khi s | La s | s s

| S S - | S - | R G | R R G | R - | S - ||
Ni Ta s | Ra s | Se s | Ba Ṭo s | Hi s | Yā s

Antara

|| D. D. S | S - | - S | R - - | R G | R S |
Su Na s | Ho s | s Go | Sai s s | Yān s | s s

| R R G | R - | S - | R - - | R G | R G |
Pa Ra T | Ba s | s Nī | Pai s s | Yān s | s s

²⁰⁸ Eye

²⁰⁹ Midstream

| Ṣ Ṣ - | Ṣ - | - Ṣ | Ṛ Ṣ N | D P | D P |
 Su Na s | Ho s | s Go | Sai s s | Yān s | s s

 | P P D | P - | M - | M - G | R G | R S |
 Pa Ra T | Ba s | Nī s | Pai s s | Yān s | s s

 | M M - | M - | M - | P M G | R G | R S |
 Ra Chi s | Ra s | Chi s | Ka Hi s | Ha s | s s

 | S S S | S - | R G | R G S | S - | S - ||
 Bi Pa Ti | Yā s | s s | Ba Ṭo s | Hi s | Yā s

Note - a) Next remaining lines have the same notation.

b) Tune taken Harivansh Tiwari through an interview.

4.7.2 Zūmar Gīt

In the western part of Bihar and the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh, which is a Bhojpuri-dominated region, the traditional folk song Zūmar is very popular among women. It is sung by a group of women with a swing in a light waist and is sung with entertainment. This singing style is so prevalent in the village, that women unintentionally start humming while doing any work in a sophisticated mood. This is an evergreen song. It does not require any special occasion to sing, whenever these women get a chance to express their happiness in all the big and small festivals, first of all, the tunes of Zūmar folk songs are on their lips. There are many customs in a traditional wedding, in which women sing the Zūmar song, in the same way, while doing household activities and being fascinated by the pleasant moments in the movement of different seasons and other small and big joys, while celebrating with friends, beautiful women dance and sing it in groups. It is full of human experiences like humor, jokes, and romance, due to which the mind of the listener gets pleasure and perceives captivated by the humorous taste.

Bhikhari Thakur's theatrical songs may have the highest number of tunes of Zūmar folk songs, from this, it can be inferred that Bhikhari Thakur was particularly inclined towards the Zūmar song and that is why he used Zūmar folk songs in his plays with great enthusiasm. In a theatrical scenario, when the heroine arrives on the stage dancing to the song Zūmar, the mind of the audience automatically starts ordering their bodies to dance to the song and they are forced to dance.

Zūmar Gīt (from the play Befī-Bechavā)

Āngan mean orī tar baiṭhal baranetiṃyā, hāya re jiyarā;

Pāna-masālā khāta, hāya re jiyarā ।

Pankhā ḍolat hansī-hansī bolata, hāya re jiyarā;

Muanha par gulāb zīrakāt hāya re jiyarā ।

Mādo mean brāhamaṇ ved uchārata, hāya re jiyarā;

Sunī- sunī ke hiyarā²¹⁰ hulasāta, hāya re jiyarā ।

4.8 Verse/‘Chhanda’ and Theatrical Songs of Bhikhari Thakur

The great Sanskrit poet Bhartrihari has called ‘Chhanda’ the soul of poetry, through which any poem can be remembered quickly and for a longer period. It has the power to compose new poems. It is only by the use of ‘Chhanda’ that the poetry gets dynamic. According to ‘Sāmvedi Daivat Brahman’, the word ‘Chhanda’ is derived from the root ‘Chadi’ and by ‘Acharya Sayan’ the word ‘Chhanda’ has been considered to be derived from ‘Chhada’ or ‘Chadi’ root. Apart from these two, the description of its origin is found in the Upanidansutra, according to which its origin is believed to be from the ‘Chad’ root. The word ‘Chand’ is derived by removing the suffix ‘Asi’ from the root ‘Chadi’ and making ‘Chakar’ of the root ‘Chhakar’, which means ‘Ahladit karan’ means to please (Chand, 2004).^{XIV}

²¹⁰ Heart

Chhanda' is used to tell the rhythm of poems, through which the *Varṇa*²¹¹ and quantities of each phase used in poetry and music are counted so that its rhythm is determined. In another sense, it is the time interval between the two varnas, which displays the time-end of the two varnas by one quantity of the 'Laghu' and the time-end of the two varnas by two quantities of the Guru.

4.8.1 Parts of the Verse/Chaanda

1. **Charan/Pada/Pāda**- Each part of the verse is called *Charan*²¹² and the total number of these parts is four. It is also called 'Pada' or 'Pāda' which is the fourth part of the verse. There are only four steps in all the verses. But there are some such verses whose steps are four but they are written in only two lines and there are some, which are written in six lines. For example, Dohā and Sorathā are written in two lines each, and kundaliyā and Chhappaya are written in six lines each. There are two types- Samachar and Viṣhamachara (Shastri, Published year not available).^{xv}

2. **Varṇa and Mātrā**- The sound in which one sawara is present is called Varṇa.

These are of two types-

- a) Hras Varṇa- It has one mātrā
- b) Dīrgha Varṇa- It has two mātrā

The time taken to pronounce any sound or letter is called mātrā.

There are two types-

- a) Laghu- It is an indicator of one quantity of mātrā
- b) Guru- It is an indicator of two quantities of mātrā.

²¹¹ Letter
²¹² Phase

3. **Number/Sankhiyān, Sequence and Kram-** The calculation of letters and quantities in a step is called the number and the placement of small and Guru is called a sequence.
4. **Gaṇ-** The group of three characters is called Gaṇ. The total number of songs in the verses is eight, which are used for counting and ordering the quantities and letters.
5. **Gati/Motion-** While reciting poetry or singing musical tunes, there is a special type of rhythmic flow in their footsteps or steps, which is called ‘Gati’.
6. **Yati/Stop-** The synonym of Yeti is ‘Viraam’, which means to stop. The place where short or complete rest is taken by the reader while reciting poetry or while singing a song by the singer is called Yeti. Its symbols are - (;) (,) (.) (.) (!) (?)
7. **Tuka-** In a verse, words with the same pronunciation used at the end of verses are called ‘Rhyming’ and this process is called rhyme. It is of two types- Tukant and Atukant.

4.8.2 Types of Verses

1. **Varṇik Chhanda-** Varṇik Chhand is that type of verse in which the steps are composed based on the number of varnas in which the number of characters is the same in each of the steps and the orderly arrangement of Laghu-Guru is the same. Examples like Sawaiyā, Kavitta, and Malini, etc.
2. **Varṇik Vṛit Chhanda-** The Varṇa are counted by these verses. It usually consists of four steps, which are implemented in each of the steps the order of the Laghu-Guru is sure, like- Matgayand Savaiyā.

- 3. Mātrik Chhanda-** The verses whose composition is based on the calculation of quantities are called ‘Mātrik Chhands’. The number of quantities is the same in all its verses, but small and Guru’s are not fixed. It has three differences (Sarang, 2021).^{XVI}
- a) Sam Mātrik Chhanda-** The number of quantities is the same in all the steps of this Chhand such as Chaupāi, Tomar, Gitik, etc.
- b) Arddhasam Mātrik Chhanda-** In this type of verse, the number of quantities in the first and third stanzas and the number of quantities in the second and fourth stanzas are equal. That is, the number of quantities of even steps present in the verses is equal to the number of quantities of all other even steps and the number of quantities of odd steps is equal to the number of quantities of all other odd steps present in the verses but the number of quantities of even steps is odd. Quantities of the steps differ by the number of steps such as Dohā, Sorathā, Chaubolā, etc.
- c) Viṣham Mātrik Chhanda-** The quantities of any of the steps in this verse are not equal like- Kundalia and Chhappaya.
- 4. Mukṭ²¹³ Chhanda-** It is free from the bondage of Varṇa and quantities. In this Mukta Chhanda, Varṇa and quantities are not counted; hence it is also called independent verse. It is free from all the rules of Laghu-Guru.

4.8.3 Varṇik Chhanda

1. Savaiyā Chhanda 2. Kavitta Chhanda 3. Drut Vilambit Chhanda 4. Mālinī Chhanda
5. Mandrakāantā Chhanda 6. Indravrajā Chhanda 7. Upeandravajrā Chhanda 8. Arilla Chhanda 9. Lāvanī Chhanda 10. Rādhikā Chhanda 11. Troṭak Chhanda 12. Bhujanga

²¹³ Free

Chhanda 13. Viyoginī Chhanda 14. Vanshastha Chhanda 15. Shikharinī Chhanda
16. Shārdūl Vikrīḍit Chhanda 17. Mattagayanga Chhanda

4.8.4 Mātrik Chhanda

1. Dohā 2. Sorathā 3. Rolā 4. Gītikā 5. Harigītikā 6. Ullālā 7. Chaupāī 8. Baravai
9. Chhappaya 10. Kuanḍaliyān 11. Digapāl 12. Ālhā yā vīr 13. Sār 14. Tāanṭak
15. Rupamāl 16. Tribhangī 17. Chaubolā

Bhikhari Thakur used only two types of verses for his theatrical songs. He transcribed the steps of his theatrical songs by using only mātrik and Varṇik verses. Here we have mentioned the same verses which Bhikhari Thakur has given a place in his Theatre music. He added to the lyrical expressions of these songs by intertwining his traditional folk songs in the Varṇik Chhanda of Savaiyā and Kavitta and the mātrik Chhand of Chaupāī, Chaubolā, and Dohā. He staged hundreds of folk songs in these verses and gave impetus to lyrical verses using Laghu and Guru.

4.9 Verses/Chhanda Used in His Teatrical Songs

Varṇik Chhanda- Savaiyā and Kavitta

Mātrik Chhanda- Chaupāī, Chaubolā and Dohā

4.9.1 Savaiyā

Savaiyā is a type of Varṇik Chhanda in which the number of characters present in the steps is counted. The number of characters in each of these verses is different. Due to the difference in the characters of the steps present in the verses, it has been divided into six parts. According to all their differences, their Varṇas have been systematically arranged. Its phases mainly consist of 22 to 26 characters (Sharma, 2021).^{XVII}

Madirā Savaiyā- 22 Varṇa

Mattagayanda Savaiyā- 23 Varṇa

Kirīṭ Savaiyā- 24 Varṇa

Durmil Savaiyā- 24 Varṇa

Suandarī Savaiyā- 25 Varṇa

Kundalatā Savaiyā- 26 Varṇa

Various forms of Savaiyā were used by Bhikhari Thakur in the lyrical form of his theatrical songs and verses to traditional folk songs in volumes of Madira, Matgayand, Kirit, Durmil, Sundari, and Kundalata Savaiya Varṇa verses.

Savaiyā (from the play ‘Kalyug-Prem’)

Khāi nisā ke kissā bahu²¹⁴ bhākhāt lāj nā lāgat eko ratī /

Hāya pitā dhikkār tuze, kalapāvat²¹⁵ nāhak byāhī satī /

Beṭā ke chām ke ḍhol chhavāve ke kavan guru sikhālāī māī /

Kahe ‘bhikhārī’ oḍhā de sir par māī-bīṭā ke mahābipatī²¹⁶ /

4.9.2 Kavitt

Like Savaiyā, poetry, it is also a Varṇik Chhanda in which the number of characters is counted. The number of its characters is counted in ‘Gaṇs’. Respectively, the group of three characters is called ‘Gaṇ’. The number of characters in the steps of this verse is usually from 27 to 33. Due to the variation in the number of Varṇa in the verses, they are divided into three parts based on the number of Varṇa present in the steps. In this verse, the order arrangement of Laghu and Guru is specially kept in mind, and in its passage, the law of Laghu-Guru is ensured, which is used separately in each of their distinctions. The three types of Kavitt verses (Sharma, 2021).^{XVIII}

²¹⁴ Wife

²¹⁵ Weeping

²¹⁶ Big Problems

a) **Dhanākṣharī (Manaharaṇa) Kavitta-** 31 Varṇa and use the Guru in end.

b) **Rūp Dhanākṣhīr Kavitta-** 32 Varṇa and use the Laghu in end.

c) **Dev Dhanākṣhīr Kavitta-** 33 Varṇa and use 3 Laghu in end

Despite having little grammar knowledge, there is a unique attempt by the Bhikhari Thakur to use various forms of chromatic verses like Kavitta in his emotional folk music to maintain their rhythmic patterns. Ignoring the purity of the language, he gave priority to the expressions and rhymed the regional typical language lyrically.

Kavitta (from Radheshyam Bahar play)

Ehī sārī par bhai ho matavārī²¹⁷, kaho to sārī lākha-lākh ke mangavā dūn /

Ek motī ke mālā tumhāre gale mean sohe²¹⁸,

Kaho to motī se samundra bharavā dūn /

Hīrā ke hār²¹⁹ par itanā gumān toko²²⁰, kaho to hīrā ke himāchal banavā dūn /

4.9.3 Chaupāī

Chaupāī is a ‘*Sammātrik*²²¹ Chhand’ consisting of four steps and the number of quantities present in each step is the same. In its four steps, 16-16 quantities are arranged in a systematic, sure way, which makes the rhythm of the Chaupāī melodious and heartfelt. Its final stage may be ‘Guru-Guru’ or ‘Laghu-Laghu’, but the interruption of ‘Guru-Guru’ is particularly interesting in this verse and it is impossible to have ‘Lagu-Guru’ or ‘Guru-Laghu’ (Ghodela, 2002).^{XIX}

In Indian music, Chaupāī Chhanda is mainly used in the hymns and Ārti-songs of God. The plurality of Chaupāī in these songs is so much that sometimes people give the name of Ārti song as Chaupāī. In all the plays composed by Bhikhari Thakur,

²¹⁷ Complacent

²¹⁸ Looking pretty

²¹⁹ Necklace

²²⁰ you

²²¹ Each phase have same mātārā

before the start of the play, similar to the ‘Purvaranga Vidhi’ of Sanskrit drama, the worship of God is done by invocation of equal verses of the Chaupāī, singing of hymns and Āarti. Apart from ‘Bhajan-Kritan’, Bhikhari Thakur wrote many traditional folk song melodies in quatrain verses and used them as supporting elements of theatrical performance in the form of his theatrical songs.

Chaupāī (from the play Nanada-Bhāujāī)

Ṭhīk dupahariyā mean āvel ṭhaga / hamean dikhāvelā aangūṭhī ke nāga / /

Galī mean bolelā ajabe bānī / ū bhāsā kehū birale²²² jānī / /

Katino rahīle man ke māra / lālach dekhāvelā bārambāra / /

Dina-rāt kāile bā dhāvā / aisan uṭhal javānī mean havā / /

4.9.4 Chaubolā

Chaubola is an *Ardhsammātrik*²²³ verse with four lines, which is mainly used in traditional folk songs, folklore, and folk drama music of North India. It is a total verse of 15 quantities, in which each phase is stopped with the eighth and seventh quantities and each phase is ended with 15 quantities.

In the performance of Bhojpuri’s traditional folk drama style ‘Nautanki’, Chaubolā is used for most theatrical dialogues. The use of the Nautanki style is also seen in the plays of Bhikhari Thakur because he was very much influenced by Nautanki. The dialogues used in Chaubolā’s verses while seeking permission from his newly wedded wife ‘Pyari Sundari’ to go to Kolkata in the play Bidesiyā are reminiscent of Nautanki.

²²² Rare

²²³ Each phase ended with the quantity of the same matra but in each line quantity of matra can be different

Chaubola (from the play 'Bidesiyā')

Man hamār parades jāye ke chāhat abahān²²⁴ pyārī /
Jaldī se taiyār karahu kuchha, rāstā ke baṭasārī²²⁵ /
'Firatī bār²²⁶, tohare pahiran²²⁷ hit kīnab bangalā sārī /
Kahe 'bhikhara' khusī raha' ghara, mat kara' soch hamārī / /

4.9.5 Dohā/Couplets

Dohā has been the most used in Indian poetry composition. Doha has got a special place in Indian culture since ancient times. From folk dramas to Sanskrit plays, the powerful dramatic dialogue of couplets has been used, which directly affects the heart of the audience. Generally, cognitive and informative sentences are written in the verses of couplets, so that the meanings of complex subjects can be said with ease in only two lines. Bhikhari Thakur understood the usefulness of couplets and their strong effect and by writing the important themes of his play in couplets, easily reached the heart of the audience.

Doha is an 'Ardhsammātrik' verse written in two lines, in which there are 13-13 quantities in the odd phases and 11-11 quantities in the even phases are 13-13 quantities in the first and third stanzas of this verse and 11 in the second and fourth stanzas. There are 11 quantities. It is necessary to have a Laghu in its conversion (Shukla, 2019).^{XX}

Dohā (from the play 'Ganga-Snan')

Budiyā²²⁸ jāī tahān nā jāība, suna' nihorā mora /
Avarū jo kuchh kahaba' bālama²²⁹! Hukūm²³⁰ bajāīb tora / /

²²⁴ Now

²²⁵ Belongings

²²⁶ While returning

²²⁷ To wear

²²⁸ Old women

²²⁹ Husband

²³⁰ Order

4.10 Other Compositions of Bhikhari Thakur: Non-Theatrical songs

Bhikhari Thakur was a man of all virtues. He was a good poet, musician, playwright, actor, singer, and dancer, who composed many plays and hundreds of folk songs and performed these on stage as an actor, singer, and dancer in front of an acknowledged audience. He received fame as a playwright. He wrote a total of 12 plays based on themes such as drug addiction, migration, mother's disdain, female marriage, superstition, etc. The main subjects of his play were social and family problems and evils, which made its place in the hearts of the rural audience as well as the urban audience. Gradually, it came out of the Bhojpuri region and established its popularity in the country and abroad as well. Bhikhari Thakur composed hundreds of *Natyageet*²³¹ which is the most beautiful jewel of his plays. In these theatrical songs, he saved our culture, tradition, and rural civilization and made it alive by using them in his drama according to the theatrical scenario and emotion. By watching their theatrical performances, we get an opportunity to listen to many such tunes which are slowly getting extinct these days. That is, we can say that Bhikhari Thakur used traditional folk tunes in his drama to preserve and protect them. For example, the singing of Sorthi lokgāthā used to last for 13 nights in the early times. Singers have a unique way of singing it on the drums and a special way of taking Ālap which is now almost extinct. He has done the work of saving it for the coming generation by putting its tunes in theatrical songs.

In addition to theatrical songs, he composed hundreds of folk songs, prayers of God, devotion to motherhood, his biography, and the problems prevailing in society at that time. He composed many hymns in the worship of Lord Shri Rām and Krishna. He was a great devotee of Lord Shri Rām and his faith in Lord Rāma was unwavering.

²³¹ Theatre songs

Based on '*Shiva Vivāh*'²³² of Lord Mahādev Shiv Shankar, he gave a lot of publicity to it by writing Indian traditional wedding music in his regional language. Even today, the result of this is that on the occasion of a marriage ceremony in Bhojpuri language-speaking areas, it is common to hear the songs of 'Shiva-Vivah' written by him.

Apart from the theatre, the main theme of the songs composed by BhikhariThakur-

1. Rāma: Bhajana-kīrtan
2. Kṛiṣṇa: Bhajana-kīrtan
3. *Rāmalīlā*²³³
4. Āratī
5. Shiva-Vivāh
6. *Mātā-Bhakti*²³⁴
7. *Būdhshālā*²³⁵ ke Beyān
8. Nāī Bahār
9. Bhikhārī Thākura: parichayahauvarṇapadavī
10. *Shankā-Samādhān*²³⁶

4.10.1 Rāma: Bhajana-Kīrtan

Human beings are always grateful for the favor done by the one whom they love, in whom they have faith and trust, and with full faith, dedicate them faithfully to their devotion. God gifted Bhikhari Thakur with the talent of acting, dancing, singing as well as writing, so he composed dozens of hymns in the gratitude of Lord Shri Ram and tried to gratify Lord Shri Ram with his singing.

²³² Marriage of lord Shiv

²³³ A theatre form, matter collect from lord Rama's life

²³⁴ Mother devotion

²³⁵ Old age home

²³⁶ Doubt resolution

He always considered Lord Shri Rām as his ideal from his heart and describes Rāmcharitrmānas as the basis of his writings. He got the inspiration to start his theatre journey from watching Ramlila. In the early days, he performed Ramlila only and sang the praises of Lord Rām's deeds. Since childhood, he was so attached to Shri Rām that listening to Rām's saga was one of his main tasks for him, wherever Rām saga was recited, he used to reach to listen to the words. This is the reason that he memorizes the entire narration by just listening to the stories.

Bhikhari Thakur has described his birth and deeds by mentioning the glories of Lord Shri Rām through Bhajan-Kirtan and by seeking forgiveness for his laziness, advising people to chant the name of Lord Rāma. According to him, the attainment of *Artha*²³⁷, *Dharma*²³⁸, *Kāma*²³⁹, and *Moksha*²⁴⁰ can be attained only by chanting the name of Rām, therefore he advises man to get the name of Rām tattooed on all parts of his body. So that whenever his eyes are beyond this tattoo, he always remembers the name of Rām.

The hope of marriage of Lord Shri Ram and Sita

*Laganiyān*²⁴¹, *laganiyān*, *laganiyān*

Kahiyā lagihan sītā rām mean laganiyān? (Tekā)

*Kuchh din bīti gaile karat saniyān-paniyān*²⁴²,

Kuchh din bītal chhurā-kāianchī-naharaniyā / Laganiyān...

Ganvā-gāī jāī, khāī, chīṭṭhī nevatan khaniyān,

Llikheke sikhavalan bhagavān dās bāniyān / Laganiyān... (Yadav, 2005).^{XXI}

²³⁷ Money

²³⁸ Religion

²³⁹ Desire

²⁴⁰ Salvation

²⁴¹ Marriage, Auspicious time

²⁴² Feeding the cow

4.10.2 Kṛiṣṇa: Bhajana-Kīrtan

Bhikhari Thakur wrote dozens of hymns of Lord Shri Krishna based on the stories of Shri Krishna's birth celebration, *Balleel*²⁴³, *Jhula Jhulan*²⁴⁴, Rasleela with Gopis, the story of going from Gokul to Mathura, Draupadi Chīrharan, etc. Like Lord Shri Rām, he used to worship Shri Krishna very diligently, and through his songs, he advises the common man to remember Lord Shri Krishna from his heart.

Kirtan of Lord Shri Krishna

Rādheshyāma-rādheshyāma-rādheshyāma || *ṭeka* ||

Dharatī ke dhana-dhana-dhan nanda dhāma |

*Ohu sedhana-dhan 'nanda grāma'*²⁴⁵ ||

Nācha-bājā vidyā ke kuchh nāikhe kāma |

Keval kanhaiyā gopāla jī ke nāma (Yadav, 2005).^{XXII}

4.10.3 Rāmalīla

Rāmalīla is a traditional folk drama of North India, especially Uttar Pradesh, in which various parts and episodes of Ramāyana are performed in a theatrical form. Not only in India but in many countries of the world, different episodes of Ramāyana are staged in different theatrical forms with different names.

Bhikhari Thakur became inclined towards theatre only after seeing Rāmlīlā performance. He was so impressed by the performance of Rāmlīlā that he ended his caste work and established a dance troupe and performed Rāmlīlā a lot in the early days. He composed many songs based on the eight episodes of Tulsikrit Ramāyana, which he named Rāmlīlā-Gān.

²⁴³ Childhood pastime

²⁴⁴ Swing

²⁴⁵ Mathura- Lord krishana's village

In kajarī rythem

*Bhagavāna, bhagavāna, bhagavāna, bhagavāna! | ṭeka |
Rāmajī dhailan manuṣhy aavatāra, rājā dasarath kā darabāra;
Jānal bālaka, būd javāna, bhagavāna..
Tab fir dhanuṣha-bān lekara, gailan muni sāth baksara;
Kailan rākṣhas ke halakāna²⁴⁶, bhagavāna (Yadav, 2005).^{XXIII}*

4.10.4 Āratī

In Hinduism, Āratī is performed twice a day in the morning and evening. There is a religious tradition of performing the Āratī of God/Goddess, which is sung with different chants for different deities. Mainly in the Ārti song, we glorify the glory of the deity and describe the characteristics of the god/goddess to which we are performing the Āratī.

Bhikhari Thakur composed dozens of Āratī songs of goddess Durga, Lord Shiva Shankar, Shri Krishna, goddess Ganga, and Shri Vishnu, describing the glory of different gods and goddesses in the collection of ārti songs and singing it with his soft throat by dedicating at the feet of God.

Āratī of goddess Durgā (Tebadū)

*Jaya jaya māt²⁴⁷ sunahu pukāra | | Teka | |
Udhakesī²⁴⁸ jag jananī ke sajal ajab shṛiangāra |
Bhuj birājat kharga²⁴⁹-khappar rahat sianha savāra | |
Karat bhakṣhaṇ²⁵⁰ māansa so nit harat dharanī bhāra |
Lāl lahangā jedit sādī tela-senūr tahakāra²⁵¹ (Yadav, 2005).^{XXIV}*

²⁴⁶ Destruction

²⁴⁷ Mother

²⁴⁸ Raised hair

²⁴⁹ Sword

²⁵⁰ Eat

²⁵¹ Dark red

4.10.5 Shiva-Vivāh

In almost all areas of Bihar, the propagation of Shiva-Vivāh songs still exists in general. A group of women sings it on the occasion of Shivaratri and marriage. They narrate the marriage story of Lord Shiva Shankar and goddess Parvati in these songs. In Hinduism, Lord Shiva has been called the God of gods, 'Mahadev', who assumes the form of Ardhanarishvara i.e. half female and half male, and gives equal importance to women and men. According to them, women and men are complementary to each other, if a man is the skeleton of the human body, then the woman is the blood and flesh of the human body. Due to her unconditional love, equality, and her innocence towards goddess Parvati, unmarried girls worship her in the month of Sāwan, and by keeping fasting for seven Mondays for having a good husband in the coming future, who loves like Lord Shiva, respects women and understands the feelings and gives them equal rights as Shiva gives.

Bhikhari Thakur narrated the unique marriage of goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva by composing the songs of Shiva-Vivāh. The arrival of a strange type of procession in the marriage and the bull ride of Lord Shankar is also mentioned.

Kajari (Shiv Shankar ke vichitra barātiyoan kā varnan)

Aisan sobhelā²⁵² sohāg²⁵³ sasurariyā²⁵⁴ mean / / ṭeka / /

Sunilā satayug ke khabariyā, bholā bail ke savāriyā;

Karīkar taiyariyā ḍagariyā mean / aisan..

Jekar paratabā najariyā, ādamī chāhe jānavāriyā;

Rāhatā chhodī ke parāt²⁵⁵ bā badhāriyā²⁵⁶ mean / aisan.. (Yadav, 2005).^{XXV}

²⁵² Gorgeous

²⁵³ Woman having her husband alive

²⁵⁴ In law's house

²⁵⁵ God- shiv Shankar

²⁵⁶ Deaf- Away from village

4.10.6 Mātā-Bhakti

Mother is such a word that contains all the love, affection, kindness, and forgiveness in itself. Whenever we have small or big trouble and for some reason externally or internally our bodies get hurt, then automatically the name of our mother comes to our lips. It does not happen spontaneously or just like that. Behind this is the mother's love for years. It is her love that supported us like a shadow in every trouble, keeps us happy to bring a smile to our face, and sacrificed her many sleepless nights on our one 'sigh'. She has the goddess of mercy and forgiveness. When children get young, they forget all their love, affection, and favor. We leave our mother in her old age, the vengeance of whose favor we cannot fulfill even by worshipping them for our whole life. Expressing this sentiment, Jan Kavi Bhikhari Thakur has done a great favor to society by making 'Mata-Bhakti' the subject of his writings and inspired thousands of youth to devotion to their mother. Through his creations, he has told people to serve the mother before her death; to survive her is better than to spend it in rituals after death.

Rythem of pachara (Mā ke sāth kie bure vyavahār ke lie pashyatāp)

Kehū naikhe kehū ke dabāvat ho maiyā /

Maiyā ho, dukhavā dekhi ke mana-hī-mean bānī pachhatāvat ho maiyā / /

Būdhā- būdhī bā log lo²⁵⁷r girāvat ho maiyā /

Maiyā ho, gānv bhar 'thaparī bāṭe bajāvat²⁵⁸', ho maiyā (Yadav, 2005).^{XXVI}

4.10.7 Būdhshālā ke Beyān

When Bhikhari Thakur composed these songs, there was no old age home in the rural setting. He experienced many times in old age the problem of the old parents being thrown out of the house by their young son and daughter-in-law. Due to this he made

²⁵⁷ Tears

²⁵⁸ Clapping

it the basis of his plays and folk songs and wrote dozens of songs on this subject to overcome this social irony. The play ‘Gangā snan’ is a prime example of this.

Bhikhari Thakur created a song collection named ‘Budhshālā Ke Bayān’ to solve this problem of these elders. Through the compositions of these songs, he urged that just as an orphanage for orphan children and a cowshed for cows has been built in his village, similarly Budhshālā should be built for the old man. By which the problems of those elderly people can be solved i.e. they can be supported who have been thrown out of the house by their children.

Būdhshālā ke Beyān (chaupāī)

Budhshālā ke kahān kahānī / Tehī ke jānī karan samdānī / /

Saravan²⁵⁹ karī yah amṛut bātā / Tekare lāgī rām se nātā / /

Pāv bhar mean kailas bāīan / Nav mās tahān rakhalī mām / /

Karanī ke fal kahiyā milī / Maiyā bhailī kuttī tar ke billī (Yadav, 2005).^{XXVII}

4.10.8 Nāī Bahār

In the Indian cast class system, the barber society is placed in the category of ‘*Shudra Varnas*²⁶⁰, whose ethnic karma is shaving i.e. cutting hair and beard and reaching social customs like marriage, death, and invitation to worship. They are also associates of Pandits and priests in religious rituals, sixteen rites, and worship, and like them, they contribute to the purification of social and religious rituals. But still, they do not get the respect they deserve. They have to work the whole day with a little honorarium. Bhikhari Thakur belonged to this caste, so he saw and experienced this problem closely and he wrote about this problem of the barber caste in ‘Nāī Bahār’. This is a collection of songs composed by Bhikhari Thakur, in which an attempt has

²⁵⁹ Shraavan Kumar is the dutiful son of old parents who are taken on a pilgrimage by him on foot across the Bharatvarsha

²⁶⁰ Lower class

been made to show society in the mirror of folk songs the pain of shaving, respect according to work, and the agony of not getting honorarium.

Nāī samudāya kā dashā (Chaupāī)

Rel ke rāstā bāṭe bhāī | Kharachā māange mean sakuchāī | |

Chiṭhī uṭhā ke chalalan chāla | Dekhān uṭhāval god ke fāla²⁶¹ | |

Chhav mahinā bhail udhāra | Anna se bharal bāṭe udhāri | |

The dekh ke sabūr karila | Jājamanikā ke sab dukh harī la (Yadav, 2005).^{XXIII}

4.10.9 Chauvarṇa Padavī

There are four types of varṇas²⁶² mentioned in Hindu scriptures, Brāhman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, whose division was earlier according to karma, which later became according to birth. The work of the four varṇas is different from each other, but all these varṇas have equal contributions to the development of any society or country. It is the irony of our country that Brahmins have always considered themselves to be high and Shudras despised, which is a hindrance to the development of any society and country.

Bhikhari Thakur composed ‘Chauvarṇa Padavī’ to understand the importance of the four varṇas and through symbols, titles, and patterns, the characteristics of the four varṇas and the division of work was easily mentioned. According to the Vedas, he called Brahmin as mouth, Kshatriya as hands, Vaishya as stomach, and Shudra as feet. The mouth is called Brahmin because if any part of the body is hurt or there is any pain, then he does not speak himself, but always talks about it like a Brahmin. The hand is Kshatriya because it protects all the varṇas and provides shade by building a weak or strong house over the heads of all. The stomach, like a Vaishya, collects the food and converts it into blood, and distributes it exactly among all the

²⁶¹ Rice

²⁶² Cast class

varnas according to the need. Bhikhari Thakur called shudra is the feet of the human being. It is beneath all the varṇas that one takes up the weight of all the varṇas like a brave laborer. According to Bhikhari Thakur, all the characters are complementary to each other, just as a healthy body must be healthy and strong for all the parts of the body, due to the weakening or deterioration of any one part, its effect on the whole body develops in the same way. Society and the country need to be healthy, prosperous and educated. If anyone in Varṇa is weak or backward, the development of that society and country is impossible (Yadav.2005, 271).^{XXIX}

(Chaupāī)

Bāta-bāt meā jāt ke padavī chhaparā ke log hokhelā /

Avarū jagah ūncha-nichāī burbak²⁶³ chatur jokhelā /

Eh taūl se jāt ke padavī ke maryādā haṭ gauye /

Chhaparā bandha nātā ke premī ghaṭake zaṭ de khaṭ²⁶⁴ gauge (Yadav, 2005).^{XXX}

4.10.10 Shankā-Samādhān

From the beginning to time immemorial, where goodness has come, evil has taken birth there itself, but in the end, evil has always had to bow down to goodness. Even in the well-organized and art-creating life of Bhikhari Thakur, some semi-knowledgeable and anti-social elements interfered and tried unsuccessfully to defame his honor and prestige. They published his works in his name and took advantage of his fame by publishing his uncultured and low-quality books in the name of Bhikhari Thakur and trying to defame his name in the desire of earning more money. Due to this a feeling of dissatisfaction started to arise in the hearts of his fans and they became victims of doubt. To overcome this problem, Bhikhari Thakur composed many songs in the context of doubt and solved the doubts of his fans.

²⁶³ Stupid

²⁶⁴ Very fast

(Savaiyā)

Andha n jānat dīpak ke chhavi²⁶⁵ aur bahiro nahīan rāg ko jānean /
Mānasarobar kā sukh ke kā kahūn nāhi kāk sake anumānai /
Pāpī mahā adhamādham hūn kabahūn nāhian svarga ke sukh bakhāne /
Taisehian mūrakh yā jag mean bhakuhā ullūvā²⁶⁶ badūrā ke samāne
(Yadav, 2005).^{XXXI}

4.10.11 Bhikhārī Thākura: Parichaya

Bhikhari Thakur was like a fortune teller. He knew very well that the work done in the present will become history in the future and will be presented to the people in the future and people will accept it as history, which will be received by them in writing. He wanted that all his compositions, biography, and the struggle story of his Theatre Journey should reach the people purely. So, he wrote his biography through dozens of folk songs for the composition of his introduction song. He made the theme in some ways to depict the struggle of his life, the journey of life, the introduction of ancestors, and the description of the birthplace. To receive respect from the public and governments he presented a gift of his composition entitled ‘Bhikhārī Thākura: Parichaya’ for his readers and singers, which we have today in written form. Perhaps, this is the reason that today we are all familiar with his personality and his creations.

(Chaupāī)

Ghar par āke lagālīan rahe / Gīta-kavitā katahūn kehū kahe / /
Artha pūchhī-pūchhī ke sīkhīan / Dohā, chhanda, nij akshar likhīan / /
Sādī-gavanā rahue bhaila / Likhe mean pahile bhor²⁶⁷ par gaila / /
Sādhu-panḍit ke ḍig jāhīan / Suni shlok ghokhī²⁶⁸ man māhīan / /
Nijapur mean karike rāmalīlā / Nāch ke tab banhalīan silasilā (Yadav, 2005).^{XXXII}

²⁶⁵ Image

²⁶⁶ Owl

²⁶⁷ Forgetfulness

²⁶⁸ to remember again and again

4.11 Musical Instruments Employed in the Play Performance of Bhikhari

Thakur

First of all, in the 28th chapter of Natyashastra, Acharya Bharata Muni mentioned the instruments as *Atodya*²⁶⁹ and divided them into four classes. The Sanskrit scholar Amar Singh, in his book 'Amarkosh', defined the meaning of Atodya in the form of a group of four types of musical instruments which we can compare with today's instrumental musician groups. Acharya Abhinavagupta divided these four types of instruments into two classes and accepted the use of string and wind instruments for vocals and the use of Percussion and solid instruments for tala (Shastri, 1985).^{xxxiii}

In the context of four types of instruments and their characteristics, Bharat Muni wrote-

Tanta chaivāvanaddham ch ghanam suṣhiramev ch | |
Chaturvidham ch vijnyeyamātodyam lakṣhaṇānvitam | |

Meaning- Tat, Avanaddha, Ghana, and Suṣhir are the four types of instruments.

Tanta tantrīgatam jnyeyamavanaddham tu paushkaram | |
Ghanastu tālo vijnyeyah suṣhiro vansha evm cha (Rastogi, 1989).^{xxxiv}

Meaning- The stringed instruments are called Tat Vādya, Avandha (plated) instrument is called Paushkar, the instrument (Manjari, etc.) played by Talaopyogi and thumping is called Ghana Vādya and the instrument (flute) played by blowing is called Sushir Vādya.

Bhikhari Thakur used all four types of instruments in his theatrical performances, propounded by Acharya Bharata Muni. He used sarangi as a string instrument,

²⁶⁹ Instruments

Dholak, Gopi-yantra and Tabla as percussion instruments, Jhal and Khanjari as solid instruments and Harmonium as wind instruments.

He used Dholak, Sarangi, Gopi-yantra, and Jhal/Jodi as the main instruments, and the rest are secondary instruments in his theatrical performances. At Bhikhari Thakur Chowk in Chhapar, the status of three music players of Bhikhari Thakur's plays have been made with their instruments, in which the Sarangi player, the Dholak player, and the Gopi-Yantra player have been given place.

Figure-2. The Statue of the Instrument Players of Bhikhari Thakur Theatre, Located at Bhikhari Thakur Chowk, Chhapra



<https://www.forwardpress.in/2017/01/bhikhari-thakur-lifes-nachaniya/>

Based on utility, all the instruments used in the Naach program of Bhikhari Thakur can be divided into two categories-

Instruments used in the main part of the play- Sarangi, Dholak, and Jhal

Note- In later times the harmonium was also accepted as the main instrument.

Instruments used in Purvaranga - Harmonium, Tabla, Sarangi, Dholak, Jhal, Gopi-Yantra.

Table-1. Instruments of Bhikhari Thakur Theatre

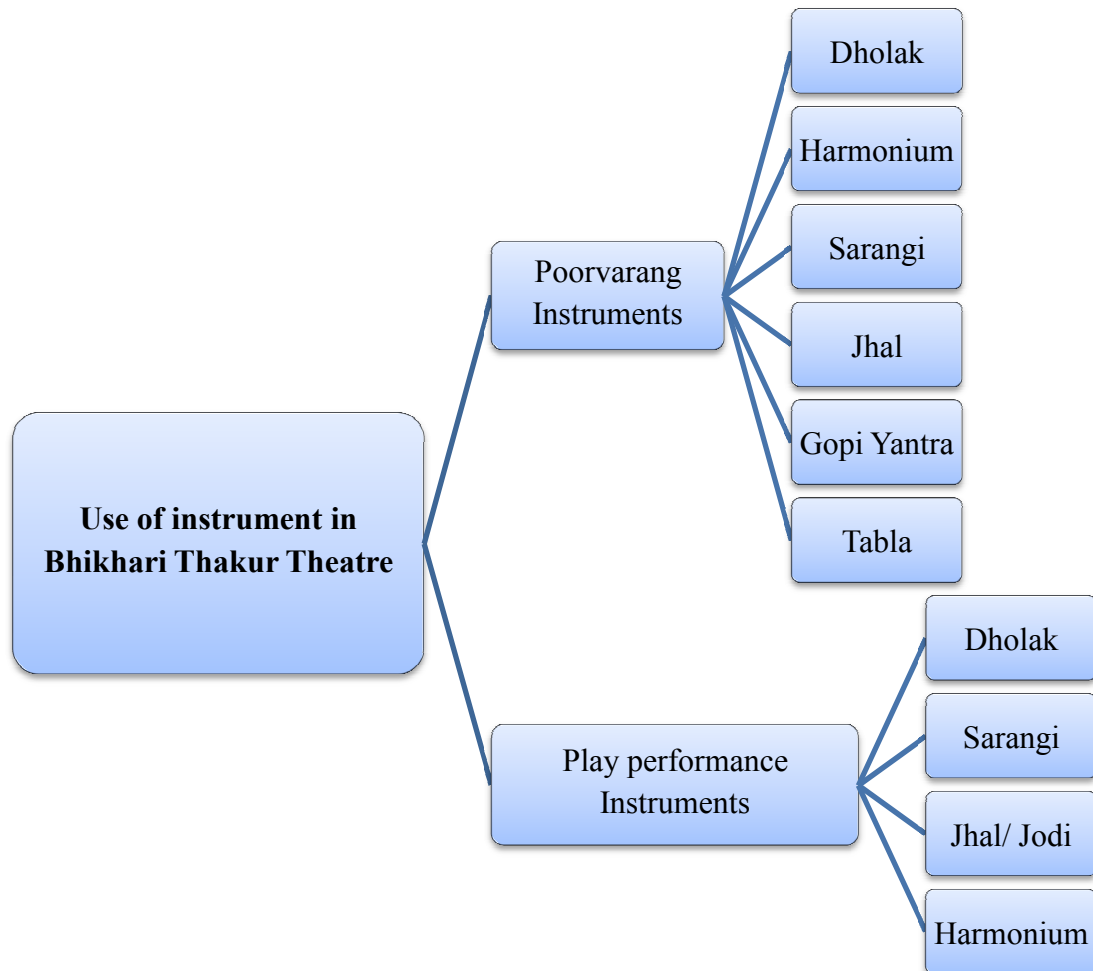


Figure of Instruments of Bhikhari Thakurs Theatre-

Figure-3. Sarangi



Figure-4. Gopi -Yantra



<http://sikhsaaj.blogspot.com/2010/07/sarangi-one-hundred-colours-of-soul.html>

Figure-5. Harmonium



Figure-6. Tabla



Figure-7. Dholak



Figure-8. Jhal/Jodi



https://www.indian-instruments.com/drumsand_percussion/dholak.htm
[81qQxbR68RL.AC SY300 QL70 ML2 .jpg](https://www.indian-instruments.com/drumsand_percussion/dholak.htm)

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Chapter-V

5. INTERVIEW

5.1 Padmashri Ramchandra Manjhi

Launda dancer

Bhikhari Thakur's students

Interview

Dated- 15/07/2022

Figure-9. Photograph with Padma Shri Ramchandra Manjhi during the Interview



Md Ibran- *Pranam*²⁷⁰ Sir would you like to tell us something about yourself?

Ramchandra Manjhi- My name is Ramchandra Manjhi. I started working with Bhikhari Thakur when I was 10 years old and even today it seems that he is with us.

Md Ibran- How did Bhikhari Thakur select new artists for his Theatre troupe?

Ramchandra Manjhi- Bhikhari Thakur used to find skilled artists of the village and call them into his '*Nāch Mandali*'²⁷¹ and give training in music, dance, and acting according to their proficiency. He used to make the artists remember the dialogues

²⁷⁰ It a kind of Greeting

²⁷¹ Theatre troupe

and songs of the play. After memorizing the script by the artist, he used to listen to him and get the mistakes corrected. We used to do what he was told and still are doing.

Md Ibran- Sir, did he have a master in his 'Nāch Mandali' to train new artists or not?

Ramchandra Manjhi- Yes, he used to teach. Sarangi players and musicians also used to teach sometime.

Md Ibran- Which make-up material did you use for the play's make-up during the time of Bhikhari Thakur?

Ramchandra Manjhi- For the make-up of the play, the first *Murdashankh*²⁷² was ground on a stone and mixed with vermilion and applied on the face and *Labar*²⁷³ used to apply black and red color on his face.

Md Ibran- How was the dress of the artist of Bhikhari Thakur's plays?

Ramchandra Manjhi- Labar was dressed in black and white cloth and Bidesi was dressed in a Dhoti, Kurta, Stockings, and Cap. , 'Pyari Sundari' used to wear a Sari, Bangles, Anklets on the feet, Necklaces around the neck, and Jewelry in the ears and nose. If you want to make *Mehraru*²⁷⁴, then what is her nature, how she lives, how she moves, keeping this in mind, clothes and ornaments were used. With clothes, jewelry, and make-up, an attempt was made to show that 'Pyari Sundari' is a Good lady and the concubine is *Randi*²⁷⁵. The 'Samaji' was dressed in the same color Dhoti, Kurta, and Turban.

²⁷² Litharge

²⁷³ Joker

²⁷⁴ In general, it means wife but here, it means newly married wife

²⁷⁵ prostitute

Md Ibran- What differentiates you between the plays performed by your theatrical troupe and the plays of Bhikhari Thakur performed by other theatrical troupes?

Ramchandra Manjhi- The main difference is between language and dialect. Our language and dialect are different from theirs. The artists of the Arrah district perform the plays of Bhikhari Thakur, but their dance does not have the spirit that comes in the performance of the artists here.

Md Ibran- Sir, which award have you got?

Ramchandra Manjhi- I have received many awards. Wherever I went to perform, I got awards and a lot of respect from people. I have received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award from the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Padma Shri Award from the President of India. The Bihar government has also given me the Lifetime Achievement Award. I got one lakh rupees from the President, which I distributed among the people. One day Sushil Modi came to my house while honor me, he gave me 21 thousand rupees.

Md Ibran- Sir, tell me something about the Launda Nāch.

Ramchandra Manjhi- The word Nāch of Launda Nāch has two syllables, Na and Cha. This means the Nāch is *Achal*²⁷⁶, which doesn't work. So how did it become so popular? If the verse of the song is correct then it will have good meaning and everyone will respect it. Earlier people used to hate Launda Nāch and now people are accepting it. We have done what we could; now you guys take it forward.

²⁷⁶ Immovable

Md Ibran- What was the nature of the Bhikhari Thakur?

Ramchandra Manjhi- The nature of Bhikhari Thakur was similar to mine. By being with him, his nature has been imbibed in me. He used to sleep throughout the day and wake up in the evening to take tea. Usually, his program was held at night only. He used to prepare plays very sincerely and used to teach everyone. He was a straight man. Whenever I made a mistake, I was scolded and explained with love. At that time I did not pay much attention to his words, but now his point is understandable.

Md Ibran- What was the time duration of the play performance?

Ramchandra Manjhi- A drama performance timing was one to two hours.

Md Ibran- Was there a dance performance during the theatrical performance or not?

Ramchandra Manjhi- No, There was no dancing in the middle of the play. Laundanach took place either before play or after the play. On the demand of the audience, the dance was stopped for a while in the middle, and then the play started again.

Md Ibran- On which occasion was Nāch programs performed mostly?

Ramchandra Manjhi- Most of the Nāch program was performed on the occasion of marriage and during Dussehra.

5.2 Ramdas Rahi

Secretary, Bhikhari Thakur Ashram

Interview

Date- 17/07/2022

Figure-10. Photograph with Ramdas Rahi during the Interview



Md Ibra- Sir, I would request you to tell me something about yourself.

Ramdas Rahi- I founded the '*Lokkalākār*²⁷⁷ Bhikhari Thakur Ashram' on 31 October 1974. The first foundation day was celebrated on 17 January 1975. On 7th July we got the organization registered and from there our service started.

Md Ibran- Sir, when were you born?

Ramdas Rahi- I was born on 6th March 1942.

Md Ibran- Sir, when did you join Bhikhari Thakur Natya Mandali?

Ramdas Rahi- I apologize, those words came into my heart. I have never been part of Bhikhari Thakur's Nāch troupe. My Guru is H.R Dev Dwarka Singh. I became associated with him in 1975 and was a lifelong companion till he lived.

²⁷⁷ Folk artist

Md Ibran- Tell the journey of the establishment of “Lok kalakar Bhikhari Thakur Ashram”.

Ramdas Rahi- Acharya Dwarka Babuji and I were earlier trying to establish it in Shastri Nagar, Patna. But then Dwarka Babu said that a committee should be formed on the birth of a litterateur. So ‘Lok kalakar Bhikhari Thakur Ashram’ was established constitutionally in Kutubpur and on 6 January 1976 his birth anniversary was celebrated in Kutubpur village. With the help of Acharya Dwarka Babuji, the land was found in Kutubpur village for the construction of the ashram. It got constitutional approval in 1974. In 1976, 10 Katha land was registered for the construction of the ashram and the ashram was built.

Md Ibran- Who was the founder and director of Bhikhari Thakur Ashram?

Ramdas Rahi- All the credit for that goes to me. Help belongs to everyone but I am its founder.

Md Ibran- Sir, what is the main purpose of Bhikhari Thakur Ashram?

Ramdas Rahi- The main objective of Bhikhari Thakur Ashram is the collection and publication of Bhikhari Thakur’s plays. The preserved rhythm of his songs and the performance of his plays is its main motive.

Md Ibran- Sir, tell me something about Bhikhari Thakur.

Ramdas Rahi- See, Bhikhari Thakur has said “Gailīan Medanīpur ke *Jilā*²⁷⁸ ohīje Kuchh Dekhalīan Rāmalīlā”. So now you tell me how will you come to do Ramlila just by watching some Ramlila performance? It is not possible. Bhikhari Thakur lived in Medinipur from 1907 to 1912. He used to go to Rāmlila day and night and watch

²⁷⁸ District

all the scenes of Rāmlila closely and meditate on them. After doing hard work for 5 years, his talent came out. Mammut used to say that talent is in the form of seed, it germinates only after irrigating. So Bhikhari Thakur got irrigated in Medinipur and when his seed of talent sprouted. So the feeling of doing Rāmlila arises in his mind and comes back to his village Kutubpur in 1812 AD. Luckily they find Rāmanand Singh. He was a landlord. He has recited *Sugriva*²⁷⁹ a lot in Rāmlila. In 1817 AD, when he felt that this would not save society, he started writing and staging plays on the evils prevalent in society. He never made any alliance with any theatrical tradition, but he started his own 'Bhikhari Thakur Theater *Parampara*²⁸⁰, in which work was done on the problems of society. The evil prevailing in the society, the evils, and the pain in the heart of the rural people were made the subject of the play. Before 1817 AD, the subject matter of the play was religious or historical in which either the story of God or the story of the king and queen was shown. But from the year 1817, Bhikhari Thakur started showing the story of society and the common man. Bhikhari Thakur originated of '*Sangeet Rupaka*²⁸¹. To understand them, it is necessary to study each of their terms. We shall have to reflect on that. He talks about the soul in his play by reading about the human heart.

Md Ibran- What is your relationship with Bhikhari Thakur?

Ramdas Rahi- I am the great-grandson of Bhikhari Thakur's sister.

Elder sister of Bhikhari Thakur

²⁷⁹ The character's name of Rāmalīlā, and he is a friend of Lord Ram.

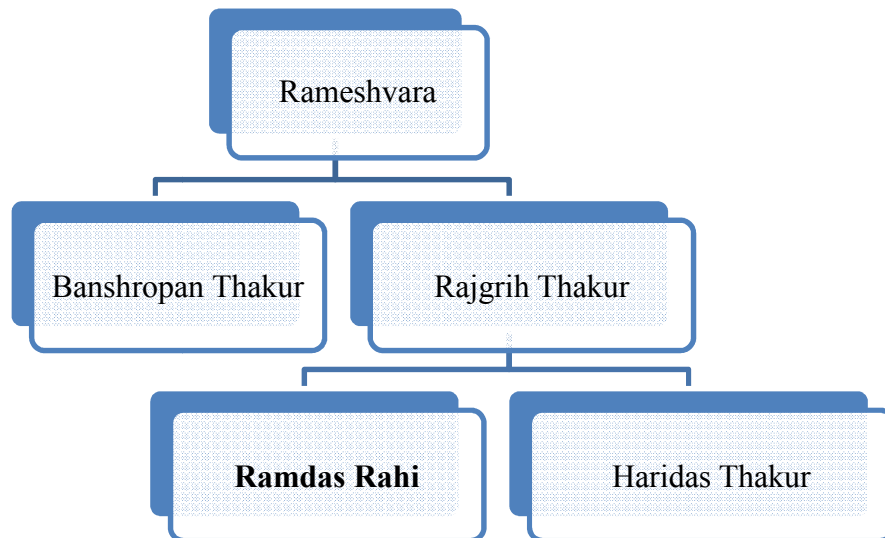
²⁸⁰ Traditional

²⁸¹ Music-metaphorical

Rameshvara

(Husband Name- Mangal Thakur)

Table-2. Family tree of Ramdas Rahi



Md Ibran- Please, Tell me something about their married life.

Ramdas Rahi- He had three wives. His last marriage was to Mantorna. Shilanath Thakur was born to his third wife Mantorna.

Md Ibran- How was the *Svarūpa*²⁸² of the theatre of Bhikhari Thakur?

Ramdas Rahi- Bhikhari Thakur's theatre was an open form of theatre. The distance between the audience and the actor was determined in his theatrical performances. His plays had a simple life story, not a king-queen story. The actors acted in simple attire.

²⁸² Nature

Md Ibran- What preparations were made before the performance of Bhikhari Thakur's drama?

Ramdas Rahi- Before the start of the play, there used to be a chorus dance. There was a *Yugal*²⁸³ of two dancers. After that, the lead artist sang four songs in a row called a *Chākarī*²⁸⁴. Then Bhikhari Thakur used to come as a poet and perform his kirtan and introduce drama. After that, the play started and went on till morning. In the initial days, *Ramkaleva*²⁸⁵ used to do it before the play started but gradually it ended.

Md Ibran- Sir, how long was the drama?

Ramdas Rahi- The play used to be one and a half to two hours. No less than that. But the program used to go on for the whole night. He had to say, where will the women go till the ray does not emerge? That's why he used to program dance and songs before the play and even after the play. Sometimes he used to stage two plays in one night.

Md Ibran- Sir, tell me about the make-up and costume of the characters of his play.

Ramdas Rahi: There was no modern make-up. He used to wear simple costumes and makeup. His performers never came down from the stage and did not wear another outfit over a dress or something else. That means different scenes had to be worn in different clothes. For example, when Bidesh is in the house, he has in Dhotī, kuratā aur gamachhā, and when he goes to Kolkata, his dress changes. Similarly, the clothes of the beloved beauty also changed according to the scene, and used to wear a Sari of Rs. 500 to Randi.

²⁸³ Double- here it is a dance performance which is performed by two dancers.

²⁸⁴ Quadruple- dance performance, performed by 4 dancer

²⁸⁵ Story of Ram and Sita's marriage

Md Ibran- What is the role of music in his play?

Ramdas Rahi- His play is a music-metaphorical drama. The song is in the play and the play is in the song. In the play Bidesiyā, Randi is saying, “Kahān Gae Rājā Khilaunā Chhoḍa Kara”. It is a very simple word but the meaning is enough.

Md Ibran- What was the process of training in Bhikhari Thakur’s theatrical troupe?

Ramdas Rahi- In his process, a boy of 10 to 15 years used to act. Before the new actors came, small characters were made to act. All the elements of acting, whether there is one in that boy or not, must be their discipline. He used to test all the things and after testing, he kept the boy in his theatrical troupe. When the boy started getting a mustache beard, then by examining his voice, delicateness, and musical vocals, it was decided whether he is right for the role of hero or the role of heroine. Shakshan Bhagat’s voice was very good. But there was no softness in his voice. Ramchandra Manjhi also has no sweetness in his voice. So he was cast in the role of actor and dancer. But Lakhichand’s voice had a wonderful flair. So he was cast in the role of the heroine. Even today the pain that is in Lakhichand’s voice is not in Ramchandra Manjhi’s voice.

Md Ibran- What is Launda dance? What is the significance of Launda dance in his play?

Ramdas Rahi- It is wrong. Launda dance is nothing. Now let me explain this. Bhikhari Thakur was not a *Bhumiyar*²⁸⁶. He belonged to the lower caste and the lower caste’s wife is the brother-in-law of all. That's why they speak whatever comes to their mind. If they were born in a big caste, they would have been worshipped. If a handsome boy is made to stand on the stage wearing a Sari, he cannot act properly.

²⁸⁶ A upper cast name , they claim Brahmin status

He needs to know about acting. In the past also, male actors used to play female characters in movies and dramas, so are they called Launda? It is the irony of our society that some people call his plays Launda Nāch. The artist of his play should be called purely hero and heroine, not Launda.

Md Ibran- What was the dance used in the play of Bhikhari Thakur called?

Ramdas Rahi- He was called Chorus dance. In it 'Chākri' was performed by four artists and 'Jugal' was performed by two artists. That song was not obscene; there was emotion in the song. The dance and gestures of all the artists in the chorus are the same.

Md Ibran- What instruments were used in his play?

Ramdas Rahi- Before the play, the tabla was used. After that Dholak, Sarangi, Jhal, Harmonium, and Gopijantar were used in the play performance. In Purvaranga, only the tabla was used instead of the dholak, the rest of the instrument was played, and when the play began, the dholak was used.

Md Ibran- What changes have taken place in the theatrical performance of Bhikhari Thakur in the present time? What do you think about these changes?

Ramdas Rahi- Where has the change taken place? Now he is neither a man nor a drama. That's all over. Now, those things are no more. We have followed their tradition till 1986 AD. After that, the group gradually broke up. Now obscenity is being done in the name of his play. No color, no form. His Sagittarius has also changed. His dignity was breached. The dress and makeup all changed. A few days back there was a Bidesiya drama in Ballia. All the drama was done in one dhoti. The mood, the dress, nothing was right.

5.3 Harivansh Tiwari

Director

Bhikhari Thakur School of Drama, Patna

Interview

Date- 17/07/2022

Figure-11. Photograph with Harivansh Tiwari during the Interview



Md Ibran- Hello sir, please tell me something about yourself.

Harivansh Tiwari- My childhood was spent in Rāmnagar Kaswā of West Champāran because my father used to work there. After passing first class I went to my native village Ballia, Uttar Pradesh, and started my studies in second grade here. By the fourth grade, I started participating in competitions, debates, speeches, and theatrical plays. I used to sit with my friend having copy and pen. I used to speak and he used to write and that's how small plays were made. We used to gather four outposts in our locality and set the stage by hanging sheets behind and start performing plays under the lights of lanterns and petromax. Thus began my theatrical journey. In my childhood, I had been listening to and humming a village woman, a shepherd, a

bullock cart driver, and farmer songs who used to sing during weddings, plantation harvesting, and festivals. Hearing these, slowly I started singing songs. I consider these shepherds, bullock cart drivers, farmers, and rural women as my first teachers, who were singing songs on the occasion of marriages, festivals, and planting-harvesting.

Md Ibran- Sir, when did you start doing theatre properly and why did you establish 'Bhikhari Thakur School of Drama'?

Harivansh Tiwari- When I finished college, my life began as a cultural worker. From 1974-75, I used it in the Culture Weapons Room to express my feelings. I have seen and understood both modern and folk theatre. So I found folk theatre quite lively, as modern theatres were more suited to urban audiences. But folk theatre affects both rural and urban. Folk theatre is the heartbeat of life, because the diversity of labor, the struggles inherent in it, their sorrows and joys, their humor and humor, and their enthusiasm, are found only in folk theatre. Then I realized that folk theatre is very popular and it is a cultural weapon to attract the masses. So, I took it deeply which resulted in the establishment of 'Bhikhari Thakur Nātya Vidyalaya'.

Md Ibrn- According to you, what is the nature of the theatre of Bhikhari Thakur?

Harivansh Tiwari- I have not seen such a stage of Bhikhari Thakur in which he is present. But I have seen many performances of his theatrical troupe. I had first seen the program 'Bidesiyā Nāch Mandali' in my village itself. One, the language style of his play, and secondly the content was very tremendous. His plays covered language conflicts, social themes, spontaneous performance style, and the lives of ordinary people. The dialogues of his play were lyrical. He used the folk melodies of Alhā-Udal, Lorikāyana, Sorthī, and Kunwar Vijaymal from the historical period as the

melodies of his theatrical songs. He also used the tunes of marriage, planting, and harvest, i.e. traditional folk songs, which made the lyrical dialogue of his play very influential.

The '*Bhānd Mandali*'²⁸⁷ of Banaras and Mirzapur was also active during that period, which also used Duggi and Nagar in their programs. Bhānd Mandali's play performance style was emerging from the middle of the Nautanki, who came to Mirzapur and Banaras via Kanpur. Its most famous artists were Mukundi Lal and his disciple Sumer Singh, which later went and made a separate one of its own. He used Duggi and Nagra in his program which also became very popular. But even in that period, Bhikhari Thakur did not use Duggi and Nagare, because the use of Duggi and Nagare in his lyrical dialogues is not justified. The folk music that we have here plays the most judicial role in connecting with the wider masses. I saw the theatrical performance of Bhikhari Thakur and felt that I should use it in a modern context in my plays also.

Md Ibran- Sir, please explain the theatrical element and its use in the plays of Bhikhari Thakur.

Harivansh Tiwari- Mainly he paid more attention to his plays on the four sides.

1. Content 2. Dance 3. Use of instincts 4. Music

He was very careful about the content. The discrepancies existed in rural areas. He kept them very firmly in his plays and used similar Characters in his plays. It was a wonderful experiment in the folklore tradition that he chose social discrepancies as the subject of his play, excluding historical, mythological, and obscenities-laden dramas.

²⁸⁷ A kind of Musical theatre troupe

The dance which he used in his plays was called 'Bhāva Nritya'. That is, there was more drama in his dance. He did not keep the audience in the same juice for a long time. In one of his rasa, the audience felt a lot of sub-rasa. The elements of 'Natuā dance' are found mostly in his dance form. In his plays, dance was used only in the form of 'Chākri' and duets in the Purvarang. His dances were free from obscenity. Not all traditional things are perfect. The developed form of Natui dance is 'Laundā dance'. There was also a connection to vulgarity. The dancers of Laundā dance are called 'Laundā'. They were of two types. (A) '*Darwāri Launda*'²⁸⁸ and (B) General Launda

Darwari Launda was fondly kept by the *Zamindars*²⁸⁹ and rich farmers who physically abused him with dance Pleasure. The others traditionally took drama training in groups and performed their dance on the occasion of marriage, festivals, and childbirth. There is also a lot of vulgarity in his dance. By removing obscenity, Bhikhari Thakur used traditional dance in the form of 'Bhāva Nritya' in his plays. He used to give dance training to the dancers from the age of 12.

Finding depth in spontaneity and striking the biggest discrepancies is the specialty of his plays. He easily adopted the simple language dialect, dress, and gestures of the villagers in his plays and tried to get the general public to get acquainted with the family and social problems prevailing in society through spontaneous theatrical performances. From this, it is known that his biggest awakening was his cultural weapon by simply presenting simple expressions on the stage. I have discussed music in the above question.

²⁸⁸ Court dancer

²⁸⁹ Landholder

Md Ibran- What is the importance of music in the play of Bhikhari Thakur?

Harivansh Tiwari- The plays of Bhikhari Thakur are called 'Sangeet Rupak'. All his plays are lyrical. Like the Sanskrit playwright, Bhikhari Thakur is also called a poet instead of a playwright, because there is a poetic side to their dialogue. All the awards that he received from the state government were in the name of '*Lok Kavi*'²⁹⁰. With as much variety as lyrical dialogue can generate communicative emotion, prose dialogue cannot, because we can change the frequency of lyrical dialogue. You can raise or lower the scale and increase the volume according to the situation and mood. You can also use Taan and Ālāp in lyrical dialogue, which is not possible in prose dialogue. Two things are very important in his music. Understanding speed operation and stop time intervals. Understanding how much speed, how long it stayed, the form of lyrical dialogue in that pause, etc., he used it in his acting style.

He did not use Duggi and Nagre in his plays. There were two parts of his program- Purvrang and play performances. They used to use Dholak, Harmonium, Jhāl (Jodi), Sarangi, Tablā, Shehnai, Gopi-Yantra, and Pakhāwaj before the start of the play, i.e. in Purvrang, and when the play started, they used only Dholak, Harmonium, and Jodi. In his time, the use of *Samaji*²⁹¹ was used to take the story forward. But now the Samaji is being used to support the artist in delivering lyrical dialogues by sitting on the back or side.

Md Ibran- Sir *Naal*²⁹² was also used?

Harivansh Tiwari- No, It cannot work on his lyrical style.

²⁹⁰ Folk/People's poet

²⁹¹ Music corse

²⁹² A kind of Dhol, which is used in mainly folk music of Bihhar

Md Ibran- Sir, Tell about the decoration of clothes and make-up Bhikhari Thakur's play.

Harivansh Tiwari- He has used very simple clothes in his play. He determined the clothes of the character according to his condition and qualities. For example, in the play *Bidesiyā*, the brother-in-law was presented in a well-equipped manner. He was dressed in a new bright Dhoti, Kurta, Gamchhā. Dance and songs are also used in the decoration of clothes. In the early days, dancers used to tie black cloth on their heads, which was a symbol of hair. At that time he used to wear Jamaffar and kept a scarf around his neck. But in the later days, Saris, Petticoats, and Blouses were used. The dancers jumped, so their inner clothing was tight.

He decorate the character based on his thinking, attitude, and practical life, and established the visual aesthetic in his play. Like at that time the face *Batohi*²⁹³ was turned white. Shankh's ash was used to whiten the face. Through this, an attempt was made to make him stand out from the other characters. He was dressed in a Dhoti and Turban and was also given a bundle.

Md Ibran- Changes that have taken place in the plays and theatrical songs of Bhikhari Thakur in the present time. How do you think this is?

Harivansh Tiwari- Just as the social system takes its form according to time; it also affects the different dimensions of literature and art. The era from which Bhikhari Thakur comes is not that era today. We can use today's modern technology like sound systems, light design, stage concepts, etc. in the presentation of Bhikhari Thakur's plays. But the content should be kept in mind. Do whatever you want to use keeping the content in mind. But the irony is that today the content is getting out of hand.

²⁹³ A character of *videsiyā* drama

Today's theatrical performances do not bring the content alive but appear to stand against the content itself. Where there is pain, it is turning into a porn comedy. It is also being used in the plays of Bhikhari Thakur that whistles have been of interest even where whistles should not be played. Doing anything in the name of experimentation and saying that Bhikhari Thakur is going popular on a worldwide scale. He is not going to the worldwide popularity with your work, but by how relevant he was and still is in his content, logical side, and the questions he raised in his play. That's why he's going on a worldwide platform.

Md Ibran- How can be preserved of Bhikhari Thakur's theatrical performance style and the original tunes?

Harivansh Tiwari- The old people who are alive, who have seen the theatrical performance of Bhikhari Thakur, and some old artists who have done theatre performances with Bhikhari Thakur are alive. By taking information from them, their original theatrical performance style and tunes can be preserved. 'Bhikhari Thakur School of Drama' also has some original tunes. I am also trying to preserve his original songs. All these songs need to be collected and recorded and if this is not done soon then their original tunes will not be found. In 1963, a film was made 'Bidesiyā'. Although the film is not based on the Bidesiya play of Bhikhari Thakur, in that film a song by Bhikhari Thakur was sung '*Dagariyā*²⁹⁴ Johat Nā'. At present, this is the only song sung by Bhikhari Thakur available in the market. This song is of pain but in today's drama people enjoy it. Its melody is changed to a fast rhythm and dance is being done on it. A similar experiment is being done with the tunes of the song "Piyavā Gailan Kalakātāvā E Sajani".

²⁹⁴ Road

Md Ibran- Sir, please recite the original tune of the song ‘Piyavā Gailan Kalakātāvā E Sajanī’!

Harivansh Tiwari- Please, see page number 103-104 for the song and notation.

Md Ibran- Sir Please recite some other original tunes of Bhikhari Thakur’s songs.

Harivansh Tiwari- Please, see page number 105-106 for song and notation.

5.4 Jainendra Kumar Dost

Director

Bhikhari Thakur Theatre Training and Research Center

Interview

Date- 14/07/2022

Figure-12. Photograph with Dr. Jainendra Kumar Dost during the Interview



Md Ibran- Hello sir, kindly tells me something about yourself.

Jainendra Dost- My name is Jainendra Dost. I have done my Ph.D and M.Phil only on Laundā Nāch which is the name of the theatre form of Bhikhari Thakur. At present, I am a lecturer on the subject of arts and crafts at the District Education Training Institute which is called DIET. I did M.Phil and Ph.D from Jawaharlal Nehru University. The research topic of my M.Phil is “Performance of Gender in Launda Nāch” and my research title in Ph.D is “Artistic Expression of Social Reality in Launda Nāch”. Apart from this, I have made a documentary film on Bhikhari Thakur whose name is “Naach Bhikhari Naach”. This film is made in collaboration with Doordarshān and PSPT. It was directed by me and Shilpi Gulati together. The film’s story is based on four living actors who worked with Bhikhari Thakur, by receiving Bhikhari Thakur’s theatre, Bhikhari Thakur’s music, and Bhikhari Thakur’s songs by

him. His recreation has been done in this film. This film is available on YouTube. Apart from that, I staged a play 'Bhikhari Naama' on the lifestyle of Bhikhari Thakur, his life, on his works, which are very popular in today's time. It has been shown in many places. From a new point of view, I keep reading books and research papers written on Bhikhari Thakur and making the world aware of this great art by speaking on different forums about his work and the home theatre of Bihar. This is my small effort.

Md Ibran- Sir, when did you start doing theatre and when did you become inclined towards Bhikhari Thakur theatre?

Jainendra Dost- Ibran, this is a long story. When I was in the third and fourth grades of primary school. I've been playing since then. In the earlier government schools, singing classes were held on Saturdays. Everyone used to sing songs, so I told the head teacher that we want to do some comic scenes, short and street plays and he gave permission. So right there, I got a chance to do drama from the third and fourth grades, I got the stage and I started doing drama. In my family, my three elder brothers used to perform plays on the occasion of Dussehra, Diwāli, Chhath Pujā, and Saraswatiā. So there also got a chance to act and thus the process of doing drama started. I joined IPTA and after some time, I Joined Breakathian Mirror Theatre Group in Delhi to take the theatre seriously. I had seen the dance of Bhikhari Thakur by Lakhdev Ram many times but reading about them for the first time tried to know about them by going to Delhi. When I went to Delhi, I also read and knew Bhikhari Thakur seriously. After that, I did my master's degree in "Dramatic and Film Studies" from Mahatma Gandhi International University. When I went to Jawaharlal Nehru University to do my M.Phil, I saw that people there misinterpreted the traditional

theatrical form of Bihar, acting, and vulgarity in Launda Nāch. So to remove this misinterpretation, I did my M.Phil and Ph.D on this subject. I gathered old artists Ramchandra Manjhi, Lakhichan Manjhi, Shivilal Bari, Ramchandra Bari, and Chhote Jaleshwar Mali, who had worked with Bhikhari Thakur, to form a theater group and tried to revive the old theatrical tradition of Bhikhari Thakur. Bhikhari Thakur's plays were prepared in the old style and presented all over the country and people liked it very much. Meanwhile, I forwarded Ramchandra Manjhi's name for the National Award. Earlier he got the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and now he has also got the Padma Shri award this year. The Bihar government has also given him the Lifetime Achievement Award. I didn't just use this form to write my research thesis. Rather, I also worked on his practical approach and tried to bring his different points of research to the front of the world.

Mo. Ibran- Bihar and outside of Bihar also, Bidesiyā drama is called folk theatre form of Bihar. What is your opinion on this subject?

Jainendra Dost- I have written about this in the literature review. The giver of the name never takes consent from the recipient of the name. If your parents have named you Ibran, then they did not ask about it with you. I make a general point, often people of the lower class are named by the upper class, upper caste, high economy, or old age. No lower-class, lower-caste, poor, or lower-aged person in the world gives the name of any elder or upper-class person. The same has happened in its naming. These educated people have named it but Bhikhari Thakur never called it Bidesiyā. Even today the theatrical performance of Bhikhari Thakur is called a Nāch program in the village. Bhikhari Thakur himself used to call it Naach. "Barajat Rahalan Bāpa-Mahatārī, Nāch Mean Tūan Mat Rah Bhikhārī". Bhikhari Thakur used to call it Nāch

and scholars are trying to make it Bidesiyā, so the politics that this has to be understood. The people of the educated community thought that the word Nāch sounds like a dance. Not like theater form. In the meantime, some people started speaking Launda dance too and the word Launda is an obscene word, so how can Launda dance represent Bihar? To avoid all this, people named it Bidesia to make Sunrise like a device, because at that time Bidesiyā drama was very popular. The tradition of Bideshiyā begins with Bhikhari Thakur while the tradition of Nāch is thousands of years old. Bideshiyā is a play by Bhikhari Thakur. Bhikhari Thakur and other theatre groups also perform Bidesiyā in their program and even today people perform Bidesiyā drama, not Bidesiyā style. This difference has to be understood.

Md Ibran- What was the nature of the theatre of Bhikhari Thakur?

Jainendra Dost- The nature of the plays of Bhikhari Thakur can be understood in two parts. One is the preparation of the play and the other is the performance. He used to write a lot to prepare for the play. He was a very good writer. He was a creator, who always used to meditate. He knew that he should be the best actor, singer, and celebrated dancer. So they kept on roaming. He used to see the good dancer and actors in the village. Used to add him to his theatrical troupe and train him. He used to have different masters in acting, dance, and music and also taught himself. When there was basic training, then he used to get roles in plays. After the play was prepared, there were booking and betting earnings of the plays.

Performance- The elements of the performance were very simple. In the early times, there were no stages, so they used to play plays in the open, and people used to watch from all sides. But gradually Bhikhari Thakur enriched this tradition of dancing. As soon as the dance took place on the platform of the outpost, a make-up room was

formed behind it. First of all, musicians sit on the stage. The Lehra in Teen Taal of Raga Chandrakonas is played in 16 beats. At the same time, the makeup of the artists is going on in the green room. Then the prayer is sung. After the prayer, the dancers perform group dance and various tunes of traditional folk songs are sung. Labāri performs comedy and after almost midnight the drama is played. After the recitation is over in the morning, the morning '*Parati Bhajan*'²⁹⁵ is sung and then the program ends. This is the nature of his play.

Md Ibran- What is the importance of music in the play of Bhikhari Thakur?

Jainendra Kumar Dost- Bhikhari Thakur's play is a musical drama. The tradition of Indian folk theatre is the tradition of musical drama. Drama and music are not different things. There is music in the play and there is a dialogue in the music. Many times I go to a government event with a drama team, and then the organizers say because of a lack of time. Cut the song, just show the drama. So I say, music is nothing different, music is dialogue. Music cannot be deleted. Music is the soul of folk drama. Bhikhari Thakur's folk theatre cannot be imagined without music.

Md Ibran- Sir, what is the acting technique of Bhikhari Thakur's plays?

Jainendra Kumar Dost- The actors of his play explain the character. Bhikhari Thakur and old artists like Ramchandra Manjhi show the merits and demerits of the characters. Bhikhari Thakur used to tell his artists that look at the people in society and observe them. How does an alcoholic Act? What is the life of a gambler like? How does a good housekeeping husband Act? What is the difference between a good and a bad woman? Proper observation is an important element of his acting technique.

²⁹⁵ Morning Hymn

Another important element is music. He pays special attention to music in his acting. When you sing and feel the song of Karoon Ras, the feeling of mourning manifests itself on your face. Feeling the music is an important part of the acting technique. Body movement, mac-up, costume, hand gestures, eye gestures, etc., and physical and dietary performances are also techniques of his plays. With the help of this, he performs the performance of his plays.

Md Ibran- How was the costume and make-up of the characters of the plays of Bhikhari Thakur and what materials were they used for make-up?

Jainendra Kumar Dost- All the plays of Bhikhari Thakur are based on the events of folk life. Therefore, the decoration of its clothes is also simple, according to the position of the character and theatrical scene. In the play *Beti Bechwa*, a young girl is married to an old man. Therefore, the clothes that the bride and groom wear at the wedding is the same as the daughter (*Upato*) and the groom (*Jhantu*) in this play. Similarly, in the play *Bidesiyā*, the *Pyari Sundari* is a new bride, so what will she wear? All these things are already assured in society. He used to take society and use it dramatically in his drama.

They used native technology for Make-up. At that time there was not much cream or powder. So they used to grind a stone called 'Murdashankh' and make charan and apply it on the face. Vermilion was found in it corresponding to the make-up of the letters. If the face of a character had more red color, then more vermilion was found in it and if someone had less red color, then it used to get Vermilion. Later on, use Powder, *Kajal*²⁹⁶, Bindiya-Tikuli, Vermilion, Bangle and Fake hair as a Make-up.

²⁹⁶ Lampblack, which applied to the eyes for cosmetic or medicinal purposes

Md Ibran- In almost all his plays two characters *Sutrdhār*²⁹⁷ and ‘Labār’ are there, whose dress is different from all the other characters. Tell me something about him.

Jainendra Kumar Dost- There is no character like Sutrdhār in the plays of Bhikhari Thakur like in modern theatre. Just as the facilitator in modern theatre comes at the beginning of the play, in the middle or after each episode, and at the end, in the same way the facilitator does not come in his play. At the very beginning of his play, a character comes and explains the circumstances of the whole play. The song related to the play is gata and serves to create a theatrical-friendly atmosphere for theatrical performance. After that, the play begins. Like the Modern Theatre, he does not come in the middle of the play as a narrator. Comes at the end of the play if need be.

The main use of ‘Labār’ is in the dance before the play. After the start of the play, he also joins the character of the play. That too goes with the story of the play and is not something comedy does separately.

Md Ibran- Sir, what is the significance of Luanda’s dance in his play?

Jainendra Kumar Dost- Not important, Launda dance is the name of his art form in which men dance as women. But people have misinterpreted the Naach. People have understood the meaning of Nāch as dance but it is a theatre form not dance. ‘Nāch’ is a theatre form of Bhikhari Thakur's traditional folk theatre. For various reasons, women were not given a place on the stage in society. So to overcome that shortcoming, Bhikhari Thakur and his earlier artists Rasulmi, Gudar Malik, etc. came up with the solution that only men will become women. Earlier the name of this form was Nāch. But now slowly Launda Nāch has become the identity of this form.

²⁹⁷ Narrator

Md Ibran- Sir what kind of songs are used in his play?

Jainendra Kumar Dost- The songs used in his play were according to the story, character, and events of the play. Bhikhari Thakur has written many songs along the lines of traditional folk tunes Purvī, Kajrī, and Nirguna. But all the songs of Bhikhari Thakur are original, only after that did all these songs come into vogue. Some of the tunes are from earlier but their words have been coined by them. The purvī is the life of his drama. In his plays, purvī songs are the most, apart from this, he has composed his songs according to the content of the play in the tunes of Dohā, Choubolā, Purvī, Nirgunargu, Sorthī, Jatsār, Kajrī, and Lorikāyana.

Md Ibran- Which instruments are mainly used in the theatrical music of Bhikhari Thakur?

Jainendra Kumar Dost- In his music mainly only four instruments were used Dholak, Jhāl, Sārangi and Gopi-Yantra. Later on, gradually Harmonia and Tablā were also used. But in the beginning, his troupe used to run with only four instruments. Banjo has been used in modern times but Bhikhari Thakur did not use a Banjo.

Md Ibran- Sir, was the 'Nāl' also used as a musical instrument?

Jainendra Kumar Dost- No, only Dholak was used, not the Nāl. And it's historical. Bhikhari Thakur Chowk, which is located in Chapra city there is also a statue of three instrumentalists. It has idols of Sārangi, Dholak, and Gopi-Yantra players.

Md Ibran- According to you, what has changed in the theatrical performance of Bhikhari Thakur in the present time?

Jainendra Kumar Dost- The change in the drama performed by Bhikhari Thakur can be understood in two ways. One by observing the change in the theatrical performance of Bhikhari Thakur made by the old artist working in the Bhikhari Thakur Theatre Training Institute and the other by observing the change in his theatrical performance made by other institutions. The old artist was slightly modified according to the situation, stage, microphone, and technology. But he did not change his acting style, singing style, style of playing instruments, make-up, and costume for 70 years. But artists from other institutions come with training from *NSD*²⁹⁸ and other different institutes. He has changed its form. They only keep the line of the story, the rest change the way of theatrical performance, acting style, singing style, and melody of the song. The city has a culture of watching 1 to 2 hours of drama and Bhikhari Thakur's play's duration is around of 4 hours. So they cut two things out of it to shorten the play. One which they feel that the audience of the city will not understand and changed the entire tune of the song "Piyavā Gailan kalkatavā Ee Sajni" and is making Launda dance to this song. Looks like Piya's departure is being celebrated. While the original tune of this song is in Karun Ras. The wife is mourning in the memory of her husband. After some time people will feel that this is the original folk drama and tune of Bhikhari Thakur. It is a conspiracy to end history and it is never good to end history.

²⁹⁸ National school of drama

Md Ibran- One last question Sir, according to you how the traditional folk drama and song of Bhikhari Thakur can be preserved?

Jainendra Kumar Dost- This is a big challenge. I have worked on it to some extent and am still doing it. Neither the government nor society pays attention to preserving it. This is a very expensive thing to digitize and record. As it would be quite expensive to record and upload on YouTube social platforms but if it happens then it would be evident to the upcoming generation. So even after 50 years, it can be sung. Exactly 100% will not be correct but 95% can be rendered. So a big movement will have to be made that their plays and songs should be recorded and preserved. So that the coming generation can know and understand it.

5.5 Sarita Saaz

Bhojpuri folk singer

Interview

Dated-14/07/2022

Figure-13. Photograph with Sarita Saaz during the Interview



Md Ibran- *Namaste*²⁹⁹ Ma'am, tell me something about yourself.

Sarita Saaz- My name is Sarita Saaz. I took classical music lessons since childhood. I started singing music from Bettiah *Gharana*³⁰⁰. My early *Guru*³⁰¹ of music was Maya Mishra, the singer of the Bettiah. From the very beginning, I was attracted to folk music. Along with classical music, I also learned the nuances of folk music. At present, my folk music teacher is Padmashree Ramchandra Manjhi. In this sequence, I joined the Bhikhari Thakur theatre and was taught the traditional folk music of Bhikhari Thakur by the artists Padmashri Ramchandra Manjhi, Chhote Ramchandra Manjhi, Lakhichandraji, and Shivilal Wari, who had worked with Bhikhari Thakur.

²⁹⁹ A kind of greeting

³⁰⁰ Court singing

³⁰¹ Teacher

After joining Bhikhari Thakur Theatre, I got a chance to deeply understand the folk songs of Bhikhari Thakur. I realized that this is the genre I am passionate about and I started learning, singing, and preserving the traditional folk songs of Bhikhari Thakur. For the first time as me, a female artist entered the Bhikhari Thakur troupe. Ministry of Culture, Government of India has also given me a national scholarship to preserve the theatrical songs of Bhikhari Thakur.

Md Ibran- Why do you give so much importance to the songs of Bhikhari Thakur in your singing?

Sarita Saaz- When I learned and understood his songs associated with Bhikhari Thakur Natya Mandali, I saw that his original tune and the original rhythm of the songs are getting lost gradually. So I felt that their original folk songs and tunes should be learned and preserved. For which I am working hard.

If you are asking why I give more importance to Bhikhari Thakur's song in my singing, then there are two reasons for this-

The first reason is that the female voice is very strong in his play. In all his plays, be it Bidesiyā, Beti Viyoga, or Gabarghichor, she has strengthened the feminine voice. A strong form of a woman is seen in his plays. For example, the heroine of the play Gabarghichor accepts another man as well. She fights with society for her child. That was a time when it was difficult to even for a woman to get out of the house. Then Bhikhari Thakur strengthened the voice of the woman so much and talked about women's rights. One reason is that I like his songs very much.

The second reason is that I am a folk singer and I like to sing folk songs. Especially I sing many genres of Bhojpuri folk songs. Even from the folklore side, the original

melody of Bhikhari Thakur's songs, the rhythm, and the use of different traditional folklore genres by him in his theatrical songs fascinate me a lot. So I felt that I should learn the songs of Bhikhari Thakur. People who listen to obscene Bhojpuri songs on YouTube these days often think that these are Bhojpuri folk songs. When I go to stage shows at many places, people demand to sing only lewd obscene songs which are in vogue these days. But I narrate the song of Bhikhari Thakur there and say brother, listen to this too, this is also a folk song. This is also the reason for being attracted to the songs of Bhikhari Thakur.

Md Ibran- What is the significance of Bhikhari Thakur's song in his play according to you?

Sarita Saaz- I think all his plays are based on the voice of the people, the problems of society, and the evils prevailing in society. He has shown all these problems in his plays and has tried to convey the problems of society to the masses through folk songs. I think it's more effective because if you tell a story like this and someone tells a story with music then a story told with music is more effective. The villagers listen to folk songs with a lot of *Chow*³⁰² when you listen, you will understand. Bhikhari Thakur's song with this tone has great importance in his plays.

Md Ibran- Mam, what kind of songs did Bhikhari Thakur use in his plays?

Sarita Saaz- Bhikhari Thakur has used different genres of folk songs in his plays. He has used folk songs and folk songs in his plays like Kajri, Alhā-Udal, Virahā, Lorikāyana, Sorthi, Brijabhān, etc. We can say that he composed his theatrical songs through folklore genres.

³⁰² with interest

Md Ibran- Which instruments were mainly used in his theatrical songs?

Sarita Saaz- Harmonium, Dholka, Tabla, Naal, and Gopi-Yantra were mainly used in his plays. With which the whole group was ready.

Md Ibran- According to you, the changes that have taken place in the singing of the songs of Bhikhari Thakur, how is this change?

Sarita Saaz- According to me, change is not a bad thing. Change is necessary and change must happen. People make changes in their own time with their understanding. The preferences of society and the audience keep on changing with the times, so you will also have to change. But in the change, it should be noted that the spirit and soul of the song should not be changed. As we will see that when Bhikhari Thakur sings the song of the play Bidesiyā and Beti Bechwa, the wife's dis illusion is manifested in it. But now its form has changed. His spirit has gradually changed. Now the tune of the song of Karun Ras is being sung in a fast rhythm and dance is being done on it, which is wrong. According to me, the song's sentiment should not be changed, the rest can be changed.

Md Ibran- How can the songs of Bhikhari Thakur be protected and preserved?

Sarita Saaz- To preserve the songs of Bhikhari Thakur, his songs should be learned as much as possible, like we have been saved by learning folk songs, Sanskar songs-marriage, mundane, and songs from birth to death by singing different occasions. In the same way, learning the plays and songs of Bhikhari Thakur properly can be preserved by singing them more and more.

And the second way is that we will write it as you said, that is, we will prepare the notation for it. Preparing the notation also requires you to be able to play instruments and know their rhythms and melodies. When you will understand the rhythm and tune properly then only you will be able to make a proper notation. After making the notation their melodies and rhythms will be alive forever. For this, it is also important that you listen to and learn more and more of the tunes of his original songs.

Md Ibran- Ma'am you are aware of Bhikhari Thakur's original tune and also sing his original tune. Please recite the original tune of the song "Chalni Ke Chhal Dulha" composed by him in the play *Beti Viyog*.

Sarita Saaz- As I said earlier, Bhikhari Thakur used to use only the tunes of folk songs in his plays. "Chalanī ke chālāl dūlhā" is a ritual song sung at weddings. It can also be called an abuse song.

Song

See Page No- 82-83

This song is sung in a moving rhythm. There is no break in it. It starts with a *thah*³⁰³ rhythm and ends in a quadruple. Jhal, Dholak, Naal, Tabla, and Harmonium are played along with their moving rhythm. The male performers take the form of a female character and sing this song while joking with the groom at the wedding scene.

Md Ibran- Please, recite to the original tune of the folk ballad used by Bhikhari Thakur in his play.

Sarita Saaz- He has used many folk ballads as theatrical songs. Like- Lorikyan, Alha-Udal, Soorthi-Bridgebhar, etc. I recite his *Natyageet of Soorthi Lay*.

³⁰³ Slowly or stable

Sorthī rhythm (from Bidesivā play)

See Page No- 100-101

So this was the rhythm of Sorthi. In this, it is mainly played by playing Gopiyāntra, which is like one.

Md Ibran- Ma'am, recite to the original tune of any 'Shram Gīt' composed by Bhikhari Thakur.

Sarita Saaz- As per Bhai-Virodht drama, he used the Ropani song, which is a type of Shram Gīt. In which the wife is narrating the family's anguish with her husband. It has been sung with much pain and detachment. I have also been asked many times why in most of his plays and songs only sorrow and pain have been shown. Why is Karun Rasa predominant in almost all his plays? All of his plays are based on social and family problems, in which women's problems have been articulated in front of society and their sorrow, pain, separation, compassion, love, affection and affection have been shown in their songs. This is the reason that his plays and songs show more feelings of detachment and sorrow.

In this song also, Updar's wife expresses her sorrow and pain to her husband crying.

Ropani Gīt, Purvī (from the play Bhāi-Birodh)

See Page No- 93

Md Ibran- Recite to the original tune of Barahmasa song in the song of Ritu Ma'am!

Sarita Saaz- Bārahmāsā is the main song of the season. Bhikhari Thakur has written about the sorrow, pain, and sorrow of a woman in twelve months i.e. in all

Bārahmāsā (from the play Bidesiyā)

See Page No- 96

The name Bhikhari Thakur comes at the end of all the songs. Which is called offering Bhog to the Bhikhari Thakur.

I narrate a song from the play Beti Bechwa. In which there is a compassionate dialogue between father and daughter-

Vidāi-Gīt, Purvi (Betī-Bechavā Nātak se)

*Girijā-kumāra! Kar dukhavā hammar para, dhara-dhar dharakat bā lor mor ho
bābūjī /*

*Paḍhala-gunal bhūli gailā, samadal bheandā bhailā; saudā besāhe mean ṭhagailā ho
bābūjī /*

*Koī kaisan jādū kaila, pāgal tohār mati bhaila; neṭī kāṭī ke beṭī bhasiavalā ho bābūjī /
ropeyā gināi lihalā, pagahā dharāi dihalā; cheriyā ke chheriyā banavalā ho
bābūjī /*

CONCLUSION

Folk drama is a combination of music, dance, and acting. Folk drama is performed only by tying these three elements in a thread. The emotional use of music, dance, and acting is also seen in the play performance of Bhikhari Thakur. Music is the backbone of his plays and he used to make the plays alive by putting the life (music) in the dead body of drama. The ease of language and the use of lyrical dialogues are the main features of his plays. Along with the Bhojpuri language, he even used the words of English, Urdu, and Persian languages all around the Bhojpuri-speaking area in the Bhojpuri accent. It makes his theatrical performance easy and interesting for the audience. Traditionally, Bhojpuri society is rich in terms of art and culture. Bhikhari Thakur provided the right path to the rich form of Bhojpuri art and culture through his theatrical tradition.

The dance used in the plays of Bhikhari Thakur was already present in Bhojpuri society which Bhikhari Thakur modified and gave a new look. This dance is a combined form of Pawariya, Natua, Jogida and Launda dance, which he named as Bhava Nritya.

In this research, mainly the characteristics and utility of music used in folk plays of Bhikhari Thakur have been highlighted. I have already mentioned that music is the backbone of Bhikhari Thakur's plays. That is why his plays have been called musical metaphors. Bhikhari Thakur wrote a total of 29 books. In which total 12 drama books are also included. All these books are mainly based on music. He used verses to compose songs and traditional folk melodies to create their tunes. He composed his songs mainly using verses like Savaiyā, Kavitta, Chaupāī, Chaubolā, and Dohā etc. The theme of the songs are based on the traditional folk tunes of Sacrament songs,

Caste songs, Labor songs, Season songs, and Ballade songs, like in Pūrvī, Chaitā, Bārahamāsā, Birahā, Pachāra, Nirguṇa, Jatasāra, Lorikāyana, Sorathī, and Alhā and performed it in as a theatrical song. Bhikhari Thakur was a changeable and learned man of high ideology, who made a huge positive change in the edge of traditional folk drama. Generally, the themes of Indian traditional folk dramas are based on king-queen stories or religious events which Bhikhari Thakur rejected outright and made a big change in the theme of the traditional folk drama. He took the subject matter of his folk drama from common people's life and made the evils, superstitions, and problems of common people prevailing in the society as his drama subjects. There is a very positive change in Indian traditional folk drama. I have described in detail the social impact of his plays in the third chapter of my dissertation. All his plays were based on the immediate problems prevailing in the society which is equally logical in the present time as it was in the time of Bhikhari Thakur.

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