A GLANCE AT FOLK PERFORMANCE AND NON-NATIVE AUDIENCE

Niraj Kumar [1] ✉ iD, Subhashree Sahoo [2] ✉ iD, M. Ramakrishnan [3] ✉ iD

[1, 2] Research Scholar, Department of Tribal Studies, Central University of Jharkhand, Cheri-Manatu, Ranchi – 835222 (Jharkhand), India
[3] Assistant Professor of Folklore, Department of Tribal Studies, Central University of Jharkhand, Cheri-Manatu, Ranchi – 835222 (Jharkhand), India
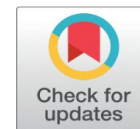
ABSTRACT

Performance is an interesting subject of study, and it is the point of intersection for many academic fields within humanities and social sciences. The studies on performance, thus, could provide opportunities for exploring different aspects of human behaviors and their creative reflections on the matters that are intrinsic to the concept of performance. In pursuit of performance studies, one could come across various knots that connect performance with every aspect of the socio-cultural life of people by redefining the stereotypical notions of "stage", "actors" and "audience." Further, the studies on performance could not be placed on a single trajectory as several approaches, perspectives and orientations that have emerged ever since the delimitation of performance happened by opening up its boundary for interdisciplinary studies lead by the undefined 'performance studies' of Richard Schechner. However, by dealing with the performance as a live presentation in all perceived forms of "stages", a significant question has been asked in this paper as a token of beginning on the "problematic" presence of audience as outsiders (non-native and non-belonging) who, by their nature of reception and response, are understood as those who have no concern either for the performance or for the performers. While each form, in the folkloristic sense, is comprising of its natural context along with a dedicated or defined audience, it seems to be a surprising phenomenon as it developed over a period of time as a result of the prodigious and irresistible globalization process. Thus, the unintended and unsolicited transformation, as an impact of globalization, in the traditional and modern performances has shaped the nature and role of 'audience', making it an insignificant and irrelevant entity for the consumption with aesthetic appreciation and conviction on the values demonstrated. So, this article problematizes the nature of audience in the decontextualized performance context by drawing insights from performance studies, semiotics, and other cognate disciplines. Based on the insights drawn from the fieldwork on Sarhul festival held in Ranchi district a few years ago, this paper argues that the role of audience cannot be understood unless there is a clear perspective on the nature of performance and performance tradition as defined by the community.

Keywords: Cultural Competence, Text, Communication, Decoding, Performance, Perlocutionary Act, Celebrations

Usually, people say that a truly artistic show will always be unique,
impossible to be repeated: never will the same actors,
in the same play, produce the same show.
Theatre is Life.
People also say that, in life, we never really do anything
for the first time, always repeating
past experiences, habits, rituals, conventions.
Life is Theatre.

(Augusto Boal, in Schechner (2013): vi)

1. INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE

Performance is a broadest concept that has always been encountered in academics, and yet it is not an undefined and unfinished one in any of the fields of enquiry within the humanities and social sciences. But it could not be stated that the concept has been explored without leaving any iota of place for further studies, that is, it is explored as must as it is unexplored. It occupies the present tense in terms of its dynamism of existence and becomes the event of the past when it comes to a study. The *Eighth Edition of Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010) defines performance as "the act of performing a play, concert or some other form of entertainment", "the way a person performs in a play, concert, etc.", "how well or badly do something; how well or badly something works", and "an act that involves a lot of effort or trouble, sometimes when it is not necessary." It is defined by the *Dictionary.com* as "a musical, dramatic, or other entertainment presented before an audience"; "the act of performing a ceremony, play, piece of music, etc."; "the execution or accomplishment of work, acts, feats, etc."; "a particular action, deed, or proceeding"; "an action or proceeding of an unusual or spectacular kind"; "the act of performing"; and "the manner in which or the efficiency with which something reacts or fulfils its intended purpose." As part of the definition, it (*Dictionary.com*) mentions the usage of the term (performance) in the field of Linguistic as "the actual use of language in real situations, which may or may not fully reflect a speaker's competence, being subject to such non-linguistic factors as inattention, distraction, memory lapses, fatigue, or emotional state." Although it accommodates many things as a way of its inclusiveness, it needs to be restricted to a few for a matter of convenience which can streamline the objective of this article to focus on the elements or parts of performance. As such, it can be confined to an act of performing something (with a broadly defined purpose) – it could be an action, a task, a function, a concert, play, ritual, etc., for the (broadly defined) audience. It may clarify without any ambiguity if the term is understood within one or two fields of enquiry. Some of the fields such as Folkloristics, Anthropology, Performance studies, and Theatrical studies could be seen as having an intersection on the matter of performance, and performance, for them, turns out to performing arts by becoming a complete entity that takes part in a communication between the performer (or a group of performers) and an audience (understood as a countable singular or plural noun) with a form of art or ritual or event. To treat performance as a communication process needs discussion on the nature of effective communication, or effective performance in other words, which is an interesting point and it falls within the objective of this study, is handled in the forthcoming pages.

Generally, performance cannot be seen in isolation, that is, it is very much part of society. This statement warrants that the participatory elements in performance

could be seen as part of a society, so they can be put into a serious study to understand the social behaviour of people in a given society. Performance is always considered as the product of a performer, so study on performance must focus in a broader level by accommodating various elements including performers, audience, social and cultural settings on which the whole performance is established. In performances there is always a transition of people who take up different roles or position within the frame of a performance, for example, when some people become actors to be performed on stage, others occupy as audience. In this context, Goffmans says that "a performance [...] is that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offence and looked to for engaging behaviour, by persons in an 'audience role'" (1986:124). It could be the reason for Dell Hymes in his unpublished paper (1973) mentions that "And there is a sense in which *performance* is an attribute of any behaviour, if the doer accepts or has imputed to him responsibility for being evaluated in regard to it" (quoted in Hymes (1973), 124 cf. Goffman (1986)). But for Richard Schechner, performance belongs to two broader categories: artistic performance and cultural performance, and among the two categories, the former refers to solo or group performances of art, performance of literature, theatrical storytelling, plays, and performance poetry and the latter category accommodates events of everyday life such as rituals, ceremonies, festivals, social performances, individual performances etc. Any performance makes the division between performer and audience, and also it defines the role of audience at beginning itself. It is not simply about the role and nature of participation in the performance is defined, but the physical space is also divided to ensure the divide between performer and audience mediates without conflicting. In not all the performance forms, the audience has any obligation in the matter of performance or at least they do not have overlapping or conflicting manifestation. Or in other words, the role of each actor or performer in a given performance is defined and this definition is communicated clearly to the audience in a way to make the performance clear and 'confusion-free.' In the actual sense, the definition of the character or role of a performer is also necessary to identify the person who appears on the stage to fulfil his or her role, as the character on the stage than the actual person who has existence in real life. It is clearly pointed out in the writings of Goffman, who suggests that "an individual employed in stage acting will demonstrate at least a dual self, a stage actor (who seeks help from the prompter, cooperation from other members of the cast, response from the audience) and a staged character. But what about the individual who is part of the "theatrical audience"? What elements does he possess?" Goffman (1986)

The performance creates an unreal world with the scripted characters and also with the agreement with the audience; the performers give them over the characters. The actors through their effective performance raise their level to the script writer's characters and themes, "appreciating allusions for which he doesn't quite have the background, marital adjustments for which he doesn't quite have the stomach, varieties in style of life for which he is not quite ready, and repartee which gives to speaking a role he could not quite acceptable for it were he to find such finery in the real world" Goffman (1986). Whether it is in theatre productions or on any other form of performances, immediately after the final stage of the performance, the persons performed as characters as per the script or appeared as a make-believe, must appear in front of the onlooker or audience by setting aside the cast to be appreciated or greeted by the audience for their appearance as characters. For example, a female performer who performed a role of a male detective, for example with the costume, will appear on the last stage as a fine female to get appreciation from the audience. The implication of this final stage after the

performance is over, is used to construct two points that the real-life persons who have performed the unreal characters on the stage as per the script must tell the audience who have done what role of the characters, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the audience must leave the place of the performance by leaving the characters on the stage itself and go with the memory of the experiences of the real persons who did complete the unrealistic characters on the dais – that is the unreal characters performed by the real performers will be left to disappear on the stage only. Thus, audience leaves the auditorium with the impact created by the characters, not by the real persons who performed as a specified character. It is also another point that invites to discussion on the nature of audience – when performance or play is over, it is over there itself with little impact/implication for the performers (significantly or insignificantly), but the disbursal of the audience in a multidirectional way to the unspecified distance could tell that the attention on the audience must not be considered as unimportant by thinking that they are merely the onlookers.

2. PERFORMANCE AS A MODEL

The nature and structure of performance as an art form or as a play, helps to study a large part of human behaviour in social life, and it has become a fashion in understanding the social and cultural events that occupy their everyday life. For example, as Schechner mentions that "[t]heater is only one mode of a continuum that reaches from the ritualization of animals (including humans) through performances in everyday life - greeting, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on - through to play, sports, theatre, dance, ceremonies rites and performance of great magnitude" (1988: 1-2). There is an advantage of seeing everyday life from the performance perspective and it expands the horizon for performance studies to accommodate more size of data so that the nuances of human behaviour could be understood, and the mystery of individual complexity could be unearthed. And it augments the fact that more than the role of a performer, the engaging behaviour of an audience must be seen as a problematic one which warrants an in-depth study in perceiving the audience, not in opposition to the performer on the one hand and it is not as a category of passivity and mute on the other hand. However, by employing theatrical performance as model to understand social and cultural events, it is not to deny that "theatre" in the postmodern sense is the reflection of a "multi-disciplinary matrix" and thus it elements from various sources that belong to different disciplines including folklore and semiotics. Indeed, the emergence of performance-approach might have promised to explore everyday social life, but it has resulted in a lot of confusion by failing to define its boundary and without its boundary is defined, it cannot define its stand it relation to other disciplines. The performance studies is identified very much with Richard Schechner (1966), Schechner (1973), Schechner (1974), Schechner (1978), Schechner (1985) etc), its origin could be traced since Bateson (1955), Austin (1955, 1962), Goffman (1959), Hymes (1967), Victor (1969), Don (1974), Moore et al. (1977), Bauman (1977) etc., and later contributions of Stuart Blackburn, Richard Frasca (1984), etc., contributed to the study of performance. Moreover, the creation of performance theory has relied on a model of the theory that draws its input from a network of ideas from the cognate disciplines that are potential to study performance independently or in association with other disciplines at interdisciplinary platforms. The interesting aspect of the performance theory as per Richard Schechner is that it falls under the social science framework, and he cautions that it cannot be treated merely as aesthetics. However, the aesthetics

cannot be ruled out in the display of or manifestation of performances, at all levels, but the performance theory must not be restricted to or limited to the aesthetics alone which will result in the missing of a social dimension to the elements involved in the performance. For Schechner, performance theory provides two perspectives: the first looks at individual and social human behaviour as a genre of performance and the second perceive performance as a kind of personal or social interaction. He mentions that "These two realms, or spheres, can be metaphorically figured as interfacing at a two-way mirror. From one face of the mirror persons interested in aesthetic genres peep through at 'life'. From the other side, persons interested in the 'social sciences' peep through at 'art'" (1985:296). His identification of seven key areas ('1. Performance in everyday life, including gatherings of every kind; 2. The structure of sports, ritual, play and public political behaviours; 3. Analysis of various modes of communication (other than the written word), semiotics; 4. The connection between human and animal behaviour patterns with an emphasis on plays and ritualized behaviour; 5. Aspects of psychotherapy that emphasize person to person interaction, acting out, and body awareness; 6. Ethnography and prehistory - both of exotic and familiar cultures; and 7. Construction of unified theories of performance, which are, in fact, theories of behaviour') (1973:3) are significant for dealing with performance theory exclusively and coherently. In the post-war scenario, there were much anthropological research by Western scholars that contributed to shaping the perspectives on performances. Akshara writes that that "The most important development in the Western responses to the oriental theatre, during the late 1950s and early 1960s is the dominance of anthropological research as a whole. Many of these anthropologies, ethnological and folklore research on the oriental society involved subjects like a ritual, community activity and cultural behaviour which in turn, often included theatre in their scope. This influenced theatre researchers in general, and they began to use cultural anthropology as a necessary discipline, borrowing specially, its methodology. As a result, often the world theatre was replaced by the world performance, which included everything from religious ritual to sports and popular gatherings" (1984:47). Thus, performance and performance theory has brought into focus various aspects of human social life and its cultural and creative expressions.
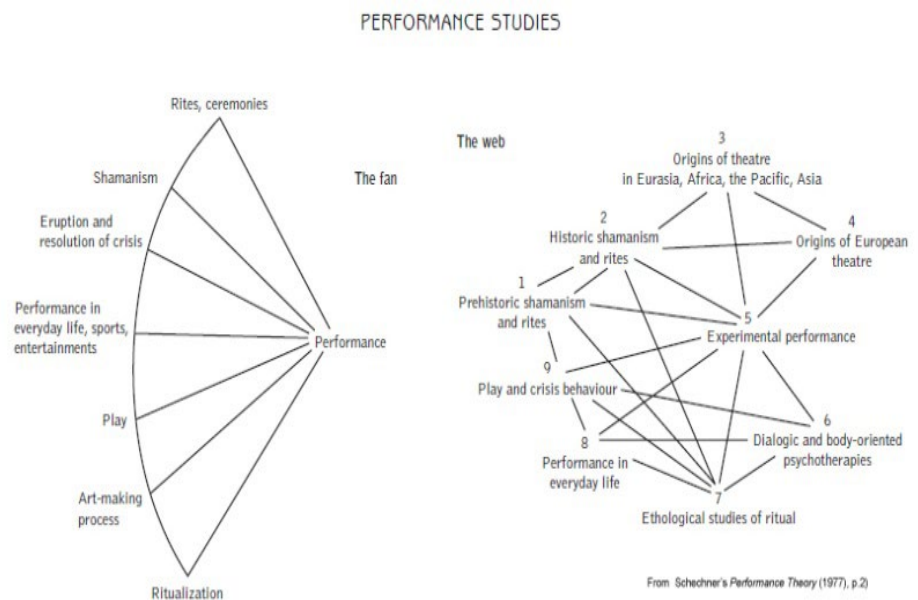

Figure 1 Performance Studies

The study of performance, or performance theory, implied that the performance belongs to the real of either culture or social human behaviour, that is, it has not reflected the point that performance is part of a society. In other words, society as a whole provides ground on which performances are exhibited, that is, a performance cannot be ignored of its sociological function. It is a clear move, as even indicated by Schechner by rejecting idea of application of aesthetics to performance that tries to uphold the importance of sociological discourse in exploring the social structure and its undercurrents revealed in the performances. The elements of performance such as dramatists, directors, performers, spectators, technical persons etc., cannot be seen in isolation that is, they must be seen as reflecting some aspects of society or social institutions. Similarly, role-playing, scenes, settings, acting and actions of performances are a good amount of data for understanding society. The sociology of performance emerged as a subfield in performance studies, and it became a thriving force in reflecting on the nature of performance as an extension of social life, that is, the social rules and norms are not omitted even in the performance. The text or the narrative text taken up for the performance could be seen as constructed as a fictional one with fictional characters operating in the fictional environment, but they never fail to reflect the social world. For Schechner, the fictional theatre never had an interaction between the actors and the audience, but they are believed to maintain a socio-physical distance as part of the social system. And thus, Schechner introduced 'event' – 'space' – 'time' under the sociological boundaries in order to understand everything from rituals to social dramas including sports. The identification of these common elements changed the perspectives and orientation towards all events that happen in everyday life, and moreover, it resulted in the comparison of one event with another at different levels on the one hand and taking one element from one form and finding it similarity in another form. For example, a shaman from a ritual performance is compared with the actor of theatrical performance, and similarly, the complexities emanated from rituals such as ritual procedures, gestures, texts, arrangements, choreographic aspects are compared with the other performative forms including sports and theatrical play. More than comparison, seeing one element in another could be considered as noteworthy as the inner meaning and human purpose of having various forms in the different realms could be understood. (For comparison be ritual with theatrical form, see Panikker (1985). Or the use of performance a point on which many things have been logically connected to produce a form could be seen in when Schechner (1977: 2) tried to understand the seven key areas (Ritual, Ceremonies; Shamanism; Eruption and resolution of crisis; Performance in everyday life; sports, entertainment; Play; Art-making process; and Ritualization) of performance theory as a fan. Conversely, the Environment theatre (1977:2) proposed by him showed the interconnection between various elements such as Prehistoric shamanism and rites; Historic shamanism and rites; Origins of theatre in Eurasia, Africa, the Pacific, Asia; Origins of European theatre; Contemporary environmental theatre; Dialogic and body-oriented psychotherapies; Ethological studies of ritual; Performance in everyday life; and play and crisis behaviour. And, each form of performance is somehow shows a kind of interconnection with each other, that is, no form is in isolation and it has been well explained with the influence of Richmond et al. (1990) with the spheres of performance genres that had a ritual, classical, modern, devotional and folk/popular as their components. The intersections that can be seen between these forms could also be considered as laying the foundation for making performance an interdisciplinary study. Since it relates too many things, though, in a logical way, it gives rise to speculation of

instability over the boundary-less performance studies. However, it is a fertile field that has more contemporary relevance in handling and relating many of the everyday human creative expressions and other social behavioural manifestations.

On the nature of performance, Schechner writes that "performances occur in many different instances and kinds. Performance must be construed as a "broad spectrum" or "continuum" of human actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media, and the internet" (2013:2). In the case of performance, the historical flexible limit has been identified by Schechner and it has played a great role in taking what is performance and what is not. In the engagement with the performance, along the continuum, while new genres are added, and others are dropped. His brief definition of performance is noteworthy that "the underlying notion is that any action that is framed, enacted, presented, highlighted, or displayed is a performance. Many performances belong to more than one category along the continuum" (2013:2). Interestingly, this definition clearly points out that there is a need of intercultural handling of embodiment, action, behaviour, and agency which are part of performance studies. It opens up the boundary of the performance studies to realize the ongoing fact that cultures don't function in isolation, but they interact with each other also tend to produce hybridity to manage the day-to-day interactions, and the intersections that results out of constant interaction does not dilute the differences among cultures, because these differences are essential in order to retain their cultural identities which will facilitate the smooth exchanges and interactions. There are many factors that have been considered as the undercurrent for making these interactions between cultures, synonymous with human interactions. It is another point that drives the nature of the objective of this paper towards exploring the characteristics of the interaction between the audience and the performance.

Going by discussions given here one could understand that performance is a too general term that encompasses a large part of our everyday life. Can we understand a performance in terms of non-performance? In an extended mode of understanding, can we say that non-performance as also a performance? Similarly, when 'being' is understood either 'active' or 'static', 'linear' or 'circular', 'expanding' or 'contracting', 'material' or 'spiritual', how do we place it in opposite to "doing"? In the lens of performance studies, both are on the same platform; while former is 'existence itself' and the latter is the 'activity of all that exists.' Schechner (2013) However, the complexity arises when performance is seen as created from bits of restored behaviour without being able to be reproduced as it is and in a way making it each performance is either as different or as unique. The components that involve in a performance and become constituents of it restrict its duplication or reproduction in ditto, and Schechner gives reasons for that "the uniqueness of an event does not depend on its materiality solely but also on its interactivity – and the interactivity is always in flux" (2013: 30). It is applicable to all forms of performances that, according to Schechner, 'occur in eight, sometimes in separate, sometimes in overlapping situations' such as '1. in everyday life – cooking, socializing, "just living"; 2. in the arts; 3. in sports and other popular entertainments; 4. in business; 5. in technology; 6. in sex; 7. in ritual – sacred and secular; and 8. in play' (2013). And he admits that one could find the list is not an exhaustive one as further theoretical exploration can add more situations. Another interesting point that finds significant in framing the objective of the paper is that the concept of restored behaviour. The restored behaviour could be understood as the reconstruction of living behaviour independent of its causal systems, and rehearsal

plays an important role as a first step in the restoration process of item that has been taken out of its social and cultural context. For Schechner, it is the "key process of every kind of performing, in everyday life, in healing, in ritual, and in the arts" (Schechner 2013:34). And "it is marked, framed, and separate, restored behaviour can be worked on, stored and recalled, played with, made into something else, transmitted, and transformed" (Schechner 2013:35). When the restoration happens, the restored behaviour is rearranged or reconstructed without making it known the original truth or source of the behaviour, or they might have been lost or ignored, or contradicted, but with giving due honour to "truth" or "source" (Schechner 2013:34), the condition of the audience must be the issue of contention. The restored behaviour becomes a complex issue in the case of emic performances which are presented as 'marked', 'framed', or 'heightened' but the components are not known to the audience. The storytelling event or rituals or cultural performances of lesser-known communities, for instance, indigenous or tribal communities, or at least any marginalized communities, the restoration of performances will be the presentation of entirely emic life rather than etic one. Unless the audience or spectators are informed prior to the performances, they will not be able to understand what is going on in front of them. It is like the spectators are expected to be familiar themselves with the rules of the game before they go to watch the event. When emic performances are performed, the restored behaviour will be a difficult task for the non-native spectators or audience since there are many symbolic and reflexive things that need to be decoded by them and that is they need to acquire the knowledge of elements that will be encoded to be decoded by the audience or spectators. However, this study considers the warning on the generalizations of performances that "performances can be generalized at the theoretical level of restoration of behaviour, but as embodied practices each and every performance is specific and different from every other. The differences enact the conventions and traditions of a genre, the personal choices made by the performers, directors, and authors, various cultural patterns, historical circumstances, and the particularities of reception" Schechner (2013)

To continue the discussion further on the point that helps to relook at the nature of the performance and the composition of audience or spectators, there are insightful points that must be mentioned here: The noteworthy aspect of Schechner's conceptualization of performance is that he adds socio-cultural contexts including convention, usage, and tradition to qualify something is a performance. For him, a performance cannot be a performance without referring to its cultural circumstances. He says that "There is nothing inherent in an action in itself that makes it a performance or disqualifies it from being a performance. From the vantage of the kind of performance theory I am propounding, every action is a performance. But from the vantage of cultural practice, some actions will be deemed performances and others not; and this will vary from culture to culture, historical period to historical period" (Schechner 2013:38). He further notes that "what "is" or "is not" performance does not depend on an event in itself but on how that event is received and placed. Today the enactment of dramas by actors "is" a theatrical performance. But it was not always so" (Schechner 2013:38).

Intercultural performances have been highlighted as an alternative to traditional proscenium theatre or traditional anthropological fieldwork and the joint venture of Richard Schechner and Victor Turner had this narrative which also defined performance as soothing that is being "between theatre and anthropology." As an expansion of the boundary of the performance studies, Judd Case studied media and religion by adapting performance. Similarly, Diana Taylor related archaic with the performance repertoire which had revealed that it has used hemispheric

perspective on Latin American performance. The role of multimedia in performance studies has been emphasized by Corinner Kratz, and Laurie Frederik explored the importance of ethnographic research and also a need for solid theoretical base an anthropological perspective. Wallace Bacon (1914-2001), who considered by many as the father of Performance theory, highlighted that the performance of literature as the ultimate act of humility. To put it in his own words: "One thing is certain about our past: Our art has found its clearest and strongest expression always in conjunction with humility (but not cowardice) towards texts. Throughout our history, the pendulum of attention has swung from one end of the arc to the other, from text to performer, from creative interest in language to techniques of voice and body. Solid strides were made during the 40s, 50s, and 60s with respect to literary study, and we began at the same time to understand with greater and greater clarity the part played by the reader (whether silent or oral) in the vivifying of texts" (Dailey 1984: 83). Emphasizing the need of traditional texts, Bacon says that "I, for one, welcome the recent interests in non-fictive texts as a valuable extension of fictive texts. I welcome the study of folklore, of native texts, of personal and autobiographical narratives as valuable knowledge of "the other." He continues further that, but we are not, in essence, anthropologists, nor folklorists, nor sociologists, nor political scientists, nor any of the many other specialists who inhabit colleges and universities, though we must welcome their knowledge and seek to use it in any of the countless ways in which it can be helpful to us." While appreciating the need of drawing elements from the other disciplines, 'for the purpose of criticism' or 'in the interaction between readers and texts which alters the interior and even the exterior lives of students through the power of texts', he insists that it must be 'for the most part, ancillary.' In this sense, he means that "[w]e teaches a difficult and rewarding art, the art of performing texts—not simply the art of performing. To give up that centre for any of the other attractive specialties to which we often and naturally tend to gravitate is, I believe, to lose the centre which for so long has held. A discipline which simply takes the shapes of other disciplines is not likely to be recognized or valued for itself" (Dailey 1984: 84).

To further the discussion on the nature of performance studies and performance theory, it is necessary to look at the contribution of J.L. Austin and Judith Butler, Eva Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Shoshana Felman. The word 'perform' or the verb 'to perform' in language was explained by J.L. Austin in his *How To Do Things With Words* (1962) for having its inherent potential to make someone 'to do something' that is "to say something is to do something, or in saying something we do something, and even by saying something we do something", and performative utterance implies what he called as a speech act, understood as something expressed by an individual that not only presents information but performs an action as well. Here, reference to J.L. Austin is relevant to focus on the objective of this article. To accept illocutionary acts in terms of J.L. Austin, that "by saying something, we do something", there are widely accepted common examples such as 'commands' and 'promises' at the level of 'conventional interpretation', so John R. Searle suggestion to refine the illocutionary act could be seen as an alternative on the simple point that it emphasized on the psychological interpretation. While the illocutionary act is associated with the addresser (speaker), the perlocutionary act is seen as related to the addressee (listener). The perlocutionary act is intended to make an effect on listener's thoughts, emotions or even their physical actions, whether directly or indirectly. The infelicity or failure associated with the illocutionary act is not either a failure not external for Austin, rather it is an inherent as well as internal to it. Similarly, it is necessary to identify the fault in the perlocutionary act in relation to performing arts. Thus, it is true that performance becomes or ought to become a perlocutionary act as it is intended to make an effect

or impact on the listener or audience, and at this moment, performance emerges as communication as well as becomes a means of communication within a given (cultural) settings. When the cultural performance is situated within the rich and varied tradition, the role of the audience must be seen as an inevitable aspect of cultural responsibility, i.e., one must possess elements of the cultures in order to understand the cultural performances of those cultures. It is evident in the case of ritual performances, celebrations, and festivals. These events are significant as they bring together both insiders and the so-called outsiders within the ring of the space as defined and designated by culture and customs, and there is a dichotomy because these are the spaces that differentiate both the performers and the audience which is an inclusive term that accommodates both the insiders and outsiders. However, both the insiders and the outsiders as audience do not possess the same amount of cultural competence which is a prerequisite for the comprehension of the performances.

3. CELEBRATIONS, FESTIVALS AND AUDIENCE

Celebrations and festivities are inseparable from human culture, and however, they are not the only creations of human beings. In fact, ethological studies have gone to the extent to put forth the claim that human celebrations are the continuation of animal behaviours. Because celebrations have a special significance in the group or community activities of both humans and animals. In most cases, they are the elements that tend to mean the 'moments' that have significance in life. Robert Jerome Smith mentions that "they may be moments of transition, from one season to another or from one stage of life to another; they may be anniversaries of historical events, of the legendary day of the birth or death of a hero or a god; or symbolic re-enactments of events in the life of a religious leader or the founder of a society. They may be moments set aside to honour some living person or some group, or occasions for communal work, with feasting and play added" (1982:159). Interestingly, in its real historical and evolutionary perspectives, the modern festivals and celebrations are considered as the survivals of ancient society. In the sense that the magical rituals performances of ancient societies serve the community by controlling nature, appeasing the gods of the fields, forests and skies, and ensuring fertility. Looking at the various celebrations and festivals of contemporary societies, even the modern society is not completely disconnected from ancient society and its primitive forms of rituals and worships. However, new dimensions have been added to the modern celebrations and festivals, and while they reflect the change in the functional patterns to fulfil the commitments and aspirations of modern societies. In other words, there are many functional elements found to be added to the celebrations and festivals which are the reflections or out-comes of the community's socio-cultural, economic, and political encounters. Thus, any academic study on the celebrations and festivals of a traditional community within the background of modern society must be extended to accommodate inter-disciplinary perspectives. Robert J. Smith writes that "A festival gives a unified context for the description and definition of the genres that occur within it, providing a basis for inter-genre comparison. A complex entity, a structural whole, a festival cannot be understood without an understanding of the interrelation of its components" (1982:168).

Festivals and celebrations are having several functions for the individuals and community members. The functions can be broadly understood in two binary terms: positive and negative. While many of the festivals are known for their economic activities where both accumulation and redistribution of wealth is quite common,

there are some festivals and celebrations that are considered disruptive and loss to the economy. The political purpose of many of the festivals and celebrations are obvious, and it is a platform provided here to all the members of the community to establish solidarity of the community that is being extended to answer political questions. And some of the festivals and celebrations are seen as associated with 'the rites of passage', a transition from one phase to another phase of life through a simple or an elaborate ritual. Sometimes, the festivals function as a medium through which strong communication among the members is established and it is a condition for the establishment as well as continued existence. Any festival or celebration is marked with a set of human behaviours which have to be learned by individuals as community members. Considering the structure of festival, we can find a host of folklore genres associated with each of the festival or celebrations, for example, costumes, rituals, oral literature (such as song, music, myth, legend, etc.), performances, beliefs, customary practices, sentiments, social drinking, etc. These genres together or independently contribute to prescribe correct behaviour to be validated by the festival itself, and they make festival as one of the major classes of folklore. However, the study of festival becomes very complicated as either the festival itself cannot be taken out of context or its various components cannot be studied in isolation. Further, for example, when many groups participate, determining the significant contribution of behavioural pattern of each group becomes inevitable. Thus, the complexities of folk performances exert more pressure on the audience who are merely onlookers with the tag of "outsiders" and here is an example that the authors, being outsiders to the tribal culture of Jharkhand, happened to be part of the audience during a Sarhul festival celebrated few years ago. It is noticed that beyond the entertaining and enchanting visual aspects of the festivals and celebrations, it has created a kind of incomprehensiveness and indecipherability over the events that happened around us. It became certain that the nuances of cultural performances cannot be contemplated and understood without the familiarity of the cultural elements which forces us to conceptualize the criticality and desperateness of the outsiders as audience. For example, finding that the observation and experience on the Sarhul celebrations and festival cannot facilitate the grasped the intended meaning, we had to rely on personal interview data and readings on secondary sources. The point is that unless there is input either from the community or from the secondary materials, it becomes illogical and absurd to be as an audience and spectator in the culturally alienated performative spaces.

4. AN INSTANCE FOR CULTURAL PERFORMANCE / AUDIENCE

The high-profile festivity of the Sarhul festival could exert pressure upon the native and non-native audience and it happened to us also a few years ago. Being a non-native audience and also not being aware of cultural associations of the event, those things that are not known to us create curiosity and enthuse to look meaning for the intended meaning. This brief account of the Sarhul is the result of our short field visits as a non-native audience to some villages in Ranchi District of Jharkhand such as Jakratand, Kamre, Kathithand, Ratu and Pannorah, a few years ago. It is an annual festival being celebrated with fervour and joy during the spring season. This festival is celebrated on the third day of the monsoon fortnight of 'Chaitra', the first month in the Hindu calendar. Naveen Sanagala, one of the residents, says that "from this day only, we start wooing of seeds. From this 'Chaitra' month only, we believe our New Year has started. And until the prayers are offered on this day, we don't use new flower and leaves and do not eat fruits. Today, after performing prayers and worshipping the tree, we will use flowers and leaves and eat fruits." After

worshipping trees, the village priest locally known as Pahan puts a few rice grains on the head of a hen. Locals believe that prosperity for the people is predicted if the hen eats the rice grains after they fall to the ground, but if the hen does not eat, a disaster awaits the community. Tribal men, women and children dress up in colourful and ethnic attires and perform traditional dances. In recent years a colourful procession, with tribal men and women dancing in groups and holding branches has also become part of the Sarhul festival. They also drink a locally made beer, brewed out of a concoction of rice, water and some tree leaves and then dance around the tree.

The Sarhul festival is having socio-cultural and political significance for the tribal communities in Jharkhand. The cognitive function of the Sarhul must be understood from two aspects: the ritual associated with the Sarhul on the one hand and the celebrations associated with it on the other hand. Ritual process has the enactment of mythological event, recalling the formation of social customs and customary practices, prediction of rain movements, addressing fertility-related issues. The ritual brings both the mythological and real-world closer. And the ritual is not only the enactment of mythological story or enactment of historical events. And it is also the time when young people get to know their customs and customary practices, etc. The participation of young people in the rituals helps to assure their identity and belonging. In some cases, those regularly attend the ritual may not get any new things out of the rituals; however, they have to show their solidarity and belongings. The interaction between young and old people who participate in the ritual creates positive emotional responses or expresses positive emotional conditions. The second aspect of celebrations associated with the Sarhul is that community participation in singing, drinking, wearing new ornaments and clothes, etc., tend to help the readers to understand the nature of belongingness. A group identity is established through the collective participation which will help them to regain their space in mainstream politics. Moreover, through the fieldwork, we found that a generative feeling of contentment and well-being and group solidarity are being constructed. The different dimensions of the worship or festival cannot be explored by simply looking at the unknown events, which, because require deep observation and hard effort gathering details in the post-fieldwork scenario. The spatial transformation is evident in the Sarhul festival that it moves from sacred private space of worship to the public space of festivities by accommodating performative form with colourful display of dance with traditional costumes and music. It is to clarify the point that whether ritual or worship or festivals and celebrations of others' culture cannot be comprehended by merely watching them as audience. The difficulty faced during the field visits, helped us to problematize the role of audience in the cultural performance, particularly of the indigenous communities. Had we been mere onlooker or audience, either the cultural display of Sarhul festival or the ritual part of the worship could not be comprehended. That is, the audience cannot be understood as mere passive recipients of the performance because they need to be involved in the process of interpreting the meaning, to be actively engaged as socialized members by taking the role of members of the interpretive community, to be available for dialogue with the constituents of the cultural performances, and moreover must be in a position to be involved in the process of deconstruction of meaning from the performative texts.

5. AUDIENCE – WHO CAN'T BE PASSIVE RECIPIENT

Audience is not a homogenous category, and it is relatively defined with the nature of performance, but one thing is clear that any audience cannot merely be a passive recipient of any performance which is performed with an intention either to make an impact or to communicate something. From the Sarhul festival, for example, the amount of pressure we received in order to understand the whole process is overwhelming as well as wearisome because it requires hard work and effort either to decipher the meaning of the overall event or to deconstruct the performative text. Since the performance is a live presentation that cannot be repeated identically and having fleeting nature of existence, it becomes difficult for the non-native audience for grasping the essence of it when they encounter a complex event – an amalgamated entity comprising of rituals, celebrations and festivities. Further, cultural performance is a product of performers as individuals in a society, and thus, the performance is an internalized event by the members of a cultural group. Here, a performance event (each performance) that is part of a performance tradition is understood as consisting of performance configuration - performance an assemblage of the performers and the acts they play – and performance context – physical, social, and cultural settings. However, the performance form is a framework that is drawn from many performances that facilitates our understanding of performance as good or bad. **(**Claus and Korom 1991:159-160**)** And, while seeing performance as a text or communicative event, the levels of textuality could be seen following de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981 as quoted in Claus and Korom (Claus and Korom 1991:178-179): 1. Cohesion (The ways in which the components of the surface text are connected within a sequence – like syntax); 2. Coherence (The ways the concepts and relations which underlie the surface text are mutually accessible and relevant. (Concepts are cognitive units and the relations are the links between the objects)); 3. Intentionality – the ways the producer or performer intends the text to be received, understood and acted upon.); 4. Acceptability: (The ways the text is received as relevant and responsive – text type, social and cultural settings); 5. Informativity: (the ways in which is effective with regard to factors such as expected-unexpected, known-unknown); 6. Situationally (the ways a text is received with regard to varying situational contexts.); and 7. Intertextuality: the ways in which texts influence one another. Considering all the seven points, an audience is no longer considered as a matter of passivity, rather it involves active involvement in the decoding activity. However, the encoding of performance becomes a difficult task for a non-native audience who happens to encounter (witness) it for the first time because of elements that are inherently associated with the performance and performative text such as the assemblage of linguistic elements; the meaning intended to be communicated; a set of discursive conventions; a multivocal means of mediation between conversant and multivocal and multimodal signifier.

6. AUDIENCE AND DELL HYMES' ETHNOGRAPHY OF SPEAKING (1962)

Another issue that emerges during this discussion on the performance and the critical role of the audience could be understood with the help of Dell Hymes, an eminent personality in the field of folklore studies, who accentuated the social use of language. Though he was of the view that "...either speaking is taken for granted, or used as a means to other ends, or only special kinds of speaking (or writing) are

valued and considered" (1962: 45 cf Claus and Korom 1991:180), now the situation is changed, Roger Abrahams (1985) admitted, 'because everyone is doing it. For Dell Hymes, the ethnography of speaking is "...concerned with the situations and uses, the patterns and functions of speaking as an activity in its own right" (1962:16 cf Claus and Korom 1991:180). So, the cross-cultural approach to language functions must emphasize the differences between languages, and 'the ways in which they differ' (1962 cf Claus and Korom 1991:180). He felt the necessity to place language in the appropriate cultural and behavioural settings and it will facilitate the handling of the problem of multiple meanings. The multiple meanings in any performance are the product of a congregation of elements that collectively participate and produce different meanings simultaneously. It can be presented in his own words that "For understanding and predicting behaviour, contexts have a cognitive significance that can be summarized in this way. The use of a language form identifies a range of meanings. A context can support a range of meanings. When a form is used in a context, it eliminates the meanings possible to that context other than those that form can signal; the context eliminates from consideration the meanings possible to the form other than those that context can support. The effective meaning depends upon the interaction of the two" (1962:16 cf Claus and Korom 1991:181). An audience as a casual visitor to performance, particularly belonging to non-native other, could not be expected to comprehend the whole event of the performance including its cognitive significance of the context that supplies elements to decide the meaning. Further, performance is not merely a visual presentation or enactment, and it is an amalgamation of various forms and practices. For example, performance is supported by a text which is having its relationship with other texts at an intertextual level to participate in discursive activities. Similarly, performance is also supported by a belief system, material culture, and poetic and aesthetic elements are also associated with performance. Hymes's ethnography can offer a platform to understand the nature of social function of a language for the members within a real situation that warrants communicative competence of both speakers and the listeners, then the linguistic competence.

Dell Hymes' bipartite conception of speech is interesting as it encompasses both the 'means of speech' available to speakers and the 'speech economy' in which the speakers participate. For Hymes, speech cannot occur in a vacuum; rather it occurs within a specific context and thus, it cannot be studied outside its sociological and cultural factors that tend to play a significant role in shaping the linguistic form and creating meaning. For Hymes, speech economy involves three elements such as speech events, constituent factors of speech event, and the functions of speech. By defining the social units and units of analysis for ethnographies of communication, Hymes proposes a list of seven etic components or factors that constitute the speech event, such as Sender (Addresser), Receiver (Addressee), Message Form, Channel, Code, topic and Setting (Scene, Situation). And these factors are identified with each function, namely, Expressive (Emotive), Directive (Conative, Pragmatic, Rhetorical, Persuasive), Poetic, Contact, Metalinguistic, Referential, and Contextual (Situational) (cf. Claus and Korom 1991:181). His contribution to folklore is well evidenced in his treatment of folklore as communication in which there is a display of "social interaction and the kinds of communicative competence that enter into interaction" (1981:79 cf. Claus and Korom 1991:182) His understanding of performance was a great stimulation for folklorists to study communicative events. Remarkably, he treated "the performance as situated in a context, the performance as emergent, as unfolding or arising within that context. The concern is with performance, not as something mechanical or inferior, ...but with performance as

something creative, realized, achieved, even transparent of the ordinary course of events" (1981:81, cf. Claus and Korom 1991:182). For Hymes, performance is an instance that belongs to a performative tradition, thus "the knowledge of performance and knowledge of tradition are interdependent" that is, "the nature performance affects what is known, for the person in a community as well as for the outside inquirer into tradition" (1981:81, cf. Claus and Korom 1991:182-183). Working in this line, contributed at great length on issuers pertaining to folklore performance, with the influence of Roman Jakobson, Dell Hymes, etc., Bauman saw folklore is expressed in "...a dual sense of artistic *action* – the doing of folklore – and artistic *event* – the performance situation, involving performer, an art form, audience, and setting..." (Bauman 1975:290) cf.)(Claus and Korom 1991: 183). In his own terms, "Fundamentally, performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. This competence rests on the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways. The performance involves on the part of the performer an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content. From the point of view of the audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of competence" (Bauman 1975: 293) cf. (Claus and Korom 1991: 183-184).

The discussion given here reiterates the point that the role of the audience is as significant as other elements that together constitute the overall dimension of performance, and also it clarifies that the performance is a process that produces at the end of it a performative text which is the combination of verbal and non-verbal, linguistic, and non-linguistic elements. While reflecting his hesitation in treating all communication as performance, Bauman agrees that the preconceived genres that are considered to be verbal art are not necessarily be treated as so by native people. After careful observation on the Ilongot society who whom consider a telling of tales is not a performance rather as a 'straight speech', Bauman states that "[o]ne of the principal questions one must ask in the ethnography of performance is what range of speech activity is regarded as susceptible to performance and what range is conventionally performed, that is, conventionally expected by members of the community to be rendered in the performance mode" (1973:294 cf (Claus and Korom 1991:184). He adds value to folklore by revealing its existential presence, and with reference to performance, also by insisting its emergent nature, that is, he emphasized the uniqueness of each performance and performative event by quoting Georges 1969:319) three points on storytelling (as an example to verbal art as performance): 'every storytelling event occurs only once in time and space', 'every storytelling event occurs only once with a particular set of social interrelationships', and 'every storytelling event generates its own unique systems of social and psychological forces' And for Georges, 'these forces exert pressure on the social environment and upon those whose interactions create that social environment' (1969:319) and on the same ground Bauman states that [t]he emergent quality of performance of performance resides in the interplay between communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of the participants, within the context of particular situations" (1975:302. cf Claus and Korom 1991:185).

7. AUDIENCE – SOME DISCUSSIONS

The position of audience becomes a complex issue from the perspectives discussed here. While prominent role of audience in any performance cannot be

denied, the impact on both the audience as well as on the performance could be well understood by categorizing on the ground of belongingness and non-belongingness to the community that creates and shapes not only the performance tradition, but also provide context for individual performance or performance event. The belongingness is many ways advantage for both the audience as well as the performers – purpose of the performance is realized, either by ignoring or criticizing the inadequacies in some cases. Here, appreciation is a regular phenomenon since the audience are already possessing the prerequisites that are needed either to appreciate or to criticize the event as per the framework provided by the performance tradition. As far as the poetic and aesthetic elements associated with the performance are concerned, the audience are already familiar with them and in some cases, they have also played a contributory role by actively engaged in the creation of them. Here the audience response is considered impactful by contributing significantly to the creation of performative text, but also on the future opportunities of the performers. Thus, the audience who belong to the community perform the role of evaluators of the event in comparison to the performance tradition. But on the disadvantage side of the belongingness could be seen evident from the fact that the audience may not be in a position either to interpret or to deconstruct the performative text. The non-belongingness is considered equally problematic since the non-familiarity constrains the audience from grasping the nuances and minute details of the performance, so their fine experience becomes incomplete, incongruous, and inconsistent. Their non-belongingness could sometime be the reason for their isolation and alienation from the performance, performance tradition, etc. This non-belongingness faced by the while attending the Sarhul festival gave them an intuition to recollect their position as non-native audience and also to prepare this article on the nature of the audience with reference to folk performances.

The nature of audience varies for each performance form and thus there is no generalized notion on the behaviour of the audience. An important aspect of the public performance is that there is a structural transformation of space that is a private space turn into, in some cases as a public space and in other cases they are treated as Habermasean public sphere. However, the nature of audience varies due to their belongingness and non-belongingness, the audience cannot be treated as homogenous group and thus their behavioural response cannot be the same. However, one could say that each art form or performance tradition imagines its own audience and the possibilities of their transformation due to the impact. In this case, there is a notion of subjectivity that is being modelled and or constructed for the performers and the audience. Between the relationship of audience and performative form and or at least, performers, there is a (fiduciary level) contract that needs to be protected for facilitating the performance and it is applicable both for the native and non-native audience who are available in the performance area. A level of tolerance between performers and audience is manufactured due to the prevailing understanding between the community, performance tradition, performance event and the audience which enable the success of the performance. It implies that the intolerant audience whether they belong to the community or to the non-native onlookers move away from the performance scene or performing area. It is a moment a conflict between the performer and the audience that naturally happens due to the content of the performance can be possible but in most of the cases it is restrained or avoided by the influence of the preparedness of the organizer of the event. In many of the folk performances, the performers make use of the performance space for the display of political and social satirical purposes. There are folk forms like Tamasha that are exclusively meant for satirical and social

criticism. The humorous form of expressions of satirical can go well with the audience by creating a light ambience with less effect on the audience in the post-performance period, which enables us to restrain from applying Habermas's notion of the public sphere on some of the folk performances. So, the structural transformation of space from private to public with more and more mediation of experiences, the folk performances show their limitation in turning these spaces into the public spheres, that is, they are public spaces than the public spheres by which the folk performances do not make much impact on the audience in terms of Habermas. In some of the folk performances, there is a constant transformation of audience into a community during the peak of the performance which eventually makes the subjection to the effect on the non-native audience.

The audience are inseparable parts of any performance, and they have an indispensable role to play throughout the performance and even in the post-performance scenario. With the participation of community members as audience, they fulfil the role of partnership in the event without which the performance event could not be organized, and in the case of non-native audience, their role is not anticipated by the performers to an extent. It is not about the interaction between the performers and the audience, but the participation in the upholding of the performance tradition in which the performance event is an instance. When the folk performances are all about upholding the tradition, the audience have an active role to play in interpreting and grasping the meaning of the overall event, and unlike the native audience, the non-native audience have to play in the post-performance scenario by involving in the process of deconstructing the overall performance and performative text. The non-native audience of any folk performances are inherently not a fixed category of people and some of the cases they are consisting of a flooding population who are there to witness the event intentionally or unintentionally or accidentally. However, changes that happened in the last few decades in the socio-economic and cultural arena, the flow of people could be seen as an everyday reality. These changes have resulted in the interactions of people of different cultural groups and these interactions have already been triggered by the process of globalization. These changes have also resulted in the new outlook of folk performances by the appropriation and incorporation modern elements. However, the folk performances that occupy public places or performed in public tend to attract more people of different walks of life apart from their community members as audience. The flow of people towards the folk performing arts has even opened up discussion on the viability of providing sustainability to the community. In the context of globalization and also for addressing the question of sustainability, the notion of cultural tourism has also been introduced with the intention to help the local community. However, the nature of diversified audience in a traditional society coming forward to witness the folk performance that are performed as a matter of pride, identity, and the prosperity of the community, must be studied and understood. Similarly, the changes that happen to art forms eventually affect the performing tradition in which performance event is an instance. So, the non-belonging, non-committed and non-native audience cannot be treated lightly as it will affect the performance tradition in a long run. In this context, displaying folk performing arts for the tourists who are non-committed, non-belonging and non-native audience must be understood. Thus, moulding and modifying the folk performing arts for the audience would eventually result in the dilution of the performance and performance tradition, and whatever performed today for the purpose of the display of pride, identity and cultural uniqueness will have to compromised tomorrow for the purpose economic sustainability and it can lead to the loss of pride, identity and cultural dilution due to the non-committed, non-native

and non-belonging audience who never develop concern either for the performers or for the performing tradition.

8. CONCLUSION

Audience has great role either to participate or to encounter in the performances or performative forms including an art exhibition, etc., and their participation is multifaceted, that is, having multidimensional and non-homogenous. In many cases, the life of art forms and their performances depends on the nature of audience and their interactions. But due to the emergence of media and their strong influence on the nature of audience, a category of people who become mediated by the consumption of the rhetorical texts by the media and they are also alienated physically from the actual performance with the help of the media strategy. The invisibility of audience could be noticed as well as desired in some of the performances, and whereas in some other cases they are expected to be imaginary and implied. Another interesting aspect is that depends on the nature of performance forms the role, nature and configuration of audience vary. Further, the audience play an important role in deciding the overall configuration of the context and it can be also seen in the case of recontextualized and decontextualized settings. Particularly, during the ongoing pandemic that is filled with the display of folk festivals and celebrations, the nature of audience becomes quite important, and it adds more pressure on the academic community, who are already treating the audience as an important subject of inquiry, to reinvigorate their focus on the subject of audience in the changing scenario.

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