

Introduction

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Modern means of entertainment such as films, cinemas, technology enabled performances of drama, various TV shows and entertainment channels profusely present in the contemporary world market are largely the results of the advent of modernity, globalization, cultural assimilation and decolonization. The concept of liberal economy made trade and commerce a trans-border and trans-cultural affair. The idea of borderless economy and borderless nation went a long way to make multi-cultural and trans-cultural activities possible which tremendously affected the folklore traditions of the nations of the world. The same is true of India. As one retrospects and goes back to the 1940's 1950's, it is bewildering to see that the only source of entertainment on a larger scale was the performance of folk dramas and theatrical performances. One astonishingly discovers how desperately our forefathers longed for moments of entertainment and how greatly they were dependent on traditional cultural shows in the form of various theatrical performances by the commoners. Such practices not only offered an inkling about the cultural baggage that moulded us but also the import of such practices.

This research treatise sets out to explore and examine the growth and development of Folklore, and Folk Theatre in general and in Jammu region in particular. The thesis focuses on Jammu region only for the exploration of folklore and folk theatre as the period covered is vast and the growth and development of the form in varying degrees in different parts of the region demands focussed investigation. The research treatise intends to unearth and shed light on how and when the folk theatre flourished in Jammu and the status it enjoys today. The thesis throws light on the growth and development of folk theatres in Jammu from 1800 – 2012 and also examines the causes of extinction / near extinction of some of the most practised

and popular forms of folk dramas, along with argument for the need to revive such endangered forms for the future generations. Loss of culture and cultural ethos marks the present generation that need to be shown the rich culture and cultural practices it used to have at some point of time in history which are in serious need of revival and revitalization.

Delimitation

The area of this thesis is delimited to the last two centuries only as the development of various folk theatrical forms in Jammu region has been fairly slow, and written materials on these practices are meagre. No substantial research work has been carried out in this area because of paucity of written materials. The slow growth of dramaturgy in the region resulted in slow pace of change in the folk art forms. Sporadic research papers and newspaper articles are the only written information available on the folk theatrical forms of the region.

Objectives of the present research

The present research seeks to analyse and understand the development of various folk theatrical performances in India in general and in Jammu in particular. It also endeavours to unearth and foreground the changes and innovations brought in such folk theatrical forms by time and changing demands of time. The thesis identifies the areas in Jammu region where the folk performances were frequent and popular and were performed with great amount of enthusiasm and interest. Based on the past records of folk practices in Jammu, a comparison will be drawn between its past and present status. It also underlines how such folk forms survived the onslaught of time, advancement and technology. Studying the attitude of the audience then and now forms a very significant part of the thesis. The present research also highlights the

various devices, mechanism, methods adopted for the performance of such folk dramas and tales. Besides language, gestures, articulations, costumes and other related dramatic devices and requirements, the present research brings out through questionnaire method, the subtle, complex aspects of such performances. Interviews conducted with celebrated theatre artists, members of different theatrical bodies and literary figures allow a peep into the past and present of the folk theatrical forms of Jammu. Exploring the impact of science and technology on folk theatrical forms of the region is another important objective of the present research treatise.

Meaning of ‘folk’ and development of Folk theatre

‘Introduction’ is treated as a chapter in this thesis. It encompasses definitions and critical views on folklores and folkloristics besides tracing the history of their development in Jammu. Folklore is as old as human existence and its society. It has always been part of human culture since the very beginning of human society. However, its systematic study seems to be fairly recent with a history of nearly two hundred years. In this context, stressing the cultural aspect of Folklore, Bascom states:

Folklore... is one of the important parts that go to make up the culture of any given people... there is no known culture which does not include folklore. No group of people, however simple their technology, has ever been discovered which does not employ some form of folklore.

(qtd. in Datta 14)

Folklore is the accretion of beliefs, behaviour, tradition, ideas, and values that people transfer from generation to generation. It consists of oral history, myths, legends, music, dance, proverbs, fairy tales, popular beliefs, games, superstitions and customs.

Culture and various cultural and traditional nuances reflect in the various folk forms of a place.

The word 'folk' is derived from the old English word 'folc' which means common people, men, tribes and multitude. 'Folc' is itself derived from Proto-Germanic noun 'fulka' which refers to 'the host of warriors'. By the end of the nineteenth century, folk became colloquialized in the sense of 'people' and was considered inelegant. The term has various connotations. For instance, in German it is also called as 'volk' or people with ethnicity and nation. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century the word 'folk' derived its origin from the word "volkskunde" which means the academic study of collective German history. This term was coined to represent the collective desire of Germans for a profound understanding of the intricate nuances of people who had no voice in the past. Germans endeavoured towards creating a single mystical identity against the political disunity regarding modernity. They interpreted 'volk' as rallying point when the nineteenth century was making giant strides towards progress and development in terms of technology and science. Thus, 'volk' which originated in the era of romanticism became the German collective mindset in 19th and 20th centuries.

In the late 18th century, Romantic nationalismⁱ relied upon the existence of historical ethnic culture which led to romantic ideal and this developed the concept of folklore. Volkish thoughts like romanticism, focussed on the irrational and emotional and mainly on man and the world. After industrialization and modernisation in 19th century, this Volkish movementⁱⁱ arose from the turmoil that accompanied transformation of European social, political and economic context. Moreover, the term 'volk' valued rural rootedness which was related to spiritual communion between the Germanic landscape, its people and the universe.

In Ireland, folk drama is the oldest surviving form of theatrical tradition. The basic elements of the folk drama are Pagan rituals for good luck as well as fertility from gods. It includes feasting, singing, dancing, vegetation and animal disguises. Some of the famous ancient folk forms are: Wrenboys, Mumming and Strawboys. Wrenboys and Mumming have similar rituals as both of these forms are celebrated on specific days and the hidden agenda is to bring good fortune including flora and fauna. The dramatic content of these forms centre on life-cycle, death and revival and amusement. Critics of the stature of Mikhail and Augusto Boal believe that folk is the basis of origin of all theatres and also termed folk theatre as ‘Carnival’. Later in 1946, with the coining of the word ‘folklore’ by antiquarian William J. Thoms, this folk re-entered in academic English and revived the term in the sense of common people whose culture is handed down orally.

Folklore has always been an area of debate and critical inquiry regarding its origin, beginning of systematic study and performance in different parts of the world. The classification and categorization of various folk forms is relatively new. Different scholars offer different interpretations for folklore and its relevance. Similarly, categorization of folklore receives varied treatment in the hands of different scholars. Dorson has divided folklore into four categories—(i) the ‘oral literature’, (ii) the ‘material culture’, (iii) the ‘social folk custom’ and (iv) the performing ‘folk art’. These forms are further divided into different sub-divisions. Oral literature encompasses folk narratives, folk songs or folk poetry with their sub parts where folk narratives include myths, proverbs, legends, folktales and riddles. Folk poetry includes various forms of poems recited in the villages. The material culture includes responses to technique, skills, recipes and formulas passed on from one generation to another. Thus, it becomes apparent that folklore deals with society’s art and craft. The

third category, i.e. social folk custom signifies the relationship between community and family which includes connection with villages, households, churches, birth ceremonies, incarnation, marriages, deaths and so on and thus incorporates the customs and beliefs of folk. The performing 'folk art' includes the genre of folk music, folk dance and folk theatre.

Folklore has a prominent role in human society as it represents traditional elements of the ways of life. Each life has its own values and thus folklore facilitates the adequate and appropriate use of folk heritage in its utilization and preservation. In his monumental book titled *The Meaning of Folklore*, Dundes explains all four major functions that folklore assists. The first function of folklore is to provide entertainment and amusement as it is mostly performed during leisure time, after the day's hard work to amuse both the teller and the listener and to relieve the overwhelming monotony of one's life. The second function of folklore comprises the role it plays in legitimizing the cultures which includes the substantiation of cultures and institutions in which rituals are performed. The third important and most significant function of folklore is found in the role that it plays in education. Fables, folktales, proverbs are used to teach truth, vices and virtues, general attitudes and principles. Dundes sums up the function of such folk forms aptly by saying that the objective of these various forms is "to warn the dissatisfied or over ambitious individual to be content with his lot, to accept the world as it is and thus to confirm to the accepted patterns" (Dundes 296). Another important function of folklore is to stabilize and maintain the culture which means applying and exercising pressure over the members of society to maintain and continue their culture from older generation to younger generation through the medium of education. William Bascom in his essay "Four Functions of Folklore" remarks:

Folklore operates within society to ensure conformity to the accepted cultural norms ... There is no difficulty of course in finding instances in folklore where laziness, complacency or the lack of ambition and initiative are condemned, but there are many which suggest the individual destroys or even disregards the institutions and conventions of his society. (qtd. in Datta 39)

The meaning of folk is different in other countries of the world from the meaning of folk in India because for them folk is common mass of people who are excluded from the civilized circle of the society. However, in India this limitation of the word folk does not characterise India because Indian society always comprises cities, towns, villages and rural areas and they are bound by certain common cultural roots. Indian folklorists find the use of the term 'Lokvarta' more meaningful and culturally informed than 'folklore'. In the Indian parlance, 'lok' means folk in the widest sense and common 'masses' in general and 'varta' means the 'tales' or 'gossips' or the 'wisdom' of the people. Both these words are believed to have their roots in Indian history. The word 'lok' is used in religious and secular literature of Vedas and the word 'varta' is also traced to Middle Ages where it is usually used for saints and religious devotees. However, the combined use of 'Lok Varta' was first used in 1920 by V.S. Agarwala. Thus, Lok Varta carries the connotation of tales of the folk wherein reflects the cultures, traditions and beliefs of the folk.

Indian Folk Theatre: Role of *Natya Shastra*

As far as Indian culture and heritage is concerned, its origin dates back to at least 5000 years from now. *Natya Shastra*ⁱⁱⁱ i.e. the grammar of theatre by Bharat Muni, the famous dramaturge, was the earliest book on dramaturgy where the great

Muni codified the art of dramaturgy. It is the most elaborate form of dramaturgy in the world and its time has been placed between 2000 B.C. to 4th Century A.D. Indian theatre must have begun long before, as *Natya Shastra* gives detailed account of Indian theatre's divine origin. In India, theatre started as a narrative form which included reciting, singing and dancing and this emphasis on the narrative element made Indian theatre efficiently theatrical right from the beginning. This is the reason that theatre in India combines all the other forms of literature and fine arts into its physical presentation. Literature, mime, music, dance movements, painting, sculpture and architecture, all combine into one and they are called as 'Natya' or 'Theatre' in India.

Phases in Indian Theatre

Indian theatre can be divided into three phases: the Classical period, the Folk/Traditional period and the Modern period. The origin of folk theatre in India shows that this tradition of theatre is inextricably linked with human civilization. The period of its performance extended from about 1000 A.D. to 1700 A.D. and it is performed even today in almost every part of India on different occasions and in different seasons. It is due to this reason, some of the theatrical forms in India are seasonal. The changes in the political set up of India and also the existence of different regional languages in different parts of the country led to the emergence of this kind of theatre. Prior to 1000 A.D., the writing and the practice of theatre was almost based on certain set norms, rules, regulations and modifications mentioned in *Natya Shastra* which was used by playwrights of classical period such as Bhasa, Kalidas, Shudrakha, Vishakhadatta and Bhana Bhutti who had contributed profusely through their dramatic pieces in Sanskrit. These classical playwrights set the tone of dramaturgy in India. Classical theatre was based on *Natya Shastra* and was remarkably sophisticated

in its forms and nature. Moreover, it is completely urban-centric and the target group, in most cases, was the elite section. On the contrary, the traditional/folk theatre emerged out of rural roots and was more simple, immediate and closer to the rural milieu, the rustics and their way of life. That's why it is also known as 'the Village Theatre' or 'The People's Theatre' or 'The Rural Theatre' as it conserves, rejuvenates and also motivates the cultural achievements of the people.

Folk theatre in India, has a rich legacy and it has always been associated with the social and cultural ethos of the rural population. It made its presence felt in ancient Vedic period and even in the Buddhist literature by disseminating the unedited stories of human life in real context. But truly speaking, it was in the medieval period that folk became an essential part of Indian drama. As one analyses the development of folk theatre historically and interprets it on the basis of the Purans, eposes, historical epics, myths and biographies of angelic and spiritual heroes, one discovers that it was during the 15th and 16th century that folk theatre emerged in its fullest form in different regions of the country. However, this particular form of theatre was named as 'Indian Folk Theatre' much later. The rural society is regarded as the base of folk theatre, and rituals are the activities that exhibited the first rudimentary elements of drama. This shows that the very base of the folk theatre in India was formed by the rituals, their varied facets and their colossal impact on Indian culture and life. Therefore, folk theatre in India takes pride in the rich history of Indian folk culture that dates back to the age old antiquity.

The form of folk theatre in India is narrative and it originates from the Indian Natya. In order to make the visual art a lot more inventive, the narrator who is called the 'sutradhar' in Indian Natya tradition, steadily moved towards the narrative description which is an intimate way and it gave rise to the tradition of narrative in

Indian folk theatre. The folk theatre has retained its age old narrative form till today. The folk theatre was purely devotional in tenor and based on religion, mythology and local legends in the beginning. However, gradually with changing needs of times it became more secular in its content and started focusing on folk stories of romance and valour and also biographical account of local heroes. Thus, Indian folk theatre came to be broadly divided into two categories: the religious and the secular. Religious theatre is also called ritual theatre where the focus is on the history, religion and myth; whereas secular theatre also known as theatre of entertainment actually originated as essential form of entertainment. Both these forms of theatre progressed together and also at the same time influenced each other to discover a fresh enunciation in Indian Natya as some of them are characterized by all the attributes of a classical theatre proper.

Songs, dances and dialogues are the main components of Indian folk theatre. There are many forms of folk theatrical performances in India as every state has its own different folk forms. Although there are some similarities, these theatrical forms have their own unique forms which usually depend on the local customs of the region, their execution, staging, costume, make-up and acting style.

Folk traditions in South India

India is a land of unity in diversity. Every state has its own folk theatrical forms. The tradition of South India is reflected in most of its folk theatrical performances. It is generally believed that folk theatre of South India evolved out of various religious ceremonies practised there. The South Indian forms include: Theyyam, Krishnattam, Kakkarissinattam, Koodiyaattam/kuttiyaattam, Chavittunatakam, Porattanatakam in Kerala; Bayalata, Yakshagana and Pal-Maddale

in Karnataka; Therukoothu in Tamil Nadu and Veedhi Natakam in Andhra Pradesh. Burrakatha/Harikatha is a folk form common in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. 'Burra' is derived from the word 'tumbura', which is a musical string instrument with a hollow shell and the word 'katha' means story. It is the modern variation of Jangam Katha, a narrative form in Andhra Pradesh. In Jangam Katha, generally a husband and wife sing stories in agricultural localities but they never do it in the society of the upper caste. Initially, the 'Jangam' community adopted the Virasiva cult (heroes' ballads), however, as time rolled on, it started accepting many tales from Vaishnavism, Shaktism, and tales of virtuous and pious women. With the passage of time this form came to be adopted by other performing communities under the name of Burrakatha, a narrative entertainment that consists of prayers, solo drama, dance, songs, poems and jokes. In place of pairs in the earlier performances, this form was standardised to three-member team. Even the content was shifted to contemporary issues from the Puranic, historical and social ones. It played an important role in awakening the people during the independence movement but after independence, people started discarding this form. Now-a-days, only rural population is fond of this traditional folk form.

There are some folk dramas of Indian theatre in Kerala for instance, Kurathiyattam, Porattunatakam and Kakkarassinatakam. But these folk dramas are not associated with rituals or even the artistic nature of the state. Therefore, the folk theatre which is ritualistic in nature is of greater importance in Kerala as it contains the special features of artistic nature of the state. These ritualistic theatrical forms have a compact plot with proper beginning, middle and end. It also contains unique features such as ambiguous characters, systematic development of plot, audience involvement, acting representative of the environment and creativeness in acting.

Theyyam, the ritualistic folk theatre of Kerala, also known as Teyyattam, derives its name from the Sanskrit word 'Daivam' which means God. In this form, folk and various tribal deities are worshipped in different forms as the folk and tribal community made into Theyyam stimulate veneration, trepidation and fear. People worship it with proper rituals and these rituals involve included dance, drama, music and poetry. It is assumed that Theyyam existed in South India prior to the arrival of Aryans. It is generally performed at temples to please the spirit and also for the well being of the people present there. They worship gods, goddesses, martyrs, and many other species of animals. In this context Ananda Lal remarks:

A large variety of Theyyams exists, belonging to gods and goddesses, war heroes, ancestors, animals, serpents, trees, and even devils. After their death, war heroes and ancestors are socially accepted as deified spirits. Godly spirits fall into three major categories: Saiva, Vaishnava, and Shakta. (Lal 414)

When the entire people of a village give a performance, it is called Otta Kolam. In this performance, all the performers wear special costumes. Apart from that, they put on professional ornaments, specially a unique crown. Theyyam is performed in two parts – the Tottam and Vellattam. It is performed during the festivals related to various village shrines accompanied by the instruments like drums, pipes and cymbals.

Krishna Attam is a colourful dramatic form which emerged in Kerala around the mid 17th century. This theatrical folk form based on Krishna legend includes a cycle of eight plays which are acted out for eight successive nights to give details of the entire story of Lord Krishna. Its style almost resembles Kathakali. Kakkarissi Natakam is another most interesting form of folk theatre in Kerala. It also includes the

traditional formula of Indian folk theatre which is an amalgamation of songs, music and dance.

Another important folk theatrical form of Kerala is Chavittunatakam performed by the Christians. This form came into existence with the arrival of Portuguese to Kerala in the sixteenth century. It is the combination of east and west which includes the western stories of war heroes translated into regional languages and performed with the music and dance adopted from indigenous folk varieties.

Folk theatre of Karnataka possesses a rich and ancient heritage of performances which are mostly based on the rituals and festivals observed and celebrated in the name of deity. Bayalata, the prime example of folk theatre of Karnataka has derived its name from the religious rituals. It is presented in five varieties: Dasarata, Sannata, Doddata, Parijata and Yakshagana. In Dasarata, Sannata and Doddata, there is a chorus of four or five narrators helped out by a Vidhushaka or jester whereas in Parijata and Yakshagna there is a single 'sutradhar' who manages the whole story.

The Dasarata is enacted on the stories of Radha and Krishna by a group of dasa i.e. men and women and the style followed in this type is adopted by a Marathi theatre as in Tamasha. In Sannata, these actors play a full story for six hours instead of playing several short stories and these are based on different themes like Vaishnavite, the Shaivite and other major social themes. Similarly, Doddata is a mixture of verse and prose, the special features of this type are the gorgeous costume, grand stage, performance with an extravagant scale and the 'Shabash' shouted by several characters. In Parijata, the performance is based on the mythological romance of Krishna and Rukhmani and Satyabhama. In this form of folk drama, the major

character is Bhagyvata who summarizes the song and plays the role of both narrator and clown.

Yakshagana is a major folk form of Karnataka. This folk form can also be called as 'people's theatre' in true sense of the term. Yakshagana is usually staged in the open paddy fields at night and its themes are based on the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the tales of *Puranas*. Tal-Maddale form of folk theatre is predecessor of the Yakshagana. 'Tal' refers to 'a kind of cymbal' while 'Maddale' is a kind of drum. In Tal-Maddale, there is no restriction of costumes, make-up, dance or acting and it is generally performed in sitting position where the story is narrated by a narrator called Bhagavata and is joined by his associates called Arthadaris.

Tamil Nadu has a rich folk tradition as a medium of entertainment where the dance dramas are enacted on the life of Lord Krishna and other legendary stories in the temple. Every temple has an attached theatre or a stage to perform. Terukkuttu, which means street theatre, is one of the most popular forms of folk drama and is about 500 years old. It is performed to please the rain goddess, Mariamman at the time of annual temple harvest to get rich harvest and harvested land is the performance space. It includes the cycle of eight plays based on the life of Draupadi for ten to sixteen days at a stretch but sometimes it is also staged in an individual's house at funeral ceremonies. Kattiyakkaran (announcer), the 'sutradhara' and also 'vidushaka' of Terukkuttu starts the performance with dances and greets the audience, propitiates the deities, introduces the characters and dwells upon the gist of the story. Komali, the important character of this form amuses the spectators with his tomfoolery.

Veedhi Natakam, the most admired form of folk theatre of Andhra Pradesh is presented in the praise of 'Bhagavan' in festival season. Literally 'veedhi' means 'street' or 'open place', so it is a folk form which is performed on a street or in an open place. As these plays are executed in an open place they are acknowledged as Veedhi Natakam. Bhagathas, who are devotees of 'Bhagwan' perform these plays and they are called Veedhi Bhagavathams.

Folk Traditions in the Western Region of India:

Just as the South, the western region of India also has a rich folk culture—Khyal, Nautanki of Rajasthan; Bhavai of Gujarat; Povada and Tamasha of Maharashtra contributed tremendously to the formation of folk theatre. Khyal is the popular folk theatre form of Rajasthan influenced by Parsi theatre. It derives its name from the word 'Khel' which means 'to play'. It is of three types—Alibuxi Khyal, Shekhawati Khyal and Kachamani Khyal. These three types are associated with Alibux, Nainuram and Lacchiram respectively, who are the contemporaries of Parsi companies. Khyal is performed on a wooden platform in an open space. Music is an important component in this form. The themes of the plays presented in Khyal are usually based on the lives of Amar Singh Rathore from Marwar, Raja Harishchandra, Jaidev Kankali and Gopichand Bharathari. The theme of the form is similar to those of Parsi theatre where dialogues are in verses and the last word of the songs and speech is stressed by the audience by repeating that word.

'Nautanki', a popular folk form of Rajasthan was a good source of entertainment before the arrival of cinema in India. It is believed that the word nautanki may have come from the popular play 'Nautanki Shehzadi—the story of Princess Nautanki'. Unlike other forms of folk theatre, it is generally in written form,

a kind of libretto for all the characters including the director, narrator, the Ranga who links the episode and comments on the action. Usually, the content of Nautanki is based on mythology such as the story of Raja Harish Chandra and Bhagat Moradhwaj, history like story of Amar Singh Rathore (Rajput nobleman affiliated to the royal house of Marwar, and a courtier of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in 17th century India), romance like stories of ‘Laila Majnun’, folklore- like story of Sultana Daku or even on the activities of contemporaneous vogue icon like dacoit queen Phulan Devi. The language used in this form is a happy blend of Hindi, Urdu, Brajbhasha and Avadhi. It is to be noted that prior to the first half of the 20th century, most of the plays were based on the themes discussed above. However, with the passage of time this form came to centre on contemporary social messages such as health, HIV/AIDS, women empowerment, dowry, immigration, communal harmony and family planning. Commonly the contentment of Nautanki lies in the intense melodic charge between two or three performances which is sometimes interrupted with a chorus to make it more amusing. These performances are often interrupted with the events like songs, dance and skits which act as both break and humorous relief for the audience. Nautanki has earned great popularity and name because of its unique music which includes vocal and instrumental.

‘Bhavai’, another folk form of western India is a traditional theatre item of Northern Gujarat and Southern Rajasthan. This form is more related to ritual offerings made to goddess Amba rather than a source of entertainment. The term is derived from ‘Bhav’ meaning ‘world’ or ‘bhava’ meaning ‘emotion’. It is generally performed during Navratra festival in the courtyard of Ambaji temple to pay tribute to goddess Amba. Regarding the staging of Bhavai, Lal says, “Bhavai is staged open-air in front of temples as a community ritual honouring the goddess Amba” (Lal 191). Amba is

the presiding deity of Bhavai and its history began in the 14th century when a Brahmin named Asaita Thakur, a 'Kathakar' began writing plays in prose dialogue. He was inspired by one of the medieval Sanskrit 'uparupaka' forms which is usually performed in open space. It is believed that he wrote about 360 scripts called 'vesha' which later became famous with the name of Bhavai along with other similar stories written afterwards. Bhavai begins with Ganpati puja (worship of Ganesh) followed by the worship of goddess Kali with two lit torches in her hands who bless both the villagers and their cattle. As the performance draws to a close, the comic character – 'juthana' or 'ranglo' comes in and "acts as the conscience, satirizing, criticizing, lampooning the doings of authority figures and pinpointing social evils" (Lal 192). Thus, Bhavai is reflective of themes relevant to the contemporary times. Such plays are usually based on communal, political and spiritual themes and their primary focus is to educate the people and to allow a fillip to the ethical and cultural life of the society.

'Tamasha', traditional and popular folk theatrical form of Marathi theatre in Maharashtra developed from the folk forms such as 'Jagran', 'Dasavatar' and 'Kirtan'. The fundamental functions of this form are entertainment, devotion and propagandist tradition. It challenges the traditional philosophy of social power by displaying them in a reversed and viciously comic style by presenting through such characters, affording people liberation for their convert resentment in opposition to the dominated hierarchies. Regarding the origin of 'Tamasha', Ananda Lal in the book *Theatres of India: A Concise Companion* states:

Although the precise date of origin remains unknown, Tamasha existed in the eighteenth century and prospered during the later Peshwa period. Yet the word was used since the twelfth century and came to signify

amusing performance, such as the.... In the nineteenth century, the term covered plays as well. (Lal 407)

The basic feature of this form is similar to those of Nautanki and Swang in Northern India. Having been inspired by Sanskrit drama, this folk form is represented by 'lavani' songs that focus on love and romance where the combination of poetry and narration are mixed and judiciously used to illustrate the popular historical themes of *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. Unlike other folk forms, the chief component of this form is the female actress known as 'Murki'. All emotions are portrayed through dance by using all classical music and dramatic gesticulations of the protagonist. It is also a popular source of entertainment in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh.

Folk Traditions of Eastern region of India

The eastern part of India engendered a rich culture of folk theatre through meaningful folkloric contributions coming from different states of the region. The mosaic of vibrant folk forms in the region consists of religious, cultural and traditional practices. These forms are variously named in various parts of the eastern region. For example, it is called 'Jatra', 'Ghambira' in West Bengal, 'Bhaona' in Assam, 'Suanga', 'Rahasa', 'Bandi Nata', 'Danda Nata' and 'Kundhei Nata' in Odisha and 'Bidesiya' in Bihar. 'Jatra', a famous folk theatrical form of Bengal has its traces throughout most of the eastern states of India like Bihar, Assam, Odisha and Tripura. It literally means a journey which is believed to have originated from the ceremonial function before starting a journey. In this folk form, a procession carrying an idol was symbolically taken as a journey. It was a source of communicating religious values to the masses. This form of folk theatre came into existence in the 16th century when the

biographers of Saint Chaitanya namely Krishnadas advocated for Vaishnava devotion to popularize a priestless adoration based on bakhti whose medium would be song and dance. It is Chaitanya's influence that popularised Krishna Jatra. It began with myths, legends and popular stories of Harish Chandra and *Nala-Damayanti*. Later it is joined with characters such as Krishana and Rama who are generally believed to have rural affiliations. Mansa Jatras belong to the tradition of Medieval Mangal Kavya. Its valorisation of romance and sexuality helps this folk form enter the urban theatre. Beginning with music, this folk theatre is modified when stage dialogues are added.

The Assamese folk theatrical form, 'Bhaona' also known as Ankiya Nat is a traditional form of musical theatre with religious message. Originally it has been called as Yatra. 'Nata' means play and 'anka' means 'single act' and with the passage of time it came to be called 'Ankiya Nat'. It is a dance drama in which dance and songs are mixed with 'slokas' and other pieces in Sanskrit. The narrator also known as 'Sutradhar' plays an important role as he begins the story first in Sanskrit and then in either Brajboli or Assamese. Throughout the play it is the narrator who introduces the themes, announces entrances and exits of characters and narrates the story and so on. The actors who perform the role are called Bhoriya. Being a one act play, several characters get involved actively in the performance to make it effective and dramatic. It is usually played in the place called 'namghar' where the characters undertake usual rehearsals before the play is finally staged. The much revered Assamese religious Guru Srimanta Sankar Dev wrote quite a good number of Ankiya Nats.

'Suanga' which means masque and farce was a popular folk form in coastal Odisha till 20th century which fell out of use and lost its popularity as time rolled on. Now-a-days it has its existence in a few districts of western Odisha. Its themes are dominated by rich Indian mythology. The prominent feature of this form is that the

actors are required to sing their own dialogues and the refrain is repeated by chorus. Moreover, the characters introduce themselves through songs; for example, when Shiva enters, he sings, “‘I am Shiva’, God of three worlds, Ganga is in my locks, I live in Kailash” (Lal 397). Minor characters such as ‘Darwari’ or Santry and ‘Vaidya’ or village doctor are introduced to make it more comic as their dialogues are written in colloquial language. The instruments used in it are ‘gini’ (Cymbal) and ‘mardala’ or ‘Shidanga’ (a double-ended drum).

‘Rahasa’, the popular form of folk theatre of coastal districts of Puri and Cuttack in Odisha is a collection of Rasleela in musical dance drama which focuses on love sport of Radha and Krishna. It is performed both by amateur and professionals and it includes in it the elaborated songs with gestures and mild dances. Mohansundar Deva Goswami, Govinda Chandra Surdeo, Bhakta Charan Das and Kala Charam Patnaik contributed stupendously to popularize this form as they used to perform this folk form all over Odisha with the professional troupes. Another form similar to Rahasa is Radhaprem Lila which means Radha’s love play and it is common in southern districts of Ganjam. In this form, the stage is decorated beautifully and the play begins with Radha and her companions sitting there and the coming of Lord Krishna in disguise to meet them.

The oldest folk form of Odisha is ‘Danda Nata’ which literally means staff dance. This form is mostly prevalent among the lower caste Hindu and connected with the worship of Lord Shiva and Gauri. This form is usually practised in Chaitra month. The musical instruments accompanied in this form are ‘dhol’ and ‘mahuri’. All characters whether mythological or social, present vivid pictures of their rural life through their dialogues. The main objective is to show ideal family and life as they emphasize prayers, religious messages, moral lesson and social correctives. An

appendage to Dhandi Nata which is popular among the lower castes and tribals is 'Bandi Nata'. The meaning of 'Bandi' is widow so that Bandi Nata means 'widow dance'. There are three characters in the play: Kutila, Radha and Krishna. Kutila is the widowed sister of Chandrasena (husband of Radha), who plays the role of villain in the immortal love and courtship of Radha and Krishna. But the play attaches more importance to the determined devotion of Kutila to Krishna and her sacrifice for Krishna. The songs are often in dialogic form with the music of 'dhol' and the wind instrument, 'mahuri'. It is a part of Vaishnava association but invocation is devoted to Lord Shiva and Parvati. This form has been passing from generation to generation through oral tradition to date. It is mingled with dances and songs to give it touch of hilarity, humour and laughter.

Another folk form related to the love of Radha and Krishna is 'Kundhei Nata' which is traditional glove/hand puppetry in Odisha. It is centralized on only two characters – Krishna and Radha. Krishna devotion and worship was the popular order of the sixteenth century which influenced both gloving and string puppet tradition of Odisha to adopt it as their exclusive thematic content. The two main characters of this form are: 'lead puppeteer and a drummer-cum-puppeteer'. There is no stage and the performers sit on a mat and manipulate the puppets in full view of the audience. These puppeteers use mainly devotional poems but now-a-days they also focus on secular themes.

The famous folk form of Bihar is Bidesiya available in Bhujpuri. It stands for reminiscence, humour and comical effect lent to it by its regional touch. This folk form was started by Bikhari Thakur who originally performed a play about the pain and suffering of a newly wed bride and her endlessly wait for her husband who had gone to another place for work and money. This theme received such an immediate

echo in social reality that it attained the status of independent form and several works with minor variation to this story reached the audience as Bidesiya. During the play only three or four performers played different roles with their everyday costumes in any available space. In Bihar, this form is enacted in several villages as its themes are very much related to the people of rural areas where men have to go to cities to earn livelihood leaving behind their families.

Folk Theatre of Northern region of India

Folk theatre of North India is symbolic representation of north Indian culture and folk ways. The famous folk forms of the region are: 'Ramleela' and 'Rasleela' in Uttar Pradesh; 'Karyala' in Himachal Pradesh; 'Ramman' in Uttarakhand and 'Dhandi' in Punjab. Another famous folk form, Nautanki, already explained in this chapter is also famous in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. The folk form 'Swang' performed largely in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan completes folk culture of North India. It is a famous North Indian folk theatrical form related to naqqal. In this connection, Lal's observation is worth mentioning:

We may distinguish between the comic duos of naqqals (also known as Bhands) and full fledged dramatic performances by a troupe, better classified as Swang; the former has exclusively satirical content, the latter heroic romance interspersed with comic prologue and interludes.
(Lal 398)

With the religious writing of Guru Nanakdev, this form of folk theatre came into existence in theatres of north India. This form of folk drama is based on morality, love-stories from Indian mythology, lives of inspiring personalities like King Prithviraj Chauhan, Puran Bhagat, Hir-Ranja, Soni-Mahiwal and Sassi-Punnu.

However, now-a-days, themes and issues such as dramas deal with have been diversified into health, hygiene and literacy.

Rasleela is the most famous and fascinating traditional theatre of Uttar Pradesh particularly in the Braj region of western Uttar Pradesh. It is exclusively based on Lord Krishna legend and focused on devotion and rituals as its themes are based on childhood and adolescent life of Krishna, personification of Vishnu during his stay in Gokul and Varindavana. With the emergence of religious Krishna Bhakti movement in the 15th century in Braj, this folk theatrical tradition became more dramatic in form and taste and came to be known as Rasleela. This form is not restricted to any particular time. It is performed anytime in any season in India.

The prominent folk theatre form performed in Himachal Pradesh is 'Karyala' which means teasing and having fun. It is performed specially around Dussehra festival in October-November in the dialects of Sirmaur district. Regarding the origin of this form, scholars believe that it is in a continuation of classical theatre while others claim that it had its origin in the eighteenth century. Earlier, it was performed continuously for sixteen nights but at present, the number of days and occasions are not fixed. Like other folk forms, it also continues for whole night and consists of different small plays emulating and ridiculing various characters that the villagers come across in daily life. It comprises two mandatory acts: Chandravali and Bairagi. The former opens any Karyala event which serves as act of consecrating the showground while the latter includes hilarious, eventually spurring exchanges between distinctive types of mendicants and some knowledgeable and some crooked. It is full of fun, satire and clownery. This folk form is passed on from generation to generation orally and commemorates through performer's adeptness and witty nature. The music is grounded on the regional melodies and the instruments used in this form

are: dhol, nagara drums, naphiri and karnal. This form is closely linked with the life of people and apart from earlier plays many new plays have been written today related to contemporary issues and problems.

The prominent folk theatre form of Utrakhand is 'Ramman', a cultural event which includes theatre, music and traditional written and oral stories. It is celebrated every year in the month of April in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand in the courtyard of temple of the village deity Bhumiya Devta. This form is unique to this region as it is neither replicated nor executed anywhere else in the Himalayan regions.

The famous folk theatrical form of Punjab is 'Dhandi'. The word 'dhadi' means the one who sings ballad using 'dhadd' and 'sarangi'. In this form minstrels of bucolic Punjab narrate heroic poetry and even family history in poetry. Muslims among them are representative of Sufi music. They sing Sufiana Kalam or spiritual verses during their performances. Such Sufi verses become fascinating on special occasions and with the help of variety of musical instruments, the 'Sufi Kissas' are sung. These 'Kissas' are narratives of 'Hir-Ranjha', 'Sassi-Punnu' and 'Soni-Mahiwal'.

Folk theatrical Tradition of Jammu and Kashmir

The folk theatrical tradition of Jammu and Kashmir is unique with different categories of dance, drama or music. The famous folk theatre forms of the region are: Achi Lamo, Mane Pa in Ladakh; Bhand Pather in Kashmir; Bhagat, Haran, Rasleela, Ramleela, Jagarna, Swang, Jatar and Jagrata in Jammu. Achi Lamo is adopted by the people of Ladakh as it has its origin in Tibet where its performance is called as 'Topa Kambha'. The performers usually come from Tibet to perform it and represent some Buddhist 'Jatik Katha' along with dance, music and drama. This folk form is

generally performed in the open. Another folk form of Ladakh focuses more on narration and dialogues unlike Achi Lamo. It is enacted by professional Mane-Pa families in Ladakh. The main purpose is to entertain the audience by providing humour and laughter.

Kashmir has a rich folk culture as it becomes evident from its chronological records found in *Nilamata Purana* and Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. 'Bandi Pethir' which was initially spelled as 'Bhand Pather' is a folk form combining mimicry, music, dance, wit, humour and pranks. It is believed that this form emerged about two thousand years ago and attained its climax in tenth century. Abhinavagupta, from Kashmir also refers to 'Bandi Pethir' as 'bhanda-natya' in his book *Abhinavabharti* written in tenth century. This testifies to the fact that 'Bandi Pethir' has remained a popular folk form for thousands of years. In Kashmiri language drama is called 'Pather' and 'Bhand' refers to the actor or performer. It acquired certain features of its own with the passage of time. It begins with a musical performance which besides attracting spectators also creates a temperament that resembles the intended drama. Themes for such dramatic performances are not generally pre-decided and the performer presents his talent through step by step upgrading, accessible material and circumstances to execute the form and entertain the audience.

Jammu region, the tradition of folk theatre has been as rich, varied and reflective of the society and culture as anywhere else. The dominant forms of Jammu folk theatre according to Om Goswami mentioned in "Lok-Natya Bhagtan: Ek Parchool" are:

1. Swang
2. Bagatan

3. Ras Leela
4. Ram Leela
5. Haran

Besides the forms mentioned above, there are also 'Bhands', 'Jogi-Gardi', 'Miraasis', 'Jagarna' and 'Jatar'. Most of these are orthodox and associated with religious deities while a few are secular. In the words of Manmohan Singh, "Similar to other traditions of folk, there is a rich repertoire of Dogra folk theatre forms" (Singh, *Sada* 23). The aim of this thesis is to study the Dogra folk theatre in all its forms and its intricate relationship with the society.

Literature Review

No full length research has been carried out on the folk theatre of Jammu. Dogra Mandal, Jammu published a small booklet, *Amar Katha* (1954) which includes the life and struggle of peasant-saint, Bawa Jitto who sacrificed his life to get freedom for farmers from the clutches of landlords. In the book *An Introduction to Dogra Folk Literature and Pahari Art* (1965), Lakshmi Narain and Sansar Chand describe the folk traditions, cultures as well as history of the Duggar region. Ramnath Shastri in the book *Jetto-Jeevan de Karak* (1973) explains the journey on the life of Bawa Jitto and various 'Karak's based on his life. In the book, *Marh Block de Shaheed*, Surender Pal Gandalgal offers a glimpse into the wide collection of local ballads in the Jammu region. Om Goswami's book *Dogri Lok Gatha: Ik Adhayayan* (1979) includes the study of various Dogri Folk ballads such as 'Karak's of Bawa Jitto, Kaliveer, Surgal Bawa and many other deities.

Ramnath Shastri in his essay "Lok-Natya-Parmpara te Duggar" published in book *Sada Sahitya* (1992) discusses folk tradition as an important part of social life.

Without the knowledge of folk tradition the social life or history of any clan or caste is not only incomplete but also far from reality. Moreover, it is almost unscientific and folk theatre is an important mirror of folk tradition. In another essay “Lok-Natya Bagtan: Ek Parchool” published in the same book, Om Goswami gives an overview of the folk form Bagtan. According to Goswami in the era of endangered folk theatrical forms there are still some traces of Bagtan and Swang in some places and it is the need of time to take necessary steps for its promotion. Om Goswami discusses the relationship between folk form Swang and Bhagtan and holds the view that the folk form Bhagtan is in actual sense a modification of folk form Swang. In an essay titled “Manduy di Bikas-Jatra”, Parsram Purva seeks to discuss the various aspects of development of folk theatrical forms in Udampur, Basoli and Ramkot. Mukundram Nagar in his essay “Purmandal di Ramleela” explains history of the Ramleela of Purmandal. It is played during the navratras of Chattr-Chodaya. It is believed that this tradition of playing Ramleela is about eighty years old and it is played with all rituals and tradition. In another essay titled “Duggar Di Lok-Nat Parmpara” in the same book Deshbandu Dogra Nutan gives an overview of different forms of folk theatre like Gusaytan, Lohri, Jagyaran, Jatar, Jadiya, Naratay, Majal, Jagarnay da Nach, Holi, Mele te Challan and Nukkar Natakay Bangar Nat.

Om Goswami in an essay titled “Lok Natak Bagtan: Ek Jayzya” published in the journal *Sheeraza* (2001) maintains that the tradition of Swang, Bhagtan and Ras is not only famous in Jammu region but in almost every state of North India. He gives an overview of folk form Bagtan and explains how it came into existence after the tradition of Ramleela. Mohan Singh, in an essay titled “Duggar Diyan Lok Natay Parampara” published in *Dogri Rangmanch* (2006) views that like other folk tradition Dogra culture also has rich folk theatrical tradition like Bagtan, Haran, Jagarna,

Jaddhu-Jadiyan, Gaghael, Jatar etc. He discusses Bagtan at length which is believed to be a pure folk theatre form of Dogra culture. In another essay “Dogri Lok Natak: Parampara te Vichardhara” in the same book Mohan Singh explains that that in order to know the relationship between traditions and beliefs of Dogri folk theatre it is necessary to discuss and understand these traditions and beliefs individually.

In an essay “Jammu Khitay ch Lohri di Tahag” published in the book titled *Duggar di Anmuli Lok Virasat* (2013), Kumar. A. Bharti gives a brilliant description of celebration of Lohri festival in the Dogra culture which is celebrated with enthusiasm and is forecasts the beginning of beginning of summer after winter season. In another essay “Jammu Khatray da Lok-Natay ‘Haran’”, Kumar. A. Bharti explains that tradition of playing Haran is successfully executed by some families from generation to generation. It is mythologically not only related to harvesting and reaping of crop but also with peace and prosperity of the people. In another essay “Jammu Pradesh di Lok-Virsa “Jatar”, Bharti, the author discusses the folk form Jatar which is usually performed at the religious places and are related to the religious beliefs of the people. It is performed by a ‘Chela’ who responds to the queries the answer of the audience. Karan Singh in *Drama, Dramaturgy and Indigeneity: North Indian Folk Theatrical Traditions* (2017) stresses on the necessity of understanding the limitations of realistic tradition in theatres and exploring the channels of fluidity and efflorescence in human character, the essential inter contextuality of dance, drama and songs. He attempts to situate the borrowings and adaptations which the living filk traditions are susceptible to and how they synthesize indigeneous elements with them in their overall structure.

Research Methodology

The few research papers and articles written on the folk theatre of Jammu focus primarily on the formal aspects. However, the present thesis analyses the various folk forms by using ethnographic approach. Ethnography is study of people and cultures as ethno means a company, people or nation and 'graphy' means field of study. Thus, ethnography is the study of culture of a group graphically and in writing as it is premeditated to survey cultural phenomenon. It focuses on the large cultural group of people and the pattern of values, behaviour, beliefs and language shared by that group.

Bronislaw Malinowski puts emphasis on the importance of participant's observation and argues that a researcher of ethnography must have contact with their informants which are necessary to understand a culture. According to Malinowski the main aim of the ethnographer is "to grasp the native's point of view, *his* relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world" (Malinowski 25).

Ethnography is mainly a qualitative research approach includes both a field work approach and scheme to writing. The ethnographer goes into the field as a field worker and lives closely and participates in the lives of the people for a lengthy time period, observing people, documenting events, social interactions, customs and rituals, taking elaborated field notes, and conducting interviews. As writer, the ethnographer arranges/ classifies, interprets, records/registers the collected data in the form of a text of a written ethnographic study of that particular subject of study. Ethnography involves an extensive approach which includes writing fieldnotes, conducting and recording interviews, taking photographs, recordings, videos, look into national, state and local archives, registering folk culture and traditions, and preparing an

ethnographic report. Being an ethnographer goes beyond method of just knowing about the technique of doing ethnographic fieldwork and producing texts.

The ethnographer primarily interposes between two main, inter-related spheres: first in the domain of collection and interpretation of data and second, in the structuring of the written account. The first sphere involves activities like the identification of the field to be studied, discussion on whom to observe, marking of significant aspects and the determination of how words and actions are interpreted. The second domain deals with the construction of the written commentary/report that states/expresses and conveys the research conclusions. Therefore, in every part of the research process, the ethnographer is not merely a non-interventionist, unprejudiced observer but is a crucial part of the research. Then arises the enduring predicament of discomfiting juxtaposition of personal experience and objective evaluations of which Mary Louise Pratt in *Writing Culture* provides solutions by emphasising the importance of subjective reflections within ethnographies to frame the cultural descriptions. Personal narrative she argues:

Mediates this contradiction between the engagement called for in fieldwork and the self-effacement called for in formal ethnographic description, or at least mitigates some of its anguish, by inserting into the ethnographic texts the authority of the personal experience out of which the ethnography is made. (Pratt 33)

Ethnography, essentially is a method of research carried out in a natural setting where the ethnographer carried his /her research regarding the features of a particular culture, particularly in this case, the cultural dimensions pertaining to folk theatre, by spending prolonged periods in the field of observing and participating in certain

aspects of social life which are relevant to the study. “Significantly, ethnography is ‘multimethod research’. The ethnographer is interested in ‘collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned’” (Hammersely and Atkinson 2). A variety of different research methods can be engaged in ethnography including participant observation, interviewing and document analysis. It is a theory of research with a constant process of contemplation and analysis and demands the ethnographer to be persistently creative, imaginative and original.

Ethnography is a research technique which strives to dig into and elucidate cultural behaviour through extended, deep and profound dealing and interaction with the subject, by engaging prospectively a variety of research methods. This method serves as a potential medium of investigation for many pathways of enquiry within the field. It carries out a dual function of storytelling and being a scientific enterprise. Therefore, the study of ethnography, with its two aspects of being a research method and a research text, reveals its interdisciplinary establishments and emphasizes the worth of a broad-based, multidisciplinary approach to research and scholarship.

Ethnography encompasses observing, recognising, searching and documenting different channels of communication of which ethnographic interview form an important part. Interviews are used generally and regularly to procure and collect personal history and experience, story and viewpoint, thoughts, skills and a wide range of other data or facts. The interview event can certainly evoke long conversations and descriptions. Sociolinguists call interviews as ‘speech events’ which refer to specific kind of linguistic and informational exchange that involves participants in a particular kind of communicative act in a specific time and place.

The interview event itself - with its myriad technical, theoretical, cultural, political, positional, and historical elements - is actually a profoundly complicated thing. In addition to the technical proficiency interviewing requires – and here we mean everything from remembering equipment to collecting high-quality sound to being a generous listener to asking good follow-up questions – there are issues of epistemology, philosophy, and ethics to consider. (Campbell and Lassiter 89-90)

Commenting upon the shift in attitude of contemporary ethnographers towards the interview, oral historian Valerie Yow writes:

In ethnographic research in general and in oral history research specifically, there has been a shift in attitude about the relationship of interviewer to narrator. Formerly, the relationship of researcher (who plays the role of authoritative scholar) to narrator (who is the passive yielder of data) was once subject to object. In the new view, power may be unequal, but both interviewer and narrator are seen as having knowledge of the situation as well as deficits in understanding. Although the interviewer brings to the interviewing situation a perspective based on research in a discipline, the narrator brings intimate knowledge of his or her own culture and often a different perspective.... This is an underlying assumption ... [of] “shared authority.” (qtd. in Campbell and Lassiter 96-97)

In ethnographic research, different assumptions underline the interview event which is quite different from other kinds of interviewing. The process of conducting interviews

involves some fundamental steps such as identifying research goals, questions, interviewees, posing questions, and analysing and interpreting transcripts and finally presenting results. Gabriele Grifflin distinguishes interviews along three dimensions:

- 1) Interviewees involved: one to one versus group interviews (the latter is predominantly discussed in terms of focused groups).
- 2) Format: structured, semi-structured, or unstructured interviews.
- 3) Setting: Public or private space (interviewee's, interviewer's, 'neutral'); face to face, telephone, email, internet.

The one to one interviews are mainly used for introducing the authors while ethnographers on the other hand focus on group interviews in which groups of people stimulated to respond to questions, ideas and frankly exchange views about a particular issue or set off issues. Group interviews are capable of eliciting a broader range of views and can be more resource and time efficient. Ethnographer may use different kinds of formats for their interviews such as structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews generally involve interviews schedules in which an interviewer poses same set of fully formulated, pre-given questions asked in the same order and ideally in the same manner with in the context of same research project as in a survey to the interviewee. This may include closed question, requiring precise answer, often only in 'yes' or 'no' and discourse deviated from these pre-established questions is discouraged. Semi-structured form of interview may proceed from an established set of question (as in structured interviews or involve an interview guide rather than an interview schedule. These are less rich in format and discussions are exchanges that open new avenues of inquiry are valued and encouraged. Unstructured interviews generally engage more open-ended conversations in which specific form of information is sought from particular interviewees. Unstructured

interviews are generally described as ‘in-depth interviews’ to hint that such interviews are intended to elicit elaborated and detailed answer or thick description. In ethnographic research, semi-structured and un-structured forms of interviews are more common. There ethnographer engages both formal and informal communicative exchanges.

Ethnography is all about opening new avenues for understanding through dialogues and conversation, and interview events are one of the many communicative channels that ethnographers employ while doing fieldwork in ethnographic research. It is a useful research method for understanding people’s views and perceptions in ethnographic study.

Through the concepts given by various ethnographers the present study explores folk theatre in more descriptive ways. The present study focuses on the above mentioned aspects of ethnography through the concepts given by Bronislaw Malinowski, Gabriele Griffin, Elizabeth Campbell and Luke Eric Lassiter. The folk theatre forms, the regions of their dominance, the social context and their place in the Dogra traditions are discussed in detail in the following chapters.

ⁱ The *völkisch* movement was the German interpretation of the populist movement, with a romantic focus on folklore and the organic, i.e.: a naturally grown community in unity, characterised by the one-body-metaphor for the entire population during a period from the late 19th century until the Nazi era. The term *völkisch* derives from the German word *Volk* (cognate with the English "folk"), corresponding to ethnic group of a population and people, with connotations in German of "people-powered". The *völkisch* "movement" was not a unified movement but "a cauldron of beliefs, fears and hopes that found expression in various movements and were often articulated in an emotional tone.

ⁱⁱ Romantic nationalism (national romanticism, organic nationalism, identity nationalism) is the form of nationalism in which the state derives its political legitimacy as an organic consequence of the unity of those it governs. This includes, depending on the particular manner of practice, the language, race, culture, religion, and customs of the nation in its primal sense of those who were born within its culture. This form of nationalism arose in reaction to dynastic or imperial hegemony, which assessed the legitimacy of the state from the top down, emanating from a monarch or other authority, which justified its existence.

ⁱⁱⁱ The *Nāṭya Śāstra* is a Sanskrit Hindu text on the performing arts. The text is attributed to sage Bharata Muni, and its first complete compilation is dated to between 200 BCE and 200 CE, but estimates vary between 500 BCE and 500 CE. The text consists of 36 chapters with a cumulative total of 6000 poetic verses describing performance arts. The subjects covered by the treatise include dramatic composition, structure of a play and the construction of a stage to host it, genres of acting, body movements, make up and costumes, role and goals of an art director, the musical scales, musical instruments and the integration of music with art performance. The *Nāṭya Śāstra* is notable as an ancient encyclopedic treatise on the arts, one which has influenced dance, music and literary traditions in India. It is also notable for its aesthetic "Rasa" theory, which asserts that entertainment is a desired effect of performance arts but not the primary goal, and that the primary goal is to transport the individual in the audience into another parallel reality, full of wonder, where he experiences the essence of his own consciousness, and reflects on spiritual and moral questions. The text has inspired secondary literature such as Sanskrit bhasya (reviews and commentaries) such as by the 10th century Abhinavagupta.

A number of folk theater forms with unique execution are staged throughout Himachal Pradesh. Without any written script the dialogues are coined by the actors during the course of the performance. The folk-theater form of Shimla, Sirmaur and Solan districts has crude humor and its beauty lies in its rustic vulgarity, not obscenity. | Source. Stage Settings. The folk- dramas are enacted in the village around Diwali or Baisakhi when the hard working farmers become free to entertain themselves. The groups of artists can be seen roaming in the villages carrying musical instruments like drum, Dholak, trumpets, musical forks etc. The artists do not require the stage.