

# Structural Peripheries and Ideological Underpinnings: Performative Narration in *Par* of Pabuji

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## I

A.K. Ramanujan considers Bhakti, tantra and folklores as three alternative, coexistent systems which are part of Little Traditions (*desi/loka*) as against Great Tradition (*margi/shastra*) and invert, oppose and modify the later structures: "In fact, the three great sources of counter-structures, bhakti, tantra and folklore, all relate to each other and also have Hindu, Buddhist and Jain forms—creating overlaps, intermediate genres, indeed, 'a scale of forms.' Tantra inverts, and extreme forms of bhakti subverts; folk forms rework and domesticate the orthodox brahmanical traditions" (Dharwadker 27). The folk forms carry within them seeds of subversion which exist in consonance with their apparent social and religious conformity. These subversive elements question the socially and religiously accepted values, judgments and conventions by presentation of alternative value system both through thematic thrust as well as through their performative potential. Further, to understand folk performances and their concerns, it is not imperative to encase them within the textual gymnastics, rather we should attempt to study them as parts of the whole, which is essentially folk life and its concerns. Different manifestations of folk life such as tales, theatre, songs, riddles and jokes inherently represent one system and reflect on each other. These forms conflict and amalgamate with each other so as to qualify and intensify a vision of folk life which exists not in simple harmony but contains all the disagreements and contradictions of a dialogic imagination. Along with this internal conflict, contestation, amalgamation and transference are the processes through which the dynamic encounter of different traditions is defined within the folk culture.

The *par* of Pabuji reveals in interesting ways how a performative tradition subverts the dominant ideologies and hierarchies in a society. This folk epic can be evaluated in two ways—through analysis of its distinctive performative principles as well as through ways in which it contests the entrenched hegemonic values and ideologies inherent in social and religious spheres. The folk theatrical traditions such as the *par* of Pabuji are empirical representations and consortium of the very same impulses which make 'folk' a site of clashing value systems and implicit hierarchies. While diverse social systems maintain an uneasy equilibrium due to presence of entrenched hegemonies within caste, gender and religious spheres, the folk performances carry out a subtle reorientation of these hierarchies through example and use of divine sanction. In case of religion, folk theatrical traditions amalgamate Sanskritic myths and popular beliefs with 'peripheral' creeds such as Siddha, Tantra and Shakti worship. Within performative traditions, folk performances such as Pabuji's *par* reveal some interesting oppositions to established canonical principles of Sanskritic and western realistic theatres. They appear to propose theatrical principles based on a distinctive interpretation of space, time continuum while representing performance as a hybrid, carnivalesque spectacle wherein the audience is as much an actor as the singer/performer. The *par* of Pabuji is thus a distinctive theatrical performance which

can be understood in its relation to social, religious and performative superstructure and the instabilities and shifting revealed in mobile social/religious formations.

Pabuji, a popular warrior folk deity of North India, is worshipped through narration of his *Par* in parts of Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat. *Par* is a cloth with depictions of episodes from the life of Pabuji which acts as a transportable temple. The absence of fixed temples dedicated to Pabuji while revealing absence of sufficient liturgical process around Pabuji for the status of God under Hindu cosmology, may also be due to the life style of pastoralist Rebaries who have an itinerant lifestyle and thus instead of visiting temple “the temple visits the worshippers” (Smith, EVTEP 5) in the form of *par*. During the *vachno* of the *par*, the performer points to the various episodes from the life of the hero on *par* while singing about them in a highly performative tradition. This *Par vachno* or the reading of *par* by performers who are drawn from a particular rural low caste reveals in interesting ways how this performative tradition becomes a vehicle of subversion. This subversion occurs on two levels – on thematic as well as performative one which coalesce to contest entrenched hegemonic values and ideologies inherent in established social, religious and martial hierarchies. Further some of these performative elements exist in simultaneous relation with other extant folk traditions and reveal an atmosphere of mutuality in a particular cultural ambience.

Though Pabuji is celebrated as a Rathor Rajput in present day popular memory, he is primarily worshipped by Rebari herdsman and is sung by Nayak priests, both of whom are considered low castes in Rajasthan. Pabuji lies at the juncture of three main divisions in Rajasthani society – those of upper caste gentry comprising Rajputs and Brahmins, common populace consisting of herders and tillers and scheduled caste and scheduled tribe people. The very fact that Pabuji remains outside the pale of Brahmanical monopoly over ritual space confirms the existence of counter Brahmanical ideology inherent in this folk deity worship as well as its incompatibility with normative value structure inherent in Brahmanical Hinduism. The story of Pabuji celebrates the rise in status of a lower class through cultivation of religious and mythical sanctions.

The epic of Pabuji underlines ways in which folk epics question social hierarchies and become a medium through which the powerless subvert the existing religious and social structures of acceptance and attain sanctions and respectability through a cunning use of the same strategies which are used by entrenched social elites for prestige and power. Not only his birth which is represented in symbolic terms as outside of legitimacy conferred on rightful heir, but his position as younger son of a father who was himself younger son in his own family also positions him at a disadvantageous position against the claims of royal ascendancy. The divinity of his birth while legitimising his claims for sanctity, also hides his status as an outsider/inferior partner under the principle of primogeniture thus assigning him a position of dependency in the hierarchy of familial, social and political power.

According to Nainasi’s version of the story, Pabuji was born to Dhadhal who was a migrant from Mahevo through Patan to Kolu. At Patan, Dhadhal met an *apsara* who consented to remain with him on the condition that he would not spy on her. The motif of movement representing an unsettled state as well as an unusual marriage

between a celestial and a human being reveal an outside status from human and normative structures of the society. The traces of illegitimacy which were more apparent in the Nainasi's version of the tale underwent a process of symbolization on a temporal scale revealing a continuous movement towards deification of the folk hero. The existence of incarnations at the fringes of the society, through illegitimate birth – either through a boon or curse, while revealing the 'on the boundary' position of charismatic beings assign them a liminal position which acts as a catalyst to change from outside location, often denied to a 'within' location. The miraculous birth of Pabuji as a son of a heavenly nymph makes it possible for him to cross those injunctions of caste, religion and normative values which govern the hierarchical and status conscious society of feudalistic Rajput society.

The claim of divinity to their saints, which is used to defy and cross the hierarchies of class, caste and social position is often manipulated by subaltern sections to contest and reclaim a higher position for themselves through inversion of established religious iconography. This legitimation progresses at two levels. On the first level it seeks to put their candidature within the established normative structure by aligning themselves to it through identification and acquiescence. On the deeper level, this claim by lower classes subtly modifies and transforms the dominant code. Both these processes occur simultaneously and with no apparent contradiction. Pabuji's reverence to dominant symbols of Brahmanic Hinduism like cow veneration and respect to Brahmins aligns and cements his legitimacy within the normative values. At the same time the play provided by his identification with divinity which marks a ledge available to divine beings to modify dominant social codes, allows him to accept his companions from lower castes and obscures his own status as a lower class Rajput.

Pabuji's lack of conventional sanction to rule which belongs to his half brother, Buro Raja is compensated through his presentation as a repository of martial values of bravery and courage. Hence while Buro Raja, a proper Rajput, fails to show 'proper' qualities of courage and honour, the 'improper' king that is Pabuji, rises to the occasion and embraces those qualities which entitle him a place of honour among Rajputs. The cultivation of chivalric code by Pabuji is used to counter other deficiencies such as nobility of birth and social position within Rajput clans and thus justify Pabuji's elevation in the feudal hierarchy. The ascendancy of position is here related with individual nature of chivalry in opposition to their rigidified location in family and clan. In comparison to Pabuji, the socially legitimised king Buro fails to keep up the high code of honour demanded from a Rajput warrior by eschewing fight with Khinchi who refused to return him a wounded hare. Buro is chided by his wife for his transgression of this code:

"I would have mounted your pyre if you fell in battle  
A proud widow of a fearless king  
But you have returned with no thought of fighting  
You are afraid of the Khinchi, O Coward king" (Smith TEP 64).

The upward mobility of a low class from its powerless position towards religious and social sanctions requires projection of saintly lineage within its folds. There guardian saints must be able to bestow sanction through their place within the

interstices of religion as well as social and political denominations. The apparently contradictory demands of saint and warrior within the aspiration of the community seeking for approval from religious and political domains becomes visible in the figure of Pabuji who reveals martial traits as well as their rejection. The claim to bravery and thus an honourable position can be accomplished only through its end result of a sanctified community in religious sphere. The position of Pabuji as a saint king extols as well as undermines the dominant code of social acceptance of Rajput behaviour. While at times he seems to uphold the socially sanctioned chivalric code associated with a Rajput, a closer look reveals that he rarely follows them in practice. This escape from the net of socially sanctioned behaviour on the part of Pabuji is explained as conflict between the cosmic and human motives by Smith wherein Pabuji, as a divinely ordained being, has to deviate from man-made expectations to fulfil his cosmic expectations. Thus his pardoning of Jindrav Khinchi after the battle and his gifting of his sword to Jindrav, thus enabling his enemy to kill him, are all seen as part of double accountability of Pabuji as incarnation of Laxman, the epic hero. The deviant behaviour of many heroes in Indian classical epics is often premised upon their being part of a divine cosmic plan which explains such actions as acceptable within divine cosmology. I suggest that this contradiction can be better explained through the model of dynamic exchange between different layers of society and the expectations of a low strata of society towards social, political and religious acceptance.

The stratification of social formation as well as the nature of dynamic interactions between different layers of society, both vertically as well as horizontally, becomes visible more in folk epics than classical ones due to their close contact with rural life. As opposed to classic, folk revels in the contingency of nature and often lacks the kind of refinement which a classical epic passes through. Its being more close to experience, and not part of an evolving mythology lends it an affinity with transformative social systems. The structural nature of classical epics which tends to become self-referential and contained is contradicted by folk epic structure which is more porous and reveals the process of coming together of different pulls, social tensions and contradictions. Folk epics like Pabuji remain better situated to understand social mobility of formations which remain well hidden in classical epics due to stronger cohesive forces operating there. The result is that in folklores acceleration of social structures is more strikingly visible wherein no such attempt at synthesis has taken place. This pacing up of social formations makes Pabhi a composite character, a 'split hero' who vacillates and transgresses current social conventions.

The instability of social crusts makes Pabuji a consortium of mutually antagonistic impulses. This tension is noted by Smith: "Pâbûji the Hindu warrior opposes and overthrows the barbaric cow-killing Muslim ruler Mirzâ Khân, and protects women from attack. He maintains his honour and the honour of his family by pursuing blood-feuds (*vair*), and his nephew Rûpnâth does the same. Despite all this, Pâbûji is devoted to the principle of *ahimsâ*, non-violence. His strength derives in large measure from sexual continence: he marries, yet, by a quirk of the narrative, remains celibate." (Smith EVTEP 3). The existence of these mutually opposite impulses has its genesis in the process of deification of local heroes by a community wherein the aspirations of the upward mobile community plays a decisive role. The assignment of

brigandish qualities to Pabuji, which puzzled Smith can be located into clash between values of two segments of society. While the ritually and socially upper classes/castes in their secure positions, prescribe different value system from their upward mobile lower counterparts. While the division between sacred and secular is more pronounced in upper classes/castes, this division is more tentative and formless in those lower classes which remained at the lower rung of caste system.

At a sociological level veneration of noble brigands is a representation of a community's desire to achieve sanctity by imitating the higher caste's religious process. This desire to imitate is further qualified by a development of its own identity through myth making in which the hero is assigned some of the virtues which are found in already established class' divinities. In this process some of the core values of deities of established classes need to be contested as they have no place in the downtrodden community's area of experiences. Since the community of herders, pastoralists and agriculturalists experiences present a different world-view than established upper classes, it leads to a counter movement wherein strict rigidities of caste, class and gender are challenged and contested through the establishment of an alternative to them. The process of alternative myth creation through imitation and contestation is amply revealed in the worship of Pabuji by low castes wherein he presents an alternative to certain aspects of high culture represented by Rajputs and Brahmins. Thus Pabuji becomes a deity from a local hero due to conglomeration of the following instincts. Firstly, as a bandit he represents a challenge to the rigid and inflexible social formations which give sanctity and power to a chosen class of hierarchical superior but numerically insignificant class. Secondly, he is co-opted by Rebaries and Nayaks, as, through his worship and their claim over him as a God, they can share in his prestige and power as a class most loyal to him. My point is that the processes of contestation and borrowings go on simultaneously which result into appearance of opposite qualities of violence/non-violence, married/celibate, bandit/saint in the character of Pabuji. The following observation by Smith regarding ambiguous nature of Pabuji becomes understandable if we see him as a product of two contending social impulses: "The reason for this is that the figure of Pâbûji, as he is presented in the epic, is highly ambiguous. As well as the brigandish, pugnacious, active qualities which befit a martial hero, he has the characteristics of a *nishkalank dev* (an 'immaculate god'), and so is calm, quiescent and passive. He fights many battles — and takes no-one's life (except for Râvana's in the confessedly 'untrue' story of the raid on Lankâ). He weds a princess — and does not consummate the marriage. He rides into war against his deadly enemy — and hands him a sword with which to kill him. His character is a mass of contradictions, his story a succession of existential dilemmas." (Smith, EVTEP 62). The attribution of play of 'daiva' and 'purusha' in the character of Pabuji is symbolic of conflict between human face and divine compulsions of a divine epic hero. It reveals a contestation between religious and moral values of a dominant priestly class with those of toiling, practical masses of people outside the pale of orthodox religious terminology.

Though Pabuji' link with folk tradition is visible throughout the epic, it would not simply do to assign him a place outside the Brahmanic-Sanskritic epic tradition. Both of these traditions communicate and influence each other through myriad ways

and the epic of Pabuji exists between the juncture of the two. The amalgamation of 'little tradition' with 'great tradition' becomes possible through transference of certain values and ideas which modify both of them in the process. To say that Pabuji is a passive hero, is to ignore the process of his historical and social constructions which invariably affect him. If he does not actively kill people, it does not mean that he is incapable of or is limited by his mythical connections. He is a hero not because of his capacity to kill, if it had been the case then Dhebo would have been the right candidate for the title as it is he who annihilates many armies single handed. Pabuji's deification stems from the duality of his character which is necessitated due to ambivalence of his position. His capacity to kill makes him acceptable through prerequisite of martiality of his character while his choice not to kill connects him with higher realm of divinity. On the sociological level it is his brigand like qualities which make his identification possible with warrior classes while his pacifist attitude attunes him towards divine status and transforms him from a warrior to demi God. Thus Pabuji is worshipped chiefly due to his refusal to participate in the active killing which might entitle him to claim the title of a great warrior, but not God, a claim which can be ascertained only with his capacity to appeal to larger human identifications which come only through detachment from human affairs and a capacity for neutrality.

Pabuji's association with thori followers while foregrounding his subaltern origin also reveals transformative power inherent in the sacred to transfer its own sacrality to low and eccentric. In the version of Parbu Bhopo used by Smith these followers are seen ambivalently as fallen Rajputs while in the version of Nainasi, they are servants of Ano Veghalo who fled when they accidentally kill Ano's son on a quarrel over a dead animal. They are denied shelter by many kings both due to power of Ano as well as their low status and are accepted only by Pabuji. Thoris's inferior status leads to frequent castigation of Pabuji by the upper class Rajputs. Pabuji's sister Sona is laughed at by her husband's co-wife on this reason and her husband gives her three lashes when she defends Pabuji. When Cado takes a message of Pabuji to Mirza Khan, the later threatens to employ them according to their status in his court: "'O chieftain Cado, I shall employ Cado and Dhebo to oversee my granaries; I shall employ Pâbûji to serve in my bedchamber!'" (Smith, EVTEP 314). This threat becomes a refrain of the adversities of Pabuji whenever Pabuji sends his message for some violation of his rights. This sniggering over their caste is again employed in the comic scene wherein Harmal is offered a job of herder by king Buro when Harmal plans to leave Pabuji when he is assigned a task to spy in Lanka. This reference to lowly birth of Pabuji's followers which avoids any direct reference to Pabuji may also be interpreted as displacement of reference through the alter ego of the deity. Much of the power of epic stems from Pabuji's association with his low caste followers who defy the caste stereotypes and show a courage which supersedes blue blooded warrior clans. The real conflict which the epic underlines is between well established caste hierarchies and the aspirations of rising segment for a place within the social and religious sphere.

That the epic underlines contestation of caste and social hierarchies is further illustrated in the last scene of the epic wherein Pabuji and his followers are killed. On his journey towards heaven, Pabuji notices Deval, the goddess of fate and destruction undertaking a curious task:

Now the blood of three castes, Rebârî, Bhîl and Rajpût, was mingling in a single stream; then Deval made a bank between. She began to make a bank between, when Pâbûji, as he ascended, saw below (what she was doing, and said,) 'O goddess, I have fulfilled your oath. My life and that of the Khîncî has come to its end because of your oath; but why are you separating out this blood?' Deval considered, and said, 'O great lord, this is Bhîl blood, this is Rebârî blood, this is Rajpût blood.' (Pâbûji replied,) 'O goddess, let this blood mingle! These have died in my service, they are my own warriors: let their blood mingle. If their blood remains separate then (in future) Bhîls will not protect Rajpûts and Rajpûts will not protect Bhîls, and nobody in the world will recognise Pâbûji. Honour my oath, and let the blood of my warriors mingle!' The lady Deval heard Pâbûji's words, and, let me tell you, she broke down the bank from between (the different streams of blood). She broke down the bank, and the blood mingled" (Smith, EVTEP 322).

The epic thus moves towards explicit contestation of caste hierarchies through advocacy of amalgamation of different sections of people. Through the mingling of blood a powerful symbol of unity and oneness of people is created, which battles feudalistic tendencies.

Another aspect of contestation of rigid hierarchies is played on gender level wherein the fixities of gender stereotyping are questioned through space, role and imagery associated with female characters in the epic. Females as a force to be feared as well as despised for their divergence from male values is a characteristics of many folk epics, deriving their source from folk imagery. At surface it seems contradictory that while woman as a representation of Shakti symbolise bloodbath, gore and a primal force sanctioning death and destruction, at the same time often she is abhorred due to her weakness, softness, sentimentality and fear. This extreme idealization at both ends — a deity with destructive potential and a being of irrationality which invites censure and ridicule from more rational, physically powerful and purposeful males may be part of the same problem. The destructive potential of females invites fear as well as contempt in the eyes of males who see this universe as composed of fixed roles and places. Females due to their uncontrolled and unmapped potential pose problem to this tendency to see everything having a pre-ordained and measurable place in this universe. The suspicion that females are more easily able to cross those boundaries, which need a prophet to transgress in male world, makes patricians push them to the margins of human existence.

In the epic of Pabuji, too, we find two tendencies affecting gender portrayal. One is typically drawn from the upper caste symbology wherein females are seen within the bounds of family honour and trappings of behaviour considered suitable to her feminine self. The other contrasting movement can be located in lower caste females who are shown to occupy subject positions and play the role of agency in human endeavours. Queen Gailovat and Phulvanti subscribe to honour of Sati on burning pyre and thus validate cultural bondage of male centered values. That both of them belong to 'proper' Rajput families makes gender and caste synthesise to produce an ideology typical to Rajput chivalric code. Pema and Deval belong to another group of females who contest the code of passivity and acceptance. Though Pema becomes a token of exchange between warring kings when she was married to Jindrav Khinchi, she actively participates in the revenge of her nephew over her husband. She gives

access to Rupnath, her nephew, to her highly protected husband through revealing of all his protective secrets. On the death of her husband, she celebrates the revenge of her brother's murder through churning of his blood at midnight:

Streams of blood flowed as he cut off the head

And his aunt held out her bowl to gather the blood

Pema collected Jindrav Khinchi's blood

And poured the blood in her churning bowl (Smith 149).

Like Pema, Deval, the Charan lady, whose help is sought again and again by Pabuji throughout the action remains at the center of the epic. Deval is the propeller of the action who gives a momentum to the plot. Under the mythological account of the tale, Deval is goddess of fate whose actions push the heroes inexorably towards their fate. Along with her symbolic role, Deval retains the characteristics of a Charan woman who is bereft of severe restraints imposed on females of upper caste. Charan women are noted for their capacity to curse and hence remain a source of awe. Along with this caste and class specific characteristics, one tend to agree with Aditya Malik when he opines in relation to epic of Devnarayan that most of the females in these folk epics represent a movement between domestic and political spheres and that different positions taken by women represent a continuum rather than an opposition: "They move skilfully between interior domestic realms of marriage and child bearing and exterior political realms of battle and bloodshed, thereby showing that the borders between these realms are interpenetrating and fluid" (Malik 134).

## II

Along with thematic contestation and crossing overs, the *Par* makes use of performance to challenge and modify the established dramatic principles. The performance tradition related to *Par Vachno* contests dramatic theories connected with consideration of suspense as the cardinal point of theatre and the story as a revealed action leading to creation of cathartic effect. As in most of the folk theatres story/plot remains an undervalued component of dramatic performance which relies on impromptu action to convey sense of spontaneous pleasure. At the same time, the repetition of the story is used to emphasise familiarity with a view to enhance and emphasise continuity of cultural values. The emphasis here shifts from the story to performance which leads to better sense of enjoyment since the main outlines of the story are known and have been seen earlier by most of the audience. The audience participation through the 'hunkara' of the Bhopi or the audience gives encouragement as well as musical background to the performance. It also acts as confirmation of audience participation in the performance and reveals that the receiver end is getting the point. Another divergence related to *Par* tradition is its contestation of sequential pictorial action. The episodes on *par* are not arranged temporarily in sequence as a visual representation of temporal sequentiality but through prominent layering. These pictorial representations are used to reinforce memory and concretise verbal material. In this pictograph the same figure may be used to convey different incidents in the story. Another peculiarity of *Par vachno* is its incomplete nature where each incident has its own life. The emphasis on performance gets revealed through narrative mode



of treating episodes as complete units and juggling of them without affecting the unity and coherence of the plot. No tears are shed here for sacrificing the organic unity of the performance and exigencies such as time and audience's convenience becomes important. This self sufficiency of episodic nature of Par vachno goes against the received notion of episodic plot as inferior to organic plot. It does not suffer from weakness of divided plot as its aim is not to produce 'pity and fear' but to relieve a sense of togetherness in a cultural ambience of continuity and acceptance. Since the completion of performance is not the end, presentation of one incident from the whole story and the episodic nature of performance does not mar the unity of the piece. The par also may acts as a device to seal off the fourth direction as audience can sit only in three directions. The Par acts as background curtain with a difference that the curtain gets alive and act as a participant in the story unlike the static background curtains in plays. The par presents another alternative dimension to the story by revealing the story through another medium of representation. It would be important to note that in most of folk performances, the audience sit on three sides of the platform, though there is no restriction on sight, the forth direction is psychologically and physiologically out of bounds since it represents the backward glance which is often prohibited in these plays.

The frequent insistence of audience on presentation of certain episodes in preference to others signifies performance as primary while relegating story to the secondary importance. What motivates the audience is how well the performer recites or acts and not how well he knows or reveals the secrets of the plot. The vachno as a performance along with its treatment of details as a framework to be memorised and produced keep the epic alive as well as communicable. The oral form of the epic makes it imperative for performers to make use of certain strategies for its dissemination in a certain form wherein fixity of set formulas is balanced by on-the-spot creation of divergences. The compulsion of first task leads to removal of too much ups and downs from the plot and gives a plain linearity to it. It does not signify that the story is without its climaxes, what is foregrounds is that these climaxes are reported along with many other commonplace details and without emotional crescendo thus giving equal importance to all parts of the narration. That is why seemingly trivial details are emphasised as much as the 'high' points of the story. The narratology of par vachno misses catharsis through arousal of dramatic emotions and seeks to produce an understanding in the audience which is both religious and secular. The surprise of scholars like Smith over the lack of contrasting points in epic narration, thus producing a kind of relief map wherein "all the details are there, nothing is missing, but there is no longer any contrast between high and low country — what was a mountain with a sharp summit is now a smooth plain to be traversed in a series of measured steps" (Smith, EVTEP 15) can be understood in convergence between folk and Sanskritic dramatic principles. The little and great traditions assimilate here to give expression to dramatic aims which are significantly different from dominant western theatrical tradition. The Rasa theory of Natyasastra aims not to lead the audience towards purification of troublesome emotions but revels in the total mood of performance wherein there is a connection and understanding between the players and audience. One can detect the same lack of Jack and Jill movement in both Sanskritic theatre as

well as Par vachno. Neither of them show death through stage/narration as well as take as much time over seemingly simple details as on 'dramatically significant' details.

An alternative hypothesis can be that the epic rendition aims at different audience and arises from alternative experience. Since the par arises from a contestation of social, political and aesthetic narrations, it begins from different possibilities and different value judgments. The social location of the epic in the lower classes with a need to challenge the hegemonic formations leads its development in different direction. Hence the 'high' points and 'low' points of the drama connote differently here wherein the prominence sought to be given to bravery and battle faces challenge from a location which questions their normative formation located in a particular elite cultural group. This contestation does not simply imply that the epic was produced consciously by the lower classes with an aim to challenge these values; the conflict of interests is more complex here. While undeniably, there is a contestation of hegemonic values which see Rajput valour as the ideal and the only defining trait of a warrior, there is amalgamation of these very values into those sections of society which had nothing to do with them except perhaps being the passive recipient of instability and destruction these conflicts brought to society at large. The flatness of narrative has a contemporary parallel in dalit writers's refusal to use the stylization and received aesthetic responses to reveal their experience in a caste ridden society. The use of flat, unornamented language for them becomes a more powerful and factual medium to convey the barrenness of their existence and conveys a protest against aesthetic excesses of upper castes: "These narratives seek to capture the authentic Dalit experience through a minute chronicling of the smallest detail of daily life in a language that, as Limbale terms it, is crude, impure and uncivil. It is as if, by capturing each detail, and reproducing it deliberately in a language that is the opposite of the language of upper caste literature, the Dalit writer will convey the essence of Dalitness. (Limbale 12)

The use of 'place' as a significant marker of performance replaces 'time' as a vehicle of dramatic narration. The differing emphasis on time and place gives birth to two diverse kinds of dramatic productions located in cultural experiences. While in Greco-Roman civilization the location of events in time led to creation of discourses of history and natural sciences wherein time is a linking chain and a yardstick for events, in many Eastern cultures location became more important than time. That is why under Eastern civilizations, the physical locality of sacred births and events evokes stronger religious sentiments than their location on the time frame of linear human civilizational progress. This tendency to prioritize geography over time also spills over in theatres like the par performances where the par locates scenes on the basis of their geographical location on the cloth and not on the scale of temporal linearity. The corollary of this principle is that it reveals a disjointedness of time. It goes against consideration of time as glue which combines two events together wherein the glue is considered opaque making frog jumps through time impossible. In contrast, in Indian folk theatres time as a unit of progression and measurement is of no significant consideration and becomes an elastic commodity. That is how in folk theatres boundaries of time are surpassed easily and in the par one representation may be used many times for depicting different incidents of the story located on divergent time scale.

In conclusion, the Performative aspect of Par *Vachno* is revealed through audience participation, bodily gestures, frequent dancing as well as modulations in the voice of the singer. The audience too does not sit idle throughout the reading and frequently comments on the action. The use of bow to point at pictorial representations of the par and the tripping of hunkario by a deliberate use of a different word, brings it to the level of performance connecting it with folk theatrical performances. Though the overall texture of the performance seems religious, it would not be correct to assume the separation between divine and secular as seamless. In folk performances these two spheres interpenetrate and qualify each other through presentation, mood of players/audience as well as through performative ambience. Sacred here does not carry the feeling of holy dread but a commonplaceness, a togetherness wherein the most sacred things can be exchanged with puns. It gives folk performances like Par *Vachno* a slippage under the most stringent social, religious and performative conventions thus making them a vehicle of alternative possibilities and change in the society.

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