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SOCIO-CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SURPANAKHA IN KERLA CLASSICAL THEATRE

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The character, Surpanakha has gained much popularity in kerla through the classical theatre Kutiyattam and Kathakali. Surpanakha, performed by the Cakyars in Kujiyattam is now a day's getting acceptance not only in kerla and india, but also in foreign countries also.

Apart From being a significant character in kerla classical theatre,Surpanakha is much studied and analised both in theatrical performance and in literature Widely based on her sociocultural,Folkloristic,linguistic and Feministic significances. Some aspects of Surpanakha are analysed here.

The Mutilation of Surpanakha's Nose, Ears and Breasts is a Symbol of Subjugating Women's Strength and lust. In Ancient Days Men Often Over Powered Women And Committed Atrocities Against Them.The Incidents of Laksmana Multilating Surpanakha At The Order Of Rama Is A Typical Example of Ancient Indian Culture.

Many Versions of Ryanaama had been Written From 2 cen. BC Onwords and even Now New Reading of The text Appear. A Perusal of Them Point To the fact that The Incident of Surpanakha Has So Many Diamentions Related To Our Culture, Social Customs And Womanhood.

Peculiarities of The Costumes of Surpanakha and linguistics Tone

The Costumes of Surpanakha on the Kutiyattam Stage,especially ornaments, Decorations and Cosmetics on her Body are Very Much similar to the Make-up of the contemporary Actors of the Folk Arts Such as Patayani, Mutiyerru,Theyyam and Thira. In Kutiyattam Surpanakha Speakes in the language 'Parkrt Tamil' Which is taken to be originated from Adimadramidabhasha and later was transformed as old

Malayam. Surpanakha's unrefined speech Kutiyattam is called 'Paribhasa' which means 'Prakrt Tamil'. This language is also called 'Hinabhasa' in Sanskrit. Ammannur Cachucakyar effected certain Surpanakha's language and expressions according to tha taste of the modern audience.

The expressions of Surpaqnakha through this language is particular to that character only. During this context in Kutiyattam, Surpanakha speaks her words in a law voice using unrefined words in a particular accent which is called Hinaswara.¹²

At the time when Kutiyattam originated, the character Surpanakha was featured

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like an aborigine women and her speech , costumes and culture were matched with that of a aborigine, But later no artist dared to reform the features of Kutiyattam because it is a classical artform. Besides that even the audience today wish to see Surpanakha in her traditional form and attire.

The comedy character Kuli in Mutiyerru is very much similar to Surpanakha(Kari) in Kutiyattam in all her behaviors and appearance. Kuli's speech with slight change of voice and accent is similar to that of Surpanakha in Kutiyattam.¹³

Similarly one can see many similarities in costumes also between 'Ninamaniyal' and different and rituals rites related with Kali worship a brief note of which is given here.

In several regions of Kerala, there exist many rituals and rites related with Kali worship and her story related to 'Darikavadham' . Such important art forms are Mutiyettu, Patayani Tira and Theyyam. All these are generally observed for the prosperity of a particular region and the inhabitants there. The ceremony 'Ninabali' , another ritual art of this kind, is observed for the good of an individual or the welfare of a family Besides, in order to get rid of deceases, afflictions, and evil death ' Ninabali' is observed. In this art form in order to Kill Darika, Kali approaches him shouting, laughing aloud and making war cry. Her body is presented bleeding with blood and teeth seen out side like tusks. This horrible feature of Kali in Ninabali is very much similar to the form of Surpanakha in 'Ninamaniyal' in Kutiyattam. The practice of 'Kuruti' in Kerala temples symbolically represents Surpanakha's 'Ninamaniyal'.

In most of the houses of north Kerala 'Ninabali' is observed to eradicate the evils. In that ceremony, the attire of Kali is very much similar to the form of Kari in Kathakali.

Impact of Surpanakha in the folk arts of Kerala

In the episode of Kali in the folk arts Mutiyettu, Patayani, Teyyam and Tira, the impact of Surpanakha of Kutiyattam is vividly.

Mutiyerru

Mutiyettu is a folkart in which the story of Kali and Darika is fully and vividly presented. Mutiyettu begins with the debate between Siva and Narada and ends with the plucking of Darika's head slaughtering him. In the regions Thrissur, Ernakulam, Idukkin and Kottayam Mutiyettu is

observed once in a year in the temples consecrated to deities and shrines. In Mutiyerru, the presentation of Kali in the Darikavadham episode, has so many similarities with that of the presentation of Surpanakha in Kutiyattam, Kali's fierce form and her drinking of blood after killing Darika reminds is the scene of Ninam of Surpanakhana in Kutiyattam.

Patayani

Patayani is ceremonial rite performed in the temples consecrated to Bhadrakali and certain other shrines. It is observed to please the goddesses. Even after killing Darika Kali's anger was not quenched and she returned furiously and at that time at the command of Siva, his attendants danced before Kali to appease her. Still she was furious and vengeful. Then they drew the caricature of Kali on arecanut leaf which is called 'Bhairavi'. Showing that form of 'Bhairavi', the attendants of Siva danced again before her, Seeing which Kali's anger was appeased and she began to laugh aloud. This part of 'Kali-Darika' story is enacted in patayani. The purpose of this ceremony is to appease evil spirits and thus to get escaped from obstacles and to obtain god's blessing.

'Bhairavi' has another version which is called 'Ninabhairavi' in which importance is given to the bleeding form of the furious Kali. This form has similarly to the 'Ninamaniyal' of Surpanakha in Kutiyattam.

Teyyam

Teyyam is a ritual folk art performed in north Kerala. The word Theyyam means 'God' in this art form. The performance is carried out by a person who assumes and adorns himself as a diety and dances in different rhythmic patterns. The purpose of Theyyam is to appease and please the diety of the region. In Teyyam, there is the presentation a god of Kariccamundi who drinks blood of as part of the ritual. This act of drinking blood is which is horrible and hedious is influenced of Ninam presentation of Surpanakhankam.

Tira

Tira is an observance practiced in the temples at Thrissur, Palakkad and Malappuram districts during the festivals, Puram or Vela. It is performed just after the harvest in Makaram(January) is over and also during the

puram Festivals in the month of Vrschikam (November) . Tira represents the Goddess Kali and her companions who return just after slaughtering Darika. The mark of 'Sulam' on the forehead of Tira is like the mark worn by Surpanakha(Kari) on her forehead in Kutiyattam.

Socio-cultural Significances of the character Surpanakha

Surpanakha is chiefly presented in Kutiyattam and Kathakali which are the two main classical art forms in Kerala. The character of Surpanakha of Kutiyattam has become widely known and famous even in foreign countries. It is in Kharavadham that Surpanakha appears mainly in Kathakali. But even then her role is little. However, Surpanakha's 'Ninamaniyal' and 'Kariyattam' in Kutiyattam is enacted almost as such in Kathakali by the characters like Nakratundi and Simhika. Kutiyattam had its glorious ages during and after 9th AD when Brahmin supremacy prevailed in the region. It may be due to this that the character Surpanakha, a low caste woman, was considered as an illiterate, indecent and cultureless woman. Also she is considered as a symbol of the aborigine class. They always prefer to live in the wilderness rather than mingle with the urban people and eat the fruits and leaves of the forest. Thus their culture, language and costumes are very different from that of the people living in urban areas. It is this feature that Surpanakha expresses and exhibits in Kutiyattam. In Kutiyattam, Surpanakha appears as a typical aborigine woman in her attire with a crown made of grass on her head and small branches of trees with leaves in her hands. She suddenly falls in love with Rama and Lakshmana at the moment she sees them. This immature behavior also is a part of Surpanakha's aborigine culture.

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