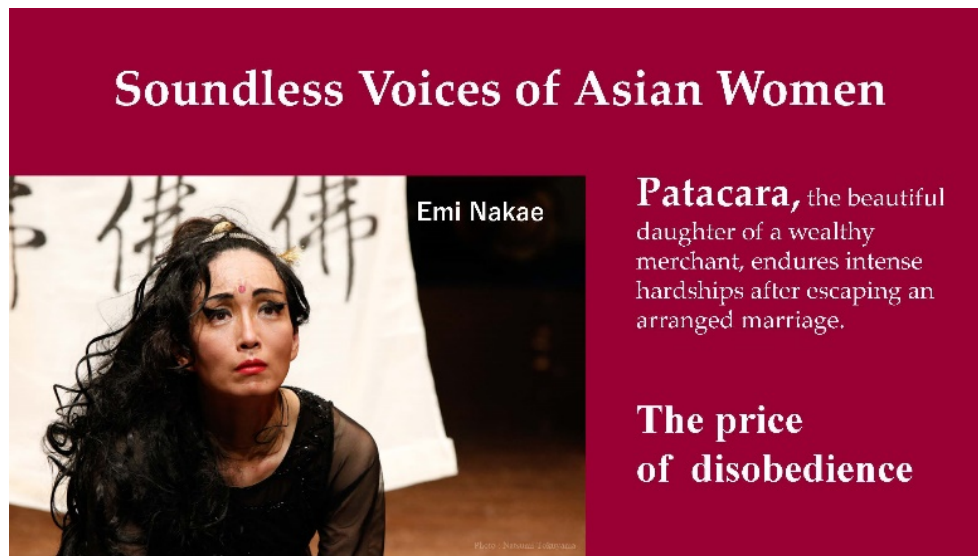


The Cycle of Women's Rebirth in the Pure Land Project

Vol. 1 **"Patacara"** – The Soundless Voices of Asian Women

by Ayumi Dakemoto



In the 21st century, when the Me Too (#MeToo) movement has sparked an outpouring of anger and solidarity among women across the globe, it may seem as if we have parted from the ancient tradition of suppressing the voices of women. Yet the fight against gendered violence and inequality continues, as evidenced in daily news headlines.

Ayumi Dakemoto, a multi-award-winning Japanese playwright and director, sheds light on the history of women's inequality in Asia. Her three-part theatre production *The Cycle of Women's Rebirth in the Pure Land* dramatizes women's lives in Asia, where religious rules and authority have traditionally impaired women's rights and freedoms.

The first part of the trilogy, "Patacara", is set in sixth-century India, where Patacara, the beautiful daughter of a wealthy merchant, endures intense hardships after escaping an arranged marriage. She runs away with a young servant of the lowest caste, with whom she later has two children. A series of tragic events follows, resulting in the dramatic deaths of her husband and children. In desperation, Patacara returns to her hometown, where she discovers that a fire has killed her family and burned their house to ground. Completely shattered and grief-stricken, she goes insane.

In search of salvation, Patacara travels thousands of miles over many years and, finally, in old age, encounters a Buddhist community (Sangha) in which she finds spiritual refuge, and she renounces her existence in the Sahā world to become the first female disciple of Buddhism. The story of Patacara illustrates the dominance of the Laws of Manu, ancient legal commandments that form part of the constitution of Hinduism, over the rights of women. The laws decree:

- A woman must obey her father, her husband and, in old age, her son.

- A woman has no right to independence.
- A woman must be patient, obedient, chaste and follow one husband only. Though he be bad, ugly, old, selfish and ill-tempered, she must respect and serve her husband as if he were a god.

Patacara goes against them and suffers unbearable ordeals because she is a woman of a rare beauty. The Laws of Manu arrived in Japan, via China, Korea and Vietnam, in the form of culture such as music and religion. Their commandments have long been embedded in Japanese society.

Here, Patacara's tormented journey is illustrated exquisitely by actor and dancer Emi Nakae. The drama is accompanied throughout by music based on the storytelling of the *jiutai* chorus and Noh music (*shi-byoshi*), which comprises *nohkan* flute, *kotzuzumi* shoulder drum, *otsuzumi* hip drum and *taiko* stick drum. Until very recently, women were banned from appearing in professional Noh performances. *Gidayu shamisen* playing merges with sounds from the Indian music scale, capturing the play's setting.

Today, are women still to experience such suffering? Where can women find refuge in parts of the world where they are still forbidden from self-discovery and self-expression? We need answers for modern women whose existence is still subdued or denied by traditional systems and rules. We hear their voices resonate in the drama of Patacara.

Written by Akiko Yanagisawa: Akiko Yanagisawa (Mu:Arts) is a London-based curator and producer of music and performing arts, encouraging genre-defying, cross-cultural collaborations by engaging with traditional Japanese artforms, including Noh.

<https://noh.muarts.org.uk/>

New film streaming 2021 April 15~20

Tickets https://memento.zaiko.io/_item/338617

HP <https://patacara-vaidehi.webnode.jp/>

<https://vimeo.com/user136550854>

Playwright & Direction : Ayumi Dakemoto / Japanese Music producer : Kisayo Katada

Noh gaku : Minoru Shibata Yoshiaki Ito

Actor: Emi Nakae Yoko Kanze Kensho Yamamoto

HAYASHI: Kisayo Katada · Chiharu Hosei Tasano Mochizuki * Tazae Mochizuki

Gidayu shamisen: Tsugaju Tsuruzawa

Post production

English translator: Tomoko Aoyama, Barbala Hartley

Videographer : Kuniaki Izumi / Supervisor: Akiko Yanagisawa