
Geography of Folk Culture: Special reference to District Purulia, West Bengal

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Abstract

The concepts of space and place are the major fundamental geographical concepts and have very significant influence on the structure of folk culture of any geographical region. Both the oral and written literary forms of folk culture have specific "Culture Specific code" of both space and place. It is well known to us that "Folk Culture is a lively fossil which refuses to die." The folk tradition of Purulia is the great literary reservoirs, which can dictate/influence the cultural spatiality of Purulia. This paper examines the impact of different concepts of space and Yi Fu Tuan's concept of place on the literary narration of folk traditions of Purulia. This paper also intend to investigate the effects of spatial and place centric influence of literary values of different folkdances, songs and rural plays (or popularly known as Jatra) on the cultural economy and socioeconomic life of the people of this district.

KEYWORDS: "Topographical Turn", "Topophilia", "Topophobia", Geographical metaphor, "Gar Har-Mitan", "Cultural economy", different folk cultural forms like Disangs, Chow, Tushu, Bhadu, Jhumur, Tushu Satyagraha movement of 1952, Post Topophilia and Post Topophilia.

INTRODUCTION

Folk culture has some symbolic identities, which are associated with different ethnic aspiration of the world. Literary and oral text of folk culture has some distinct spatial characteristics, which are associated with any **geoethnicity**. There is mutual influence of both physical and socio-cultural geographical aspects on the narrative and literary cultural discourse of folk culture. The influence of place on literature particularly folk literature exposes the emotional attachment. Place and placelessness are the important aspects of geographical knowledge. In his book "**Place and placelessness**" (1976 London Pion) Edward Relph emphasized that the practical knowledge about place is essential for human existence and social relation between mode of production and productive force. As Charles Francis Potter said, "Folklore is a lively fossil which refuse to die" (Page1 "Jangal Mahaler Sanskriti Lok Sanskriti Adivasi Kendra" Govt. Of West Bengal Kolkata-2010). The folk tradition of Purulia is the great literary reservoir that can influence the cultural special significance of this region.

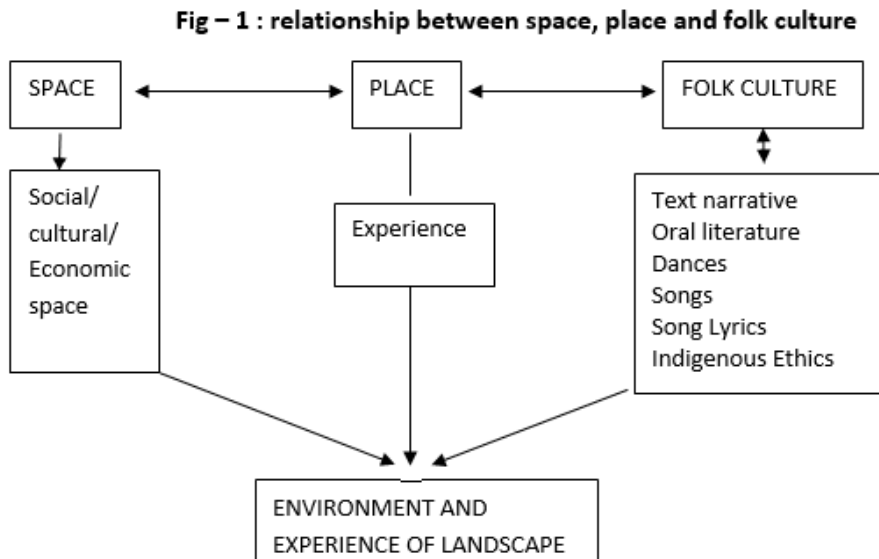
OBJECTIVES

1. Examine the influence of space and place on folk tradition.
2. Folk tradition as a spatial political weapon.
3. Post Topophilia/ Topophobia.

METHODOLOGY

1. Analysis of archival and secondary data.
2. Field survey.
3. Analysis of different aspects of folk culture.

It is well known to cultural geographers that there are close relationship between space, place and folk culture and that is shown in a schematic chart below.



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are many previous discussions on the influence of space and place on literary text and vice versa. In his book “Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, attitudes and values” (1974) Yi Fu Tuan investigates the ‘affectionate bond’ between people and place with the emphasizing on ‘ways of perceiving environment’. The broad meaning of the term “Topophilia” is ***human love for his/ her dwelling/ living place through the expression of pride (page 92 do)***. Yi Fu Tuan identified seven components of ‘Topophilia’ namely, (i) aesthetic appreciation (ii) physical contact (iii)

health and topophilia (iv) familiarity and attachment (v) patriotism (vi) urbanization and attitude to the country side (vii) wilderness (page 93 do).

The word 'Topophilia' also introduced by Yi Fu Tuan means, "Fear about landscape or loosing of fear about his/ her dwelling place."

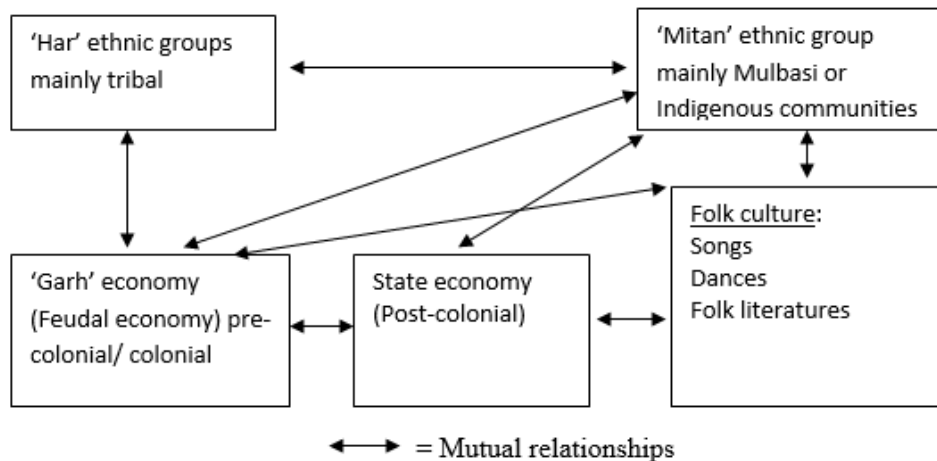
Ernest W. B. Hess Luttich wrote 'The paper draws the attention to the approach of **Jurij M Lotman** who understands text as a cultural specific code for space and symbolic space in literature as a result of culturally specific uses of signs' (page 1 Spatial Turn: On the concept of space in cultural geography and literary theory- Ernest W. B. Hess Luttich- Journal for Theoretical cartography Vol 5 2012 www meta-carto-semeotics.org)

So the influences of concept of space and place on the text of folk culture/ literature are classified into three broad categories:

- A. 'Topophilia'
- B. 'Topophobia'
- C. 'Concept of spatial turn'

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDIED AREA

Fig – 2: Relationship between 'Garh-Har-Mitan' economies with folk culture



INFLUENCE OF SPACE AND PLACE ON FOLK TRADITION

Different folk dances, songs and rural play or Jatras have made great influence on the spatial turn of the folk culture of Purulia/ manbhum region. Bhadu, Tushu, Jhumur,

Pranpakhi, Baha, Chang, Banhdhna, karam, gajon, Panchali etc. Are the different forms of traditional folk culture, which are popular among local tribal and indigenous communities? There is an example of a Santali marriage song with dance, which is the typical example of concept of 'Topophillia', shown below:

"Birburu dare sakam
Gada Sod: dare nir
Joto hate debon bachantao
Ana sangate Jalam arang Santhalang
Ary choli enech sereng
Joto boy hate debon bachao"

Bir= Forest, Buru= Hills, Dare Sakam= Tree leaves, Gada sod= Rivers, Darenir= Weeds Debon= Defence, Senthalago= Santhal tribe, Ary choli= dance music, Enech= Protect (page-23 Bazar Hembram –Dhirendra nath Baske Dipankar Ghosh: Loksanskriti and Adivasi Kendra Govt. of Wb 2010 Kolkata)

It is evident from this song that the influence of "topophillia" of Santals on their immediate dwelling environment. Indigenous tribes/ communities of Purulia are very much emotionally attached with their dwelling place particularly with their forest and immediate physical geography of hills/ Burus, small rivers (Gada God), rocks etc.

Texts of Jhumur songs are also shown the effects of 'Topophillia' and the topographical turn of the narrative through the depiction of their daily 'life world'.

"Amra Manbhum er botigo
Puruliyay Dhan Na holy
Burdwaman e Khatigo
Amra Manbhum er botigo"

(Page 99 "Purulia Nachni o Nachni nach" Dr. Jolly bagchi [Gupta] Annyatara Path o Charcha Kolkata Nov 2015)

"Amra Manbhum er botigo": Shows the sense of pride about undivided Manbhum emphasizing deep affectionate bond about their dwelling place (Topophillia).

Dhan= Rice

Khatigo= Migratory labourers/ Namaliya)

This tiny para of this Jhumur song shows the socio economic condition of the agrarian economy of Purulia by depicting 'Puruliyay Dhan Na holey' a typical example of spatial turn of the folk text. This line shows two hard realities of socio economic life of Purulia.

The rice economy of Purulia depends on two factors- (i) availability of rainfall (ii) irrigation facilities but due to the drought conditions and underdevelopment of irrigation sector agricultural development in Purulia faces several constraints with resulting effects of out migration to Burdwan (Namaliya) for search of alternative jobs and livelihood.

FOLK TRADITION AS A SPATIAL POLITICAL WEAPON

Different forms of folk traditions such as songs, dances, drama are used as **democratic political weapon** in different parts of the world. **Lok Sevak Sangha** or **LSS** a Gandhian political organization of Purulia played very significant role in the geo ethnic political mobilization for the demand in the state of West Bengal during 1952. They used folksongs, dances, music particularly the 'Tushu'/ 'Tusu' songs as a political weapon to mobilize the people in favour of their political demand. As Ernest WB Hess Luttich said ".....topographical turn focuses on the representation forms of space, the topographical turn moves the description of spatial structures, relations, positional concerns to the fore"(page 7....). The geographical (resemble as physical space) space of Purulia/ Manbhum and its geo-ethnic cultural forms such as '**Tusu/ Tushu**' songs were the main psychological motivators for the greater political movement (Bengal Merger movement initiated by L. SS). This has been expressed through a famous '**Tusu/ Tushu**' song given below:

"Shuno Bihari Bhai
Tora rakte narbi dang dekai
Tora apon tore bhed barali
Bangla Bhasay dili chari,
Bhaike bhule korli boro
Bangla Bihari buddhitayie"
Bangla Bihari Sobai
Ek Bharater apon bhai
Bangali ke marli tobu
Bish choral Hindu Tai
Ek Bharaty bhai bhai
Matri Bhasay rajya chai"

[This "Tusu" song was written by famous LSS leader ex freedom fighter and ex MP Sri Bhajahari Mahato]

The entire song is the typical example of 'Topophilia' showing its different components such as,

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- (i) "Ek Bharatye bhai bhai Matri Bhasay rajya chai"= 'Topophillia' of patriotism
 - (ii) "Shuno Bihari Bhai Tora rakte narbi dang dekal"= 'familiarity and attachment'

Patriotism of Manbhum during 1956 also expressed by the people of Purulia known as 'Topophillia' well expressed in another Jhumur song,

"Manbhum er manat thaklo nai
Gel koi Bihar ke
Tukchu bhum takli Na Banglay"
(Page 99 Jolly Bagchi, Gupta J)

POST TOPOPHILLIA/ TOPOPHOBIA?

Now questions arises that whether are there any effects of 'Topophillia' and 'Topophobia' exist in our globalized economy .There is a rapid change in the every sphere global capitalist economy. What was relevant in 1975 is not relevant in 2017. Whether this era can be termed as era of post 'topophillia' and post 'topophobia'? In this regard, some new components of spatial cultural economy of any region particularly of Purulia which are as follows:

- (i) New forms of spatial political economy where
 - (a) Labour market is flexible.
 - (b) Informal labour market is dominant than formal labour market.
 - (c) Migratory labour force who are moving to all large urban parts of India for search of permanent jobs.
 - (d) Locally migrated labour forces or "Namaliya".
- (ii) Continuous out migration from rural areas
- (iii) Dominance of popular culture in rural areas through TV, Cable networks, FM radio, mobiles (3G/ 4G – Jio sim)
- (iv) Excessive monetary supply in rural areas through different govt. schemes such MGNREGA.
- (v) Predominance of wage economy over agrarian economy.

As a result of this – all this factors are adversely effects on different forms of folk culture. It also creates lack of attachment about place/ Space (**Post Topophillia**) and lack of fear about their dwelling place (**Post Topophobia**). There is a overall confusion and contradiction in the 'life world'. We conduct a household survey at Gar Panchakot village (Janardandi gram panchayat of Neturia block, Purulia) with certain questionnaire in March 2016 and got some results which are as follows:

Table – 1: Household Participation

Household viewing / participating in both popular culture and folk culture at Gar Panchakot village (March 2018-19) [%]
A. Both viewing different popular culture and folk culture= 78%
B. Actively performing different types of folk forms= 68%
C. Only viewing folk culture= 12%
D. No leisure time= 22% to 32%
(Field survey, March 2016)

From this table-1, following facts are derived:

- (a) Both the popular culture and folk culture are still dominant in this village.
- (b) Participations in different folk forms are still very high (68%)
- (c) However, another significant factor is that nearly 22% to 32% of the respondents don't have any leisure time due to their busy engagement in economic activities.

Table – 2: Household survey of Gar Panchakot village showing % of viewing different forms of popular culture and folk culture (%)

Popular Culture (Viewing)	Folk Culture (Viewing and participation)
(a) Hindi cinema = 8%	(a) Jhumur/ Tushu/ Tusu/ Bhadu songs = 25%
(b) Bengali cinema = 8%	(b) Chow = 0.50 % (V and P)
(c) Bengali TV serials = 22%	(c) Jatra (particularly Santhali jatra) = 20%
(d) Internet through mobile = 13%	(d) Other = 0.50%
(e) radio = 3%	
Total = 54%	Total = 46%

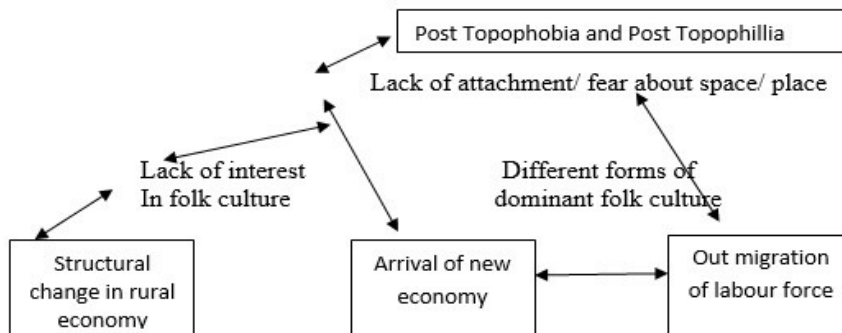
Field survey, March 2016

It is evident from the table-2 that,

- (i) More people are engaged in popular culture than folk culture.
- (ii) Different forms of popular culture are stronger than folk counterpart.

From evidence of empirical data we can construct the components of post topophilia and post topophobia which are as follows:

Fig 3: Diagram of Post Topophobia and post Topophilia



CONCLUSION

From the following discussion, it is evident that there is a close relationship between space, place and folk culture. Due to the arrival of new globalized economy, this organic relationship is felt threatened.

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