CHAPTER - IV

COMMUNICATIVE ASPECTS OF PERFORMING ARTFORMS

In general outlook the process of communication of an information is started with two or more persons. It is a sort of interaction among the persons involved or a mutual sharing of ideas and experiences. There are many ways by which one mind may affect another, e.g. oral or written words, gestures, facial expressions, pictures, models, photographs etc., which are used by the performing artforms. It is a dynamic organisation of the communicator or sender, interpreter or receiver and communication content or message. It is a bipolar process because the performing art forms send the messages and the audience receive these. The sender may be one person or an organisation. The receiver may be an individual or a member of the group. Generally the content of communication is an organised field of stimulus consisting of a variety of signs and symbols. These stimuli are received through the performing artforms when the sender wants to build up a commonness with the receiver, he encodes his message to the decoder from which the decoder or audience are profited.¹

Generally communication is a process of transmission of knowledge.

to the various categories of people of the society. It is clear that communication is a process of conveying ideas or feelings from the performer to the audience. Evidently it is an interaction between the performer and the audience. It is true that for proper communication the performer should be very clear about the knowledge he wants to communicate. Besides he should know the medium or procedure of proper communication - it may be language, body movement, gestures, attitudes, pictures, dresses or other forms of expression. Communication helps in making, transmitting and interpreting message. It indicates the importance of common experiences or ideas to the common people. Thus the performing art forms play a vital role as communicative aspect in the field of education.  

The main objective of communication is to enable the audience to perceive the ideas or concepts clearly. The performing artforms try to communicate properly the common experiences or common ideas among the audience. These are the proper media of communication of knowledge, ideas or concepts of any subject. Therefore performing art form is the important medium of communication. Folklore is as old as human being. As men are created by God, folklore is created by human being. So it can be said that folklore is a human science.

2. Ibid.
Because human thinking and reasoning are closely related to folklore. From different folklore materials people acquire various knowledge of different subjects. From time immemorial items of folklore have been exhibited among the people with the help of performing art forms. Such performances communicate various types of education to the common people. Each performance plays an important role as communicative aspect in the human society. But for such performances special environment is necessary in which different sections of people are assembled. The performers exhibit their hands and body movements before the audience. Besides, they recite different texts and communicate different social messages to the common people. These performers exhibit various social rules and regulations with the help of performing art forms.

Generally performing art forms play their roles as communicative aspect among the different groups of people. It is a very easy process of communication of knowledge among the rural people. Evidently the success of performing art forms depends on the comment of the audience. From the wide sense although quality and action of the performers are primary things for the communication of knowledge, it gives more importance on the motivation, attitude and comment of the audience.⁴

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According to some folklorists performance and communication are very important processes for knowledge development among the common people. Folklorists who support this view are Dan Ben Amos, Kenneth S. Goldstain, Dell Hymes, Bruce A. Rosenberg, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Linda Degh, Richard Bauman, Roger D. Abrahams, etc.  

Generally from time immemorial the processes of performance and communication have been playing vital role among the non-literate rural people. In the words of Malinowski primitive languages are associated with the context of culture and situation. Malinowski suggested that outsiders can correctly understand these languages only if they consider the context of cultural reality, that is, 'the material equipment, the activities, interests, moral and aesthetic values with which words are correlated'. Very often, knowledge of cultural reality in general is insufficient for the elucidation of the meaning of texts, and the particular context of situation has to be accounted for. By this latter term Malinowski meant both the circumstantial information surrounding speaking, and the facial expression, gesture, bodily activities, the whole group of people during an exchange of utterances and the part of the environment on which these people are engaged.

4. Ibid.
Generally through the performing art forms the primitive culture can be exhibited by the way of language. For the first time Malinowski proposed the concept context of situation as the key for language interpretation, after he suggested that this context of cultural reality is strictly analogous to the context of speech (i.e. situation).\textsuperscript{6} Language is the mediator of communication of knowledge in the context of culture.

Besides these, Malinowski shifed the focus in the study of non-written languages, their magic formulas, and their narratives from the reported document back to their existence as living, dynamic, verbal social reality.\textsuperscript{7} He formulises his theory for proper accommodation in the folklore field. So, such a change involves a conceptualization of folklore in which communication and performance are key terms. It releases folklore from the literate bonds imposed upon it in archives and libraries and views it as human verbal symbolic interaction of performing kind.\textsuperscript{8}

On the other hand semiotics or science of symptoms is the modern creation of folk science. The main aim and objective of semiotics is communication. Thus the main aim and objective of performance is communication. The term semiotic was used in the medical science to

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 2-3.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., p. 3.
understand the physical and mental qualities of the patient. According to John Locke the main aim of semiotic is the study of nature of signs. It includes many subjects such as Linguistics, Mathematics, Logic, Anthropology, folklore, Philosophy etc. Semiotics are of three different types such as Pure Semiotics, Descriptive semiotics and Applied semiotics. Every type is unique in its nature. When the doctrines of signs are described in the field of language that is called Pure Semiotics. On the other hand when the nature of aim and character of the doctrines of signs are described that is called Descriptive semiotics. And at last when the knowledge of signs are used for the solution of different aims and objectives that is known as Applied semiotics.9

From the above point of view it is clear that semiotics is patterned communications in all modalities.10 Thus man and different types of animals exhibit their emotional movement and action through the use of signs in the communicative field. In day-to-day life it is seen that man uses different signs and qualities in the field of srābana, darshana, sparsa, ghrāna and āsvādana.11 These are known as social behaviours. These social behaviours are distinct in the different aspects of folklore. The aim and objective of these behaviours are to communicate the thinking among the common people. Thus men and animals

9. N.C. Sarma, Op-cit., p. 95
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 96.
communicate their thinking, reasoning, emotion in different fields and situations with the help of signs.

Generally folklore materials are exhibited by some performers through some performing art forms. The performer acquires some cultural knowledge of folklore materials and express these knowledge through different types of mudrās (movements). As a result, these become more attractive and interesting for the rural and common people. Because the active performer who is related to folklore, knows some knowledge, such knowledge - a set of rules, a system of communication, a grammar in which the relationships between the attributes of verbal messages and the social-cultural reality are constant interplay, transforming symbols and metaphors, styles and structures, themes and forms in response to social variables of a situation. ¹² In this way the linguistic view is distinct that it makes no sense to say that the meaning of narrative has anything to do with the context of situation of the moment of narration, for in what sense does the meaning of what is said depend upon the attitude of the listeners? Yet from the perspectives of the contextual approach to folklore, in which its communicative attributes are primary, not only does it make good sense to base the meaning of a text upon both the intent of the

¹². D.B. Amos, Op-cit., p. 3
speaker and the attitude of the listener, but also to consider the meaning of messages as interdependent upon their actual communicative events.13

So to say performance is one of the most attractive elements of contextual study. It is the main medium of communicating any ideas or thought. It expresses the manner of the delivery of a folklore item. Therefore folkloric action is involved in performance. These actions are presented by some performances such as song, dance and drama etc. These performing art forms are largely spread in different parts of India. It is also current in different parts of Assam. Generally Assam is rich in its traditional culture specially in the field of performing artforms. Such performing artforms are the media of cultural identity. These artforms communicate various traditional thoughts and ideas among the non-literate rural folk.

Generally Socio-linguistics is the main way of looking at the performance and communication aspects of folklore. The aspects of performance and communication of folklore depend on Dell Hyme's method of the ethnography of communication. This method according to Ben Amos is application of linguistic theories and method to the social dimensions of speaking recast communication in culture into a

13. Ibid.
new mold. It demonstrates patterns of speaking, not only of language. Hymes suggests concurring with other studies in sociolinguistics and cultural anthropology, that using the analogy of language the entire network of cultural communications has its rules of appropriateness. Not only is language systematic, but also language use, encompassing linguistic as well as social constituents into its sphere and affecting the meaning of utterances.\textsuperscript{14}

It is distinct that folklore materials are important sources of communication process. The notion of performing artforms is exhibited before the audience as communication process. It is seen that such artforms give a distinctive contribution to the study of different events of communication of knowledge. The notion of performance can be included in three dimension such as the interpretable, the reportable and the repeatable. They perform their functions in the folklore field. Generally it is seen that performance, as cultural behaviour for which a person assumes responsibility to an audience, is a quite specific quite special category. Performance is not a wastebasket, but a key to much of the difference in the meaning of life as between communities.\textsuperscript{15} On the other hand in an oral tradition performance is a mode of existence and realization that is partly constitutive of what:

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 3-4.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 18.
the tradition is. The tradition itself exists partly for the sake of performance; performance is itself partly an end. And while there are cases analogous to the primadonna who cannot go on if any detail is not right, more often the performers of tradition are masters of adaptation to situation. There is no more an 'ur-performance' than there is an 'Ur-text', only the systematic study of performances can disclose the true structure. Therefore performing artforms are some ways of communication of knowledge. These artforms are shaped by three important factors such as tradition, teller and audience. When these factors are active then the communication process of knowledge becomes a success. Observe Linda Degh and Andrew Vazsonyi:

Folk traditions do not live as common property 'in the depth of the soul of the people', rather they are subject to individual creativity. All kinds of folk expressions have their active proponents and passive carriers who represent only a limited number of people in every community.

Through these people of the community our old traditions are survived among the common people, and new generation gets more opportunity to know properly them. Therefore the concept of folklore

transmission became an acknowledged theoretical notion that was included in many folklore text books without essential critical comments.18

So it is distinct that the performing artforms play a vital role as communicative aspect among the rural folk. Now a days the shift of attention is towards the study of the communicative process of folklore. The performer specially depends on the view of audience and try to transform the proper knowledge of text to the audience and try to create that situation in which the relationship of performance obtains between speakers and listeners. The speaker exhibits various performances by signs and symbols which covers the situation. Some informations are communicated by the act of performance. Therefore at present the communication and performance of folklore is very necessary. Some folklorists try to modify folklore and discuss it from various points of view. Such analytical discussions bring forward the particular attributes of the communicaton process for which scholars of various disciplines do not account.

Generally the proper concept of communication was popular, on
danger of becoming a cliche, during the fifties in the surge of mass
communication research in sociology and following the advent of

18. Ibid.
cybernetics as a distinct field of study. Some folklorists use the two important key which are known as performance and communication in the cultural field. In this way William H. Jansen made an attempt to apply the pure concept of performance to the central problem of folklore studies back in the fifties. He suggested a model for proper classification of folklore in which performance and participation serve as two polarities, having an inverse relation to each other in every folklore genre. On the other hand Roger Abrahams suggested a rhetorical theory of folklore, which stressed on the controlling power of folklore and its manipulative qualities in social situations. Generally the terms performance and communication are more inclusive terms which account for the rhetorical attributes of folklore and accommodate the concerns with the symbolic qualities of face-to-face interaction.

From this point of view it is clear that folklore plays a vital role to know the man's social life, pursuing of customs, development of institutions, creation of values, behavioural pattern and function in relation to faith and belief. Therefore, performing artforms have played a vital role in the field of communication. Generally these performing artforms are purely indigenous modes and have served the society as important instruments of communication for ages.

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19. Ibid., p. 5.
20. Ibid., p. 5-6
Different types of performing artforms like *Ojapali, Dhuliya, Khuliya, Putalā-nāc* are indigenous modes which have served as powerful instruments of communication. Specially these artforms perform some functions of communication. Such performances give some informations regarding the social and economic conditions. Through these communication process the rural people get some valuable knowledge necessary for everyday life. Hence it is clear that performing artforms are communicative arts which communicate various messages to the audience. The artforms perform functions as important media of mass communication.

Generally performing artforms are arranged for the recreation of the people of the society. According to the taste of the folk the performing artforms arrange some situations and characters covering various situations and environments of our society. These are mostly related with the life of the folk. Therefore the common people are attracted and interested in the programmes of the performing artforms. Through the performing artforms different programmes can be exhibited before the mass for their consciousness such as - family-planning, production of increased crops, protection from pestilence, protection from malaria, national integration and so forth. Such plans can be successful only through the different types of performing artforms.
Because these artforms can properly express the main theme of the plans.22

The performing artforms recite some songs, myths, ballads which help the common people for their personal consciousness and for the control of society. Because the performing artforms exhibit properly various subject matters according to situation from which the mass people can be conscious for self control and social control. Besides joy, anger, sorrow, and other emotions of the people can be exhibited distinctly through the attitude and movement of the body with the help of the performing artforms. In the words of Richard M. Dorson:

I. G. Prizov had recognised that Folklore reflected the real life of the people in their struggle against the tsars, clergy and land owners. I. A. Xudjakov had pursued the themes of social protest and class satire in popular tales and historical folksongs.23

Besides, Betty Wang says that:

The rough jokes, songs, and proverbs, the anger of the folk is vent upon the often frighteningly unassailable individual or institution.24

Generally the performer exhibits different theme of the text through

23. Ibid., p. 139.
24. Ibid., p. 140.
the various artforms. Specially Ojāpāli, Putalānāc, Dhuliya, Khuliyābhāoriya, Kushāngān, Bhārigān play a vital role as the medium of communication among the common people. The Ojāpāli artform gives more opportunity to know the different myths of the Gods and men and their unsocial activities through which the common people become very conscious and try to refine these. But it is clear that some myths give some ideas for the protection of life. Thus Ojāpāli provides reliable knowledge through entertainment to the common people belonging to different ethnic groups.

Evidently the main objective of Ojāpāli artform is communication. It is a very attractive method of communication. The Ojāpāli exhibits various rules and regulations, ideas, discipline of different centuries through the song, dance and abhinaya before the audience. The performers of Ojāpāli give more stress on the communication of the text. Besides the useful materials and songs Ojāpāli imparts some conceptual knowledge to the common people. The Ojāpāli artform mainly depends on the text and social environment where the common people are benefited. And audience also can repeat those songs, dances and abhinaya from the audio-visual artform Ojāpāli. In this folk institution Ojā and Pāli perform cultural, moral and social duties. The audience are attracted by their socially acceptable cultural behaviours. These expressions or situations are more helpful for the life of different
groups of people. In the words of Dell Hymes performance is not a wastebasket, but a key to much of the difference in the meaning of life as between communities.

Generally performance is very necessary to survive the traditional culture among the new generation. Ojäpali, recites various ballads occasionally from which common people are profited. Performance like Birāt-parba of Mahābhārata is recited by the Ojäpali at the death ceremony and the songs of Rāmāyana are recited by Ojäpali at the marriage ceremony. So to say Ojäpali is that institution through which Pandit, ignorant, blind, dumb and deaf people enjoy a joyful situation. A blind man enjoys the song of Ojäpali whereas a dumb or deaf enjoys the movement of the hands, eyes and other parts of the body because these movements are very important for the dumb and deaf people. The ignorant acquires some knowledge from the humorous exchanges and gestures of the Ojäpali. Because the ignorant people easily understand the humorous explanations. It is through the explanations of Ojäpali that the songs, dances and abhinaya of Ojäpali, attain gusto and force characteristic of excellent performance and communication. Thus various types of songs exhibit the different situations of our society. The common people protested against the British administrators.

through the songs. Through these songs they expressed their inner grief, emotion and joy. One specimen is given below -

\[
gāch lāta chajānā, donar mātīt khājānā \\
loē dah tākā dah ānā a
\\
rādhānāṭh tāhchīḷdār, gāch lāta chajānā \\
atīke adharmī a
\\
rāiżak bāndhi bāndhi mārē \\
gāch lātā chajānā a
\\
donar matīt khājānā, loē dah tākā dah ānā a
\]

There are some folk songs recounting the heroic deeds relating to freedom in our society. Some examples are given below -

\[
Gāndhi sūṭā kāṭu, Gandhi sūṭā kāṭu, \\
sālākathīr ār lāgchī bhālentārōk māṭu, \\
gandhi sūṭā kāṭu a
\]

Another example is -

\[
Gāndhi ole, miting karle, rāiżē āchilchāī ; \\
borah tārē phāṭāk khāṭe gandhīō phāṭākōk jāī a
\\
rāiż sakalē uthi bole ethen habō ki ? \\
chapat kari gandhi rājā sarāj kari di a
\]

28. Ibid., p. 141.
Therefore the role of performing artforms is very wide in the tribal and non-tribal societies. These artforms create a new strength in the minds of different groups of people. The role of artforms is very meaningful in the contexts of religious occasion and different festivals and ceremonies. In these situations Ojapali, Kusangan, Khuliyaabhaor and other perform a great role as communicative media. Therefore, role of the artform is very meaningful and reliable. Through the communication process interrelationship is established among the people. Therefore in the words of Robert Briffault, *Festivals are the most concrete expression of collective emotions and loyalties.* After all, group feelings and emotions are exhibited through the performing artforms in any

29. Ibid., pp. 141-142.
30. Ibid., p. 142.
31. Ibid., p. 143.
action from which all people get some knowledge for their own refinement.

Thus different performing artforms recite the different life history of ideal persons from different sacred books. On the other hand the songs, dances, and abhinaya of the performers are very jubilant for the children, adolescent and old people of the society. They follow everything from the artforms and use in their personal life. Thus from the performing artforms every persons get some reliable and recreational knowledge which are necessary for their personality development and such knowledge helps the people for their personal adjustment in the social situations.

Generally the performing artforms exhibit a real picture of any ancient story through the perfect abhinaya. Therefore unlearned people also are profited through the different artforms. They get some moral, philosophical, historical, religious and spiritual knowledge from the performing artforms. Because they can easily acquire different knowledge from these artforms and try to use these knowledge in their day to day life. In this way B. Malinowski says:

Myth serves as a warrant, a charter, and often even a practical guide.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 133.
Its function is purely traditional. It gives more higher and better stress on the traditional cultural value. But such myths perfectly exhibit through the performing artforms. Dhuliya performance creates a humorous environment which includes some attempts at refinement. It helps the common people for their personal and social refinement. And it creates a physical and mental recreation and abolish the physical and mental fatigue of the people. It gives some ideology to control social conflict. The idea of social control develops the social life. Such knowledge can be acquired easily only through the performing artforms. Thus the performing artforms express some advices to the common people which are too much reliable for their future development in different situations. The performer expresses such advices through the song, dance and abhinaya among the audience. Therefore, it is distinct that the song, dance and abhinaya are the important medium of communication from which learned and unlearned people acquire various types of knowledge in their life. These are successful media of communication process among the common people. Besides, these artforms communicate some information to the common people of Government work and supplies proper knowledge for national development and national integration. They communicate different knowledge of family planning, child planning, adult planning by their active performances.

Generally it is seen that while structural studies for the most part
focused primarily on the text itself, communicative studies of folklore performance concerned themselves with the interrelation between texts and situations. Both aim at discovering the symbolic codes of folklore as they relate to situations within the constraints of particular genres. Both are synchronic studies considering the holistic entities as their prime objective. While the text of a tale, or the entire narrative production of a culture, may be the whole in structural analysis, communicative research considers as holistic entities communicative events or the entire network of folkloric communication in a society. From the above discussion it can be said that the integration of the different information will contribute hopefully to the study of folklore not as a completed structured text but as the structuring of verbal symbolic expressions.

In the wider sense the central point of education is the communication between the old and the new generations. Through the communication process every person of any society learns various rules and regulations, culture, behaviour and religion of their own society. But it is clear that such knowledge can be communicated through various media particularly with the help of performing artforms. Such artforms may exhibit sympathy, identification, suggestion to the audience for which audience can be benefited. From this point of view

34. Ibid., p. 7.
it can be said that these artforms contain broad and universal aspects.

In this context language may play significant role. It is clear that any person can learn various types of knowledge through the daily communication process. Thus, it is clear that the performing artforms may play a vital role in communicating the desired social messages to the audience. This communication process transmits the traditional culture to the new youth. This communication process may give perfect service to the mass with the help of various kinds of artforms. Different types of performing artforms communicate various informations of traditional society to the rural non-elite folk who are completely ignorant in their original culture. According to performances of the artforms the common people acquires the present and past knowledge through their active action and recitation. Therefore, these artforms are very essential elements of various activities of day to day life of the people. They inform to the common people of the rites and rituals held round the year through their performances. They contain some real and universal aspects. Generally these artforms can serve both the religious urge and the social need among the folk. They can fulfil any problem of the folk through the materials of the folklore which are closely attached with song, dance and abhinaya. Evidently performance of the artforms is the perfect medium of communicating any thoughts or ideas. Performance can explain the manner of different folklore items and present these items sincerely and consciously. Thus the common
people acquire knowledge with the help of communicating process of folklore.

Besides, the artforms communicate various knowledge of Government such as department of education, administration, finance, department of medical to the common people. Generally they communicate religious, moral, social, philosophical, aesthetical and cultural information to the new generation. Because they can communicate religious matter, social fact and cultural elements with the help of song, dance and abhinaya. So to say they constitute some important component of the cultural life of the Indian society. From different points of view the performing artforms play a significant role as communicative aspect in the field of information. Specially oral communication such as explanation, description, narration, verbal illustrations are necessary for the rural folk for their knowledge development. Because oral communication is the quickest and speedy means of imparting knowledge for the non-literate rural folk of Assam. An audio-visual communication process is necessary to convey the identical messages to the different categories of people of the society. After all the art forms serve the people for good communication of knowledge. Therefore, communication process is an art and skill for knowledge development of rural non-elite folk. These performing artforms perform their own role as communicative aspect on different fields and situations.