Mittal Patel is the initiator and coordinator of ‘Vicharata Samuday Samarthan Manch’ – the DNT-NT Rights Activism wing of Janpath – the wellknown Ahmedabad based NGO.

Honourable Shri Morari Bapu has agreed to deliver a Katha (a religious narrative) for the nomadic and denotified tribes in March 2011. The katha is an opportunity for these communities to make the society feel their presence, to make the society aware about their past, present and future, and about the problems they are facing now. Pujya Moraribapu has given this opportunity to the community. This could be a great medium to make people aware about the services rendered by these communities to the society for ages and now when the communities are living a life of distress and anonymity and are uprooted from the society, time has come to make people sympathise towards these communities and to make them think for the upliftment of these communities. In order to prepare the artists from the communities to perform at the time of the katha, a workshop was organised at Grambharti, Amrapara, Dist. Gandhinagar, during 12th to 14th November 2010.

Introduction

There are 313 Nomadic and 198 De-notified tribes in India. Most of these communities are located in the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. If we look at the historical background of these communities one can understand how important a role they have played in the society. The communities like Kangsiya, Saraniya, Gadliya, Waghari, Ghantiya, Chamta,
Vansphoda etc. used to provide various kinds of services to the society. Another group of these communities was of entertainers. Communities like Bhavaiya, Bajaniya, Nat, Madari, Nath, Bharthari, Turi, Bhand etc. catered the need of entertainment to the society with their art and culture, when TV and radio was not known. When they came to village for entertainment people used to welcome them and accommodate them in village temples. For next few days they used to entertain the village and in turn were receiving gifts in form of grains like Jowar, Bajri, Wheat, etc; and also clothes and other necessary things. In this way culture and art was their source of livelihood and respect.

Advent of modern technology like radio and television has made these entertaining communities irrelevant and they lost their livelihood. Now the entertainment is available at the click of a TV-remote. Now people do not prefer to see their performances for entertainment. The present condition of these communities is worst. Though a few members of the Vadi, Barathari, Nat, Bhavaya communities are still continuing their traditional occupation of entertainment, they are not getting sufficient income and the respect from the society out of this. Devoid of livelihood they are struggling to fulfil their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. But still they are preserving their art. They are not getting opportunities to present their art due to lack of support, financial constraints and awareness. An effort is being made by VSSM to provide them a platform and to make them relevant in the present scenario. Many hands have come forward to support the huge task. With the help of all of these, Vicharta Samuday Samarthan Manch(VSSM), working with 40 such Nomadic and De-notified tribes, had organised a workshop of a few artists from various communities of NT-DNT.

The Programme

More than 150 artists from 8 districts of Gujarat participated in the programme. Shri Lal
Rambhia from ‘Kutchh Sangeet Sadhak Sangh’ and Mulchandbhai Lalan from Mumbai came to train these artists. They taught them especially stage confidence and stage behaviour. These artists were from different nomadic and de-notified communities like Bhaivaya, Nat, Bharathri, Vadi, Dafer, Turi, Bajaniya, Raval, Nath, Garudi, Bava Bairagi etc. They shared a common stage for three days to perform their folk arts.

Performances:

1. **Deshi Dhol**: A group of young nomads performed Deshi Dhol beats with interesting dancing styles. They presented twenty two types of dhol beats with dance. It was amazing to know that the simple instrument was used in different styles for different moods and occasions. A few of the styles are – beats for Ganesh Sthapna, Marriage Dhol, Fera, Garbha Dhol, Marachi Dhol, Teen Tali Dhol, Rajasthani Tal, Shehnai dhol, Smashan Dhol, Jashan, Sanedo etc.

2. **Beda Dance**: Beda dance is traditional dance of ‘Nat’ community. This dance was one of the attractions of the programme. It is a unique kind of dance. A man with 8-9 ‘Bedas (water pots)’ on his head dances wearing a sari. Ishwarbhai, Mugatlal and many other artists performed this dance. Their steps were very akin and impressive. The audience loved this dance very much and reswponded with big applause.

3. **Kacchi Ghodi**: Three generations of the same family danced by keeping their legs into a big artificial horse.

4. **Shehnai**: A Group of nomadic communities played Shehnai and created beautiful atmosphere.

5. **Bhungal**: Members of Bhaivaya and Turi communities performed this item. Bhungal is a traditional instrument being played at the time of the performance of Bhavai.
6. **Marachi Dance:** Marachi dance was another attraction of the programme. Twelve girls performed this dance. They were well prepared and danced on rhythm of Dholki, Shehnai with a Marachi song sung by two girls among them.

7. **Hathi Dance:** This dance requires more place to perform. Six persons performed this dance in an open ground. One person walking on bamboo sticks wearing a big mascot of an elephant. It surprisingly gave a feeling that an elephant is coming and a person is sitting on it. The others in the group proceeded in procession with music and flags. It was worth to see it.

8. **Ravan Hattho:** ‘Bharathri’ is a Nomadic tribe which plays the ‘Ravan Hattho’- a string instrument, an instrument made up of wood and a shell of coconut. At a time thirteen people from Bharathari community performed with instrument on stage along with their folk song.

9. **Mevda Dance:** ‘Talvar’ was a weapon used in war to kill the enemies. But here on this stage nomads used it to entertain the society. Group of twenty people danced on rhythm of Dhol and Shehnai with ‘Talvar’ in their hand.

10. **Morli Vadan:** Vadi community plays the Morli-the traditional instrument played to make a snake swing and dance. ‘Vadi’ a snake charmer community lost their occupation due to ‘Wild Life Protection Act 1972’. After the implementation of the act this community has been prohibited to catch the snake. Therefore, most of the members of this caste stopped to play the Morli. At the workshop two groups of Vadi community played Morli and made the audience dance like a snake.

11. **Ganesh Stahapna:** Two different groups belonging to different nomadic communities sung a song of god Ganesha at the beginning of the programme.

**Final performances**

During the workshop the artists learnt a lot of things from Shri Lal Rambhia and Shri Mulchand Lalan. They learnt discipline, punctuality, stage behaviour. They gained confidence and better style and techniques to put their art in more presentable form. On the third day of programme all artists showed their final performances. They performed in front of
Grambharati staff, a group of participants of a literature workshop, local public, well-known writers like Shri Raghuvir Chaudhari, Shri Mansukh Salla, Shri Madhav Ramanuj and Shri Kishor Gaud and other invitees. For many of the spectators this was a never-seen-elsewhere performance. It has some indigenous flavour and fragrance. They stood amazed with such a fantastic performance.

Conclusion:

1. This was a first of its kind programme organised for the artists belonging to the lowest strata of the society. They could make it felt to the viewers that they are having such a rich culture of art by birth and they inherit this tradition from older generations. The response from the artists was very positive. They were happy with the exposure they got from the workshop. A few of them were performing on stage for the first time. They also requested for more such trainings for them in future.

2. This programme also provided a shared platform for all Nomadic and De-notified tribes. All artists from different communities lived under one roof, shared their happiness, sorrows and culture with one another for three days. All of them assisted each other in their performances.

3. It was a learning process for VSSM too as VSSM too for the first time stepped into the cultural aspect of these communities. This was the first of its kind programme organised by VSSM. As an organisation also we have a long distance to run. There are still aspects on which we need to strengthen ourselves. Having faced the challenges posed during the workshop we got distracted a bit during the workshop. But with the support of well-wishers and love from the community as well as from the people outside we could regain our confidence. We learnt more about management and programming skills from this cultural programme workshop.

4. We are planning to organise two more of such training programmes within next few months before the katha. The objective is to put before the society their rich cultural tradition and the services they made to the mainstream society for ages. It is also to make them confident about their art, to put their art in presentable form in the contemporary scenario and to enable them to earn livelihood through their art. Many other artists who have missed this programme also want to participate in such programmes. Very soon a
second workshop of this kind is to be organised by minimising the errors we faced in this workshop. If you can be helpful in any way for these workshops please feel free to contact us.

A summary of Expenses incurred at Manoranjan Kala Mahotsav 2010 are as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Food expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Incentive and Travelling of artists</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Sound</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Costumes (for Mevda and Marachi groups)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,73256</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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The VSSM team with the participants of the workshop

Our Sincere Thanks to:

Grambharti Institute, Shri Lal Rambhia, Shri Mulchandbhai Lalan, Kutch Kala Sadhak Sangh

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