

Ranchi as a New *Akhra* (Performing Space): the emergence of indigenous public sphere

SUBODH KUNWER

School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Abstract: The paper intends to examine the emergence of Ranchi city as the new *akhra* (performing space) of *adivasi* (indigenous) politics in Jharkhand. It studies the transformation of the city space into a new performance space on the occasion of *Sarhul* festivity. On the eve of *Sarhul*, *adivasi* dance in their village *akhra sthal*, but now-a-days instead of dancing in *akhra*, villagers nearby Ranchi move to the heart of the city where they dance and perform. It becomes imperative to look at the traditional ritual performance of *Sarhul* and the traditional performing space *akhra sthal* as it shifts to the city space and the discourse it generates. When the festival is organized in Ranchi city, it produces a discourse and a sphere which not only draws the attention of the media but also enters into the broader political realm. Mobilizing elements of contemporary relevance becomes more important than focusing on the ritual elements in the celebration of festival. Ritual and festivals get thetricalized and aesthetical with the emergence of Ranchi as a new *akhra*. The paper also tries to establish that culture and performance remain central to all kinds of social and political mobilization in Jharkhand.

Key words : *Sarhul, Adivasi/Indigenous, Indigeneity/ Adivasiyat, Public Sphere, Akhra, Ranchi.*