

Chhattisgarh: Uncorking the folk talents from Populace cinema and staging

Anuradha Shukla

Bharati Vidyapeeth College of Engineering, Navi Mumbai

Email: anurkarma@gmail.com

An area residing in the dense forest, where hard working people exhibiting their energy in mines, factories and household, where tribal dominance perform art and craft derived from daily life, where nourishing observation of facts of people manifest woodcarving, bell metal craft, bamboo ware and tribal jewellery, where still in some tribal castes, happiness is celebrated on the birth of a girl child as she brings dowry at the time of wedding knot, where temples do not possess great architecture but instead very simple and unadorned where Gods and Goddesses (Danteshwari, Kudargarhi, Mahamaya, Chaturbhuj etc.) are worshipped as bestower of wishes and protector against evils and animoic form of folk arts of Gods and Goddesses are more popular. Most interesting facts, where custom 'Ghutul' imbibes live in relationship and swayambar custom representing mod- liberal lifestyle. The land which is known for 'Kosa Silk' and 'Lost Wax Art', where handmade products-bows and arrows, bird and fish traps, baskets along with handloom Dhurva Sarees are trademarks, where cock-fights, tribal dances-Karma, Salai and Suma have established as benchmark of state's identity and the land which is popularly known as 'Rice Bowl Of India.' It's all a beauty bounty Chhattisgarh.

Legend Kautilya embarked his notions on King and his rule policies. Among them one is said that if Raja has shortage of money and revenue, he has to extract mines and minerals to fulfill needs of subject. That statement was given by Acharya Kautilya looking at minerals rich Gondvana land of ancient India which is popularly known as Chhattisgarh. The land has expanded its wings in all the fields uptill now. Among them the most charming, lively and productive field is cinema. Indian cinema has become a part and parcel of our daily life whether it is a regional or a Bollywood movie. It has a major role to play in our society. Though

entertainment is the key word of Indian Cinema it has far more responsibility as it impacts the mind of the audiences.

“In a 1963 report for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization looking at Indian Cinema and culture, the author (*Balduon Dhingra*) quoted a speech by Prime Minister Nehru who stated, “the influence in India of films is greater than newspapers and books combined.” (Sisodia,21) Each one of us today is aware of the terms-*Cinema*”, *Bollywood*”, *Films*”, *Actors*”, *Movies*” etc. So deep rooted are these terms in our society that even a five year old kid could explain the meanings of the same. Films have by far become one of the most popular medium of mass communication and one of the biggest revenue earners for the country. So now to know “Chollywood” cinem industry of Chhattisgarh state.

Versatile actor, singer, director, television star Padma shri awardee first from Chhattisgarh to receive such a prestigious award very popular Chollywood actor Ramanuj Sharma popularly known as Anuj Sharma started showing his talent of acting and singing from quite an early age. Born and brought up at Bhatapara in Raipur itself Anuj completed his schooling from local school and college from Ravi Shankar University. At present his family consists his lovely wife Dr. Smita Sharma and two lovely daughters. Anuj made his debut in the 2000 film, *Mor Chhaihan Bhuiyan* that became a huge commercial success. The release of the movie took his career graph to the peak. The film was screened at two cinemas for a week at eight shows a day, a record reported to be standing till now. The success of the debut film elevated Anuj to stardom which saw him making eight releases a year and 4 silver jubilee hits, the only lead actor to do so in Chhattisgarhi films; the career, which featured successful movies like ‘Maya’ ‘Mr Tetkuraam’ and ‘Mohu Diwana Tuhu Diwani’, also saw him getting the best actor award four times; even many awards have drawn in his lap. Among them Chhattisgarh Ratna Samman - Pandit Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur in year 2013, Pratibha Samman - Chhattisgarh B. S. Central Committee in year 2011, Vipra Samman - Sarv Brahman Samaj in year 2011, Toy Award by JCI Raipur Metro in the same year, Young Communicator Award - International School of Business and Media in year 2010, Young Communicator Award - Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication consequently in 2009 and an Honour - Tamil Nadu Hindi Sahitya Academy. Its noteworthy that Sharma stage appearance as an anchor is worth to watch. Not only in Chollywood but Sharma's films have been dubbed into many other languages such

as Sambalpuri, Jharkhandi, Bundelkhandi, Gujarati, and Bhojpuri, he has also acted in a number of Bhojpuri films.



pictures of Anuj Sharma and his direction skill, courtesy-Scrollroll.com, Internate.

Chhattisgarhi tourism board as well as other commercial firms are enhanced by this famous actor by making promotions advertisements. One local fest Cherchera consists of a slogan ‘ Cherchera, ghar ke kachara la her hera’ emphasizing on cleanliness. Anuj Sharma is the first Chhattisgarhi compere who has compered more than one twenty five television shows. His skill has spreaded wings as Radio jockey in National FM channel. Number of century is crossed of his video albums of folk songs. Blessings bestowed upon him for being multifarious, he can be defined as Chhattisgarhi culture narrator and a power house of multitalents to keep growing regional art and cinema. “Sir Alec Guinness, upon receiving a special Oscar in 1980, said that when he started in films he realized he should do nothing, and he’s been doing it for twenty five years; being simple!” (Bajaj 338)Same is with Anuj Sharma. Artistic genius is found in his nerve.

A glimpse of his awards:

Category	Film	Awarded by	Year
Best Actor	<i>Mor Chhainha Bhuinya</i>	Chhattisgarh Film Awards	2002
Best Playback Singer	<i>Angana</i>	Chhattisgarh Film Awards	2002
Best Actor	<i>Mor Chhainha Bhuinya</i>	Government of Chhattisgarh	2003
Best Actor	<i>Jhan Bhulav Ma La</i>	Chhattisgarh Film Awards	2005
Best Actor	<i>Mahun Diwana Tahun Diwani</i>	Chhattisgarh Film Awards	2010

Best Film	<i>Mister Tetkuram</i>	Grandyara Ranjhanjhar Chhattisgarhi Cine Award	2012
Best Popular Actor	<i>Mahun Diwana Tahun Diwani</i>	Chhattisgarh Film Awards	2013 Good Actors.

Source: Internate

Coming to one more who can be called lively art legend is Padma shri Teejan Bai, well known Pandavani singer. Born in a small village Ghanyari near Bhilai city in socially considered downtrodden family. From the age of thirteen she has been shining . In the truest tradition of a Chhattisgarhi performer to help the audience to understand the narration of Mahabharata in two typical style of Pandwani- Vedamati and Kapalik. In the Vedamati style, the narrator sits on the floor crossing his/her feet and makes a plain statement of facts as they happened. In the Kapalik style the story-teller enacts the story through action and expressions. Teejan Bai is tremendous in Kapalik style. Its magical to experience a lady in traditional style cotton saari, armband, waistband, bangles, nose ring and anklets of silver in typical folk style jewelery, big dark red bindi and beetal nut kinda lips, vermilion on her combline in desi style and loud tone of narrating having different facial expressions and postures is truly mesmerizing. After invoking the blessings of the God in the first line of her performance ““Bol dev bindaban Bihari lal ki jai”, Teejan Bai initiated her story telling journey. She has established herself as an epitome to challenge patriarchal hegemony in the field of Pandvani, before her which was only subject of male orators.



Source: Scrollroll.com, Internate.

Her big-break came, when Habib Tanvir, a famous theatre personality from Madhya Pradesh, noticed her talent, and she was called to perform for then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. There was no turning back from then on, in-time she received national and international recognition, a Padma Shri in 1988, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1995, and Padma Bhushan in 2003. Beginning in the 80s, she travelled all over the world as a cultural ambassador, to countries as far as England, France, Switzerland, Germany, Turkey, Tunisia, Malta, Cyprus, Romania and Mauritius. Behind her unique singing, rigorous fight of her personal life pushed Teejan Bai to fight against all odds to protect her singing to the younger generation. Married at the age of 12, splited from husband. She built herself a small hut and started living on her own, borrowing utensils and food from neighbours, yet never left her singing, which eventually paid off for her. In the following years, she was married twice times over, though none of her marriages succeeded. Later she fell in love with Tukka Ram, a former harmonium player in her troupe, and they had three children.



Source: youtube.com

An adept actor of Bollywood Nawazuddin Siddique along with his wife Aiasha Siddique is on plan to make biopic on Teejan Bai. It's a news released by Bombay Times newspaper in February 2019. The pair has wish to see Amitabh Bacchan as grandfather of legendary Teejan Bai. Its interesting to know that even Amitabh Bachhan's father Harivansh Rai Bachhan was also

fan of Teejan Bai's exponent Pandvani style. If the film would come on silver screen, it would be the first biopic from Chhattisgarh state.

Cinema is mirror reflection of reality. Life is real and needs exposure through strongest source, i.e. movies. Looking at these two artists-Anuj Sharma and Teejan Bai, notion of thinking folk art as miniature art is misconception in general. People usually think that folk art and folk cinema are restricted in their boundaries and get less popular widely but seeing and observing these two, who have the audience eating out their hands, we have to start to assure ourselves, especially y-generation about folk artists of national and international caliber, who not only fly prestigious flags of own states they belong, but become source of inspiration and motivation for many budding and established actors, artists, directors, producers, painters, print media and so on. Finding their stature so high sometimes art is found bigger than life. In short, cinema captures the essence of life itself.

Work Cited:

Sisodia Kirti Thesis, A Study Of Indian Cinema In 21st Century And Social Issues (A Special Reference Of Aamir Khan's Cinema), Chapter 8, P.P. 21.

Balaji Dhanraj, The complecity of Film Acting, International Journal of New Innovations, 2012 1(2),P.P.338.