

# Lokaratna

Volume XVI, ISSN:2347-6427, June 2023



An International Peer-reviewed online journal

**Folklore Foundation, Bhubaneswar, India**

**LOKARATNA, Vol. XVI, June 2023**

Lokaratna is the e-journal of the Folklore Foundation, Bhubaneswar. It is a peer-reviewed International online open access journal. ISSN: 2347-6427. The purpose of the journal is to explore the rich cultural traditions of India for a wider readership. Any scholar across the globe interested to contribute to any aspect of folklore is welcome. This volume contains articles on culture, folklore, education, and language pedagogy.

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## From the Desk of the Editor in Chief



### Narrating Diversity

Cultural diversity has been the fundamental feature of the Northeastern India. Though there exist eight states now, the North Eastern states were conceived as the seven sisters in the popular imagination of the people. The northeast is not a homogenous entity, but a conglomeration of multiple languages and cultures. It has more than 200 communities and more than 220 languages. The Nagas of Nagaland are sub-divided into seventeen tribes. In such a diverse culture, people live a life of unity and harmony. Their oral traditions give testimony of their rich history and heritage. Their contribution to the freedom struggle is immense and enduring. Their heritage and culture penetrated their literary texts too. This feature makes their literature distinct from other literature. We hope the ethnic conflict in this region must end and a peaceful co-existence must be restored.

This volume of Lokaratna captures some of the culture and traditions of the North East. We have selected them as they speak volumes about our diverse and rich cultural heritage. We hope that these articles will provide different perspectives on diversity.

At present we witness the multi-cultural expressions in diverse art forms. Recently the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi organised UNMESH 2, grand festival of letters, in which about six hundred writers from multilingual and multicultural background participated in Bhopal on 3-6 August 2023. About seventy multilingual writers across the country participated in this festival where diverse unwritten Indigenous languages were represented. Similarly, the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi organised the multifaceted dances and performances of India involving nine hundred performers, musician, dancers, and singers. The blend of literature and music displayed the cultural diversities of India on a one platform that is quite incredible. The unity of culture and language breaking the barriers of great and little, Desi and Margi have been the voice of 21<sup>st</sup> Century India. Northeast as a cultural mosaic has contributed to Indian culture. We appreciate the efforts of Sahitya Akademi and Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi for their unprecedented

events and hope that the country will maintain its national and social integration with the art, language, and literature.

In case for recognising the unwritten and marginalised languages, the NCERT, New Delhi has taken a bold step by preparing Kuwi and Desia primer for the tribal children of Koraput. Mr Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Education and Mrs Nirmala Sitaraman, Minister of Finance, Government of India released the two tribal primers on 17 August 2023, which is a breakthrough for education of tribal children. This also symbolises the spirit of respecting the language of children in schools to which the Minister of Education has initiated and wish to disseminate the movement in all parts of the country. We congratulate the government of India for their favourable signal for rest of the nonscheduled languages of India, to get recognition in schools, to provide a quality education in tribal areas. Thus, both tradition and modernity will co exists in culture, literature, and language education India despite its diverse language, ethnicity and faiths.

The Lokaratna has reached twenty-five volumes over sixteen years I congratulate the writers, editorial board, advisory board and the Folklore Foundation team for their selfless contribution to the cause of Indian culture, language and literature. Special Thanks to Prof Mark Turin, Professor of Anthropology, who has been always supportive to Folklore Foundation, India.

I hope this volume edited by Prof Anand Mahanand and Dr Subhasis Nanda, will be well appreciated by the wider readership across the globe.

**Mahendra Kumar Mishra**



### From the Executive Editor, Lokaratna



#### *Connected by Culture*

In a short story titled “In the Rain- Land of Gods” Mamang Dai, the noted writer from Nagaland highlights how her region has been cut off from the rest of the world. It is more isolated when there are floods, and the houses are surrounded by water. The boat is the only mode of communication. This is a metaphor for the whole of Northeastern states. North East has been disconnected from the Indian territory for a long time. This disconnects causes misinterpretation, apprehension and misunderstanding about the people and their culture. To the people of the “mainland” the people of North East are known as aliens, aggressive and so on but little do we know that these states have been repository of rich cultural traditions and heritage. The culture is unique and has a long history. Culturally Northeast is connected with the rest of India in many different ways. Even in the interiors of North East, one finds names of people from the characters of the two Indian epics. At the same way, the tattoos and textiles of Nagaland have reached the modern youth of the metropolitan cities of India. The above are only two examples of cultural exchange. There will be numerous instances of such cultural sharing if one tries to explore. The inter-connectedness is found in literature, songs, music, food and clothes and many cultural practices.

This issue of *Lokaratna* celebrates the rich traditions of Northeast by incorporating a few articles on the North East India.

The folklore section this time is rich with as many as eleven articles on folklore. Srijani Bhattacharya in her article titled “Oral Traditions of Arunachal Pradesh: Depiction of Nature through the Oral Narratives” gives a profile of the oral narratives of Arunachal Pradesh and demonstrates different forms of oral tradition represented in them. She connects nature with human knowledge and highlights how folk forms such as legends and myths contribute to the growth of such knowledge. Medongu-üKhroumo and Chubala Sanglir in their article “Exploring the Traditional Ethical and Moral Values of the AngamiNagas: Taboos and Beliefs through the

Lens of *Kenyü* Observance” takes a look at the Kenyü Observance and explore ethical and moral values in it. Thounaojam Ruhichand in his article “Traditional Institution of Folk Literature and Culture in Manipur with **Special** Reference to Umanglai Haraoba” **describes** the traditional ritual festival and its richness in contributing to human life and knowledge. The author stresses on the elements the ritual conveys to the people. They include elements like common ancestry, integrity and communal harmony. B.N. Patnaik in his article titled “On the Transformation of a Folktale into a Puranic tale” explores how a folktale undergoes changes and acquires puranic elements. In her article “Traditional Art & Craft and Issues of Sustainability at Raghurajpur. Heritage Village of Odisha: A Sociological Overview” Bibhabari Bal showcases the art and crafts of the Raghurajpur village of Odisha. She explains that spirituality is the source for most of such arts and crafts. She also highlights the challenges these forms face in the wake of environmental degradation and inroads of modernity. Payel Ghosh’s article “Bauls, the Wandering Minstrels of Bengal: The Asceticism, Creative Subversion and Artistic Persona of a Performative Group” gives a profile of the Baul songs and explains the spiritual and social messages they carry. Meeraz Hoque’s article “Indigenous Customs and Performative Artifacts of the Rajbanshis of Cooch Behar” explores the case of Subversion through eroticism and cultural metamorphosis in the customs and practices of the Rajbanshis of Cooch Behar through an alternative reading of their cultural practices. Saridharam Baskey and Sumahan Bandopadhyay study the traditional songs of the Santals and foreground the concept of peace in them. Devina Krishna in her article “Analyzing Musicality and Rhythm in Narrative Techniques in Dogri Folktales” studies the musical elements in Dogri folktales. Sarita Sahay in her article “Songs, Dance and The Festive Fervour: People of Bihar (India) And the Festival of Colours The ‘Holi’” explores the impact of songs and music on the psychology of the celebrators. Amit Kumar and Rabindranath Sarma in their article “Folklore Film Based on Famous Folktale Suhani Mehar” discuss how folktales have been derived for films as resource. Folk literature has undergone changes after being influenced by Indian Renaissance. Dr Irom Robindro Singh captures this in his article “Growth of Manipuri Literature after Nineteenth Century Indian Renaissance.”

The literature section also contains articles that show case cultural transactions. For instance, Gowri Iyengar’s article ‘Navigating Indian Identity in the United States’ studies representation of Indians in the U.S with their cultural exchange and shifts. Suman Shelly and Sabita Tripathy in their article “Female Claustrophobic Experience in Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column*” foreground the traumatic experience of women at the result of partition of India and Pakistan. Swapna Rani Singh in her article “*Yajnaseni* and *the Palace of Illusion*: A Comparative Study” makes a comparative survey of Pratibha Ray’s *Yajnaseni* and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *the Palace of Illusion*. Mahesh Kumar Dey and Kinjalkumari G. Desai in their article titled “Autobiographical Testimony of Marginalized Transgender Identity in Revathi’s *The Truth*

*About Me: A Hijra Life Story and A Life in Trans Activism*” study two texts by Revathi and explore the depiction of Hijra life as depicted in the two texts mentioned above.

Pradip Kumar Panda makes a study of R.K. Narayan’s novels in his article “**A** Socio-cultural Reflection: The Touch of Indian Belongingness in R. K. Narayan.” And foregrounds the sociocultural aspects in them.

The Pedagogy Section has informative and relevant articles. Bijaya Kumar Nath and Laxmidhar Behera in their article titled “Influence of Teachers Attitude on Reading Readiness and Reading Performance among Tribal Students of Mayurbhanj: A Critical Reflection from the Field” reflects on issues related to teachers’ attitude towards reading readiness among tribal students of Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. Goutam Naskar and Ranjit Mandal in their article “. Globalisation and Minority Languages: A Prospect of Language Revival” study the status of minority languages in the context t of globalization. Revathi Srinivas in her article “Words, words, words”: Cohesion in the English Coursebook at the Primary Level in Telangana State” demonstrates how appropriate language and cohesive devices play a major role in memorization and learning at the young age. Sonali Hota in her article “Comparative Content Analysis on Panchayati Raj System as a Topic of Class-VI Political Science Textbook between NCERT and SCERT, Odisha” compares the SCERT textbooks of Odisha with NCERT and shows that NCERT textbooks are based on research and current developments in the field of education whereas the SCERT, Odisha textbooks lack such good elements. Kamalakar in his article “Dalit and Higher Education in India” highlights the status of higher education among dalits.

This issue has two interviews. The first one is about the journey of drama by Dhira Mallick. It is taken by Ankit Rath. It captures the unique journey of a dramatist. The second interview is a conversation with Professor Pabitra Sarkar by Aditi Ghosh. Professor Sarkar shares his experience of his journey as a linguist whose focus has been the development of mother tongue. Thus, this issue of *Lokaratna* is rich in cultural and intellectual repertoire. This is due to the contributions made by our contributors. We are thankful to them. We apologize for the delay in bringing out this volume for some unavoidable reasons. We also thank the reviewers for their time. The beautiful cover design represents mosaic of Gond art, mandala art and alpana along with diverse cultural representations from Odisha. We thank Dr Monali Sahu Pathenge for this wonderful design. Finally, we offer this beautiful gift of *Lokaratna* to our readers.

*Anand Mahanand*, Executive editor

### Congratulations Dr Mahendra Kumar Mishra



This year, Dr Mahendra Kumar Mishra, the Founder of Folklore Foundation, India has been conferred with the International Mother Language UNESCO Award on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023 from Ms. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Ms. Hasina conferred the award in the Institute of Mother Language Institute (UNESCO-II) in Dhaka on the eve of International Mother Language Day.

Dr Mishra is a folklorist and an Advisor of Multilingual Education in Language and Learning Foundation, New Delhi.

We the member of Folklore Foundation and Editorial Board of Lokaratna, offer our heartfelt complements to Dr Mishra and wish him to contribute to the humankind with his thought and work.

Folklore Foundation, India

## CONTENTS

Sl no	Title	Author(s)	Page
	About the Journal	Editorial Board FF	ii
	Note to Contributors		v
	From the Desk of Editor-in-Chief		vii
	From the Desk of the Executive Editor		ix
	Contents		xiv
<b>FOLKLORE, LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES</b>			
1	Oral Traditions of Arunachal Pradesh: Depiction of Nature through the Oral Narratives of the Region	Srijani Bhattacharjee	1
2	Exploring the Traditional Ethical and Moral Values of the Angami Nagas: Taboos and Beliefs through the Lens of Kenyü Observance	Medongu-ü Khroumo Chubala Sanglir	8
3	Traditional Institution of Folk Literature and Culture in Manipur with Special Reference to Umanglai Haraoba	Thounaojam Ruhichand	20
4	On The Transformation of a Folktale into a Puranic Tale	Bibudhendra Narayan Patnaik	27
5	Traditional Art & Craft and Issues of Sustainability at Raghurajpur Heritage Village of Odisha: A Sociological Overview	Bibhabari Bal	38
6	Bauls, the Wandering Minstrels of Bengal: The Asceticism, Creative Subversion and Artistic Persona of a Performative Group	Payel Ghosh	53
7	Subversion through Eroticism and Cultural Metamorphosis: A Study of the Indigenous Customs and Performative Artifacts of the Rajbanshis of Cooch Behar	Meeraz Hoque	69

7	The Idea of Peace in Traditional Songs of the Santal	Saridharam Baskey Sumahan Bandyopadhyay	84
8	Songs, Dance and The Festive Fervour: People of Bihar (India) and The Festival of Colours The 'Holi'	Sarita Sahay	99
9	Folklore Film Based on Famous Folktale Suhani Mehar	Amit Kumar Rabindranath Sarma	113
10	Growth of Manipuri Literature after Nineteenth Century Indian Renaissance	Irom robindro Singh	120
11	Navigating Indian Identity in the United States	Gowri Iyengar	132
12	Female Claustrophobic Experience in Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column	N Suman Shelly Prof Sabita Tripathy	144
13	Yajnaseni and the Palace of Illusion a Comparative Study	Swapna Rani Singh	151
14	Autobiographical Testimony of Marginalized Transgender Identity in A. Revathi's The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story and A Life in Trans Activism	Kinjal kumari G. Desai Mahesh K. Dey	157
15	A Socio-cultural Reflection: The Touch of Indian Belongingness in R.K. Narayan	Pradip Kumar Panda	167
16	Jhumur Songs of Purulia during the Corona Pandemic: Historical Memoirs of Migrant Crisis in India	Bhaktipada Mahato	174
17	Analyzing Musicality and Rhythm in Narrative Techniques in Dogri Folktales	Devina Krishna	183

<b>EDUCATION AND LANGAUGE</b>			
17	Influence of Teachers Attitude on Reading Readiness and Reading Performance among Tribal Students of Mayurbhanj: A Critical Reflection from the Filed	Bijaya Kumar Nath	198
18	Globalization and Minority Languages: A Prospect of Language Revival	Ranjit Mandal Goutam Naskar	216
19	“Words, words, words”: Cohesion in the English Coursebook at the Primary Level in Telangana State	Revathi Srinivas	227
20	Comparative Content Analysis on Panchayati Raj System as a Topic of Class-VI Political Science Textbook between NEERT and SCERT, Odisha	Sonali Hota	247
21	Dalits and Higher Education in India	Gedam Kamalakar	268
<b>INTERVIEWS</b>			
22	Interview with Mr. Dhira Mallick		273
23	A Conversation with Professor Pabitra Sarkar	Aditi Ghosh	283



FOLKLORE, LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

# Oral Traditions of Arunachal Pradesh: Depiction of Nature through the Oral Narratives of the Region

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## **Abstract**

The paper attempts to show how the oral narratives of Arunachal Pradesh have tried to understand nature and its associated occurrences from indigenous perspectives. It aims to demonstrate the local urge to comprehend nature and find reasons behind its manifestations when the people lacked scientific knowledge and clarification for them. Under such situation, legends, folklore, and myths were the agencies through which the tribal mind sought the answers.

**Keywords:** oral, traditions, tribes, nature.

## **Introduction**

Oral narratives are vital to understand indigenous cultures. As they represent popular beliefs, customs, traditions, and values associated with a society, they enable us to gather knowledge about a socio-ethnic group. The term 'folklore' to demarcate this sphere of knowledge was first coined by the British antiquarian William Thoms in 1846. Previously the terms 'popular antiquities' or 'popular literature' were used for the purpose (Handoo 1985: 1). Consulting the sphere of study scientifically to know about indigenous societies was first undertaken by the Grimms brothers of Germany. Thereafter folk lore societies were established, and journals were published in Europe and America to enquire into this emerging area of inquest. The British in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century consulted Indian fables like Kathasaritasagar, Panchatantra and Jataka tales for understanding the Indian society. (Naithani 2001: 183-188). Mr Gomme, the Honorary Secretary of the Folk Tale Committee in India in the early twentieth century considering folk lore

as a science classified it as traditional narratives, folk tales, hero tales, ballads, songs, legends, customs, games, superstitions and beliefs, witchcraft, astrology, fancies, folk speech, popular sayings and nomenclature, proverbs, jingles, rhymes, and riddles (Chilli 1913: 1-2). Thus, folk lore gained recognition as relics of indigenous culture.

Oral narratives, an essential element of folk lore consists of songs, stories, memories, poems, lullabies, rituals, rites, myths, proverbs, and riddles associated with categories like religious, historical, social and culture of human societies have been repositories of Indian traditions since early times. The Vedas for example were oral recitals present in our country verbally delivered through ages (Kambar 1994: 110-115). Till converted to writing, epics like Mahabharata and the Jataka tales were narrated in oral form. Oral narratives are part of regional cultures in India. '*Kaavad Banchana*' is a story telling tradition in Rajasthan where Ramayana and Mahabharata, stories from the Puranas, caste genealogies and folk culture are recounted verbally. Similarly, '*Kathak*' traditions are found in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and parts of Northern India where the *Kathiks* narrate the myths and legends with the use of mime and gestures. Likewise in Nagaland, training, and education on the realities of life were imparted orally to the Naga youths in dormitories in the pre-independence era (Mishra and Chaudhary 2017: 1-37)

Northeast India is also a treasure house of oral cultures. The linguistic groups residing in the region have transmitted their oral traditions verbally for generations until they were textualized. Such traditions provide information on the tangible and intangible cultures of the region and its residents (Syiem 2016: 83-84, Bender 2012: 110). Thus, oral sources are precious alternative to understand the composite culture and structure of tribal societies in North East India especially about those which lack in archaeological or written sources.

### **Objectives and Methodology**

The paper investigates into the oral tales of Arunachal Pradesh through which its inhabitants' sought answers to questions related to nature, its creation, and occurrences. It highlights on the indigenous way of interpreting nature that was lacking in modern scientific explanation and justification. The paper is based on folk lore studies, anthropological researches, primary and secondary literature by the Indian and British scholars. Online sources have also been consulted.

## **Oral Traditions and Historical Description of Arunachal Pradesh**

Arunachal Pradesh remained closed to the outer world for centuries due to its topography, mountainous landscapes, disease and leech infested terrains and mighty rivers. The people of the region therefore led an isolated life confined to their geographical limits that enabled the growth of unique cultures among them. The people of Arunachal Pradesh are classified as Tibeto-Burman (Van Ham 2014: 27). The region has around 26 major tribal groups and 110 sub tribes, 50 different languages with dialects and sub-dialects. Oral traditions in the territory are reflections of the ideas, factors and processes that shaped the distinctive culture of the tribes through ages.

Till its reorganization under the British, Arunachal Pradesh functioned as an anthology of different tribal political entities separated from each other through geographical boundaries. The hill tribes exercised feudal rights over the communities living in the foothills near Assam plains and consequently undertook raids in the region to express their supremacy. The Ahom kings of Assam (1228-1826) adopted the system of 'Posa' under which the plain tribes made an annual contribution of essential commodities to the hill tribes in order to pacify them (Bordoloi 1964:18-20). The British government implemented the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation in 1873 and thus continued with the policy of isolation. In 1883, the Assam Frontier Tract Regulation was promulgated that politically divided the region into western, central eastern and Lakhimpur sections. In 1915 the tract was reorganized for better administration. It was named as North-east Frontier under the Government of India Act 1935 (Pandey 1997:9). It functioned as a part of Assam after independence under the Indian Independence Act of 1947. In 1965, units of local self-governments such as Zilla Parishads, Anchal Samitis, and Gram Panchayat were established and by 1972 the territory was upgraded as Union Territory with headquarters at Shillong. On 20<sup>th</sup> February 1987, it attained statehood as Arunachal Pradesh (Rao 2003:20).

The origin of the communities residing in Arunachal Pradesh is shrouded in mystery. The people of the region have migrated from various places of their origins such as the Monpas have migrated from Bhutan or Tibet, the Sherdukpens trace their origin from the Ahom royalty, the Akas claim their migration from upper Assam, the Adis are believed to have migrated from across the Himalayas and the Khamptis have descended from Burma. Similarly, there is presence

of several religions in the region. For instance, the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Khamptis and Singphos are Buddhists, the Mishings and the Noctes practice Vaishnavism, some tribes have converted to Christianity, the Adi, Nishi, Tagins, Idus, Mijus, Taroans, Buguns, Hrusos and Mijis have indigenous beliefs or believe in Donyi Polo (Tripathy & Dutta 2008:17-20). These diversities have evolved distinct cultures among the communities of which oral traditions occupy an important part. Legends, myths, and proverbs as part of them appreciably illuminate about indigenous roots in the region. Oral traditions also existed in the form of verbal impart of knowledge to people by the Buddhist monasteries, dormitories, and village councils (Bose 1997:258). Oral traditions remained as the source of instruction till the initiation of formal education after Indian independence.

### **Depictions of Nature in the Oral Narratives of Arunachal Pradesh**

The oral narratives of Arunachal Pradesh depict the creation of world from various perspectives. The idea that the world was formed from a primeval ocean finds place in several oral accounts of the area. The Hill Miri tribe considered that an enormous tree grew out of sea and the worms ate the wood of the tree until by the constant felling of the dust into the water formed the earth. The Hill Miri, Hrusso and the Khampti communities thought that the earth has emerged from a cosmic egg. The Minyong Adis believed that a *mithun* (a buffalo like animal found in the Eastern Himalayas) had dug a pit on the ground into which water was poured and dry earth was accumulated that formed the earth. The Nocte tribe believe that the earth appeared from water that subsided according to its own accord. The Sherdukpens considered that the earth was formed when two heavenly brothers threw a lotus into the surface of an ocean whereupon it was covered with flowers. Thereafter winds blew with clouds of dust until the earth was formed. According to a Taraon Mishmi tale, there was mud below a waterbody upon which a pillar was created on which a swarm of white ants climbed with their mouths filled with mud and created the earth (Elwin 1999:4).

Oral traditions of Arunachal Pradesh offer different reasons for the creation of rivers, mountains, sky, and other geographical formations within earth. The Minyong Adis believed the earth and the sky were separated couple. After the separation, the earth longed to return to her husband and as she was raising herself towards the sky, the sun and the moon appeared that made her ashamed and she could not proceed further. That part of her which was approaching towards her husband

became fixed and came up as mountains. The hill Miris believe that after the cracking of a cosmic egg, earth, mountains, and rivers came out of it. A Singpho legend connected the origin of earth with a woman who was born as cloud out of primeval fog and mist. She had a son and daughter who were like snow and from them the earth and the sky were born. It also believed that at the beginning, the earth was made of mud and the sky covered it forming a thick cloud. When wind was born, the earth was dried that led to its solidification and drove the sky far away (Elwin 1999:4). The Galo community attributed the origin of rivers to a rat spirit known as *Agi Bagi* who drank water from underground. On the request of deities and other living beings, he cut through the ground to let the water come out to quench their thirst. Initially the water refused to flow and demanded that its flow over the ground should be like a marriage procession. All the deities accepted the proposal and the water flow took the shape of rivers. Similar legends exist on the formation of rocks and stones too (Basar 2014:51).

The followers of Donyi-Polo faith in Arunachal Pradesh have legends associated with the creation of Sun and Moon. The Apatani legends perceived that initially the earth and sky were in vague forms. They received physical shapes when a figure named Hintii Anii gave birth to earth and the sky. The sun and the moon were the eyes of Hintii Anii. During this period the evil spirits led by Girii created a new world with another sun known as Chanter Danyi and a moon named as Chanter Pulo. The existence of two suns and moons heated up the earth leading to its destruction where habitation became impossible. In such situation, Tamu destroyed the sun and the moon created by Girii by shooting them down. Now there were only Danyi, the sun and Pulo, the moon (Blackburn 2008:154). So, Sun-Moon are revered figures in the Donyi-Polo faith. The Adi oral narratives visualized human lives as surrounded by good and evil spirits above which there existed the sun and the moon or the Donyi-polo. Thus, they gave an elevated position to sun and moon. The position of the prime mover of creation was given to *Kayum* or the great mother. The hill Miris considered that mankind was surrounded by a pantheon of spirits headed by the sun who stood without the support of the moon. The earth god with the sun protected all living beings (Elwin 1999: 31-32).

The oral narratives of Arunachal Pradesh have attempted to find reasons behind occurrences of natural disasters and phenomenon like eclipse or mark in the moon. The Dafla folktales considered the moon and the sun as married couple. The marks in the moon were caused after he was beaten by his wife, the sun. The Minyong traditions suggest that Wiyu, the

great black bear like creature after finding the sun to be too hot throws his shade on it and creates eclipse. It also believed that eclipse happened when the moon veiled its face. The Minyongs believe that thunders were the sound of weeping of the mighty *Wiyu*. The Taron Mishmis attributed lightening to the fighting between the cloud pigs in the sky. According to the Miri oral sources, rain is caused by the overflowing of the great sky tank that sometimes goes dry leading to droughts. The Wancho tales propose that when gods in heaven and earth go for war, the earth trembles leading to earthquakes. Some of the communities also believe that the earth rests on the head of a mighty creature and earthquakes are caused by the restlessness of the creature (Elwin 1999:33-85).

### **Conclusion**

Thus, such attempts to know about nature through oral narratives bring out the curiosities and inquisitiveness of indigenous tribal mind in Arunachal Pradesh about natural phenomenon especially during the period when they lacked scientific elucidations for such occurrences. Depiction of nature through oral lore informs about tribal worldview about nature, elements of indigenous culture, and about local socio-ethnic characteristics. The isolation of the region from the rest of the world played an important role in shaping such explanations through oral narratives which were later instrumental in framing information about the region and its communities under the colonial and post-colonial regimes.

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# **Exploring the Traditional Ethical and Moral Values of the Angami Nagas: Taboos and Beliefs through the Lens of *Kenyü* Observance**

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## **Abstract**

Traditional beliefs and observances are the intangible heritage that brings out the uniqueness of a community. The colonial stereotyping of the Nagas as found in the ethnographic records/monographs/Reports has made the pre-colonial Naga society primitive in the realm of savagery and such histories forms the typical discourse of the Naga Hills. The refined aspects of cultural traditions like social etiquettes, civic sense, politeness and courtesy that are embedded in the traditional beliefs system have been ignored historiographically. Looking from the insider's perspective, the paper aims to shed light on the significant aspects of traditional values that have been overlooked in broader historical narratives. Emphasizing on the *Kenyü* observance, understood as 'forbidden,' 'fear'and thus a 'code of conduct', the work endeavors to reveal the philosophy behind the traditional practices and how its observances have instilled and promoted moral and ethical values and regulated society in the past. The paper further sheds light on the nature of society as reflected in the various beliefs and taboo observances. It also give an insight into how the intangible traditional beliefs continued to become a very important part of the cultural tradition and how it acts as a guide in maintaining peace and order in everyday life till today.

Keywords: *Kenyü*, civic sense, social etiquettes, taboo, ethics.

## **Introduction:**

Angami Naga is one of the 16 Naga tribes in Nagaland inhabiting the North East Indian state of Nagaland. They primarily reside in the southern district of Kohima, which borders the states of Manipur and Assam. The Angami Nagas form the fifth largest Naga group in the state, with a total population of 1,24,696 (2001 Census). The Angami along with other ethnic Naga group viz: Annal, Chakhesang, Mao, Maram, Poumai, Pochury, Rengma, and Zeliangrong are commonly called as the Tenyimia Nagas. Officially, the Tenyimia group consisted of nine tribes'.<sup>1</sup> 'The Angami tribe is made up of different groups. Hutton (1921:15) identifies four distinct groups among them. They are i) the Khonoma group ii) Kohima group iii) Viswema group iv) Chakhroma group. These groups of people even at present are commonly identified based on their geographical distribution. The Northern Angami are the people living in and around Kohima, the Western Angami are those living in the West, the Southern Angami are towards the South and the Chakhroma Angami lives on the slopes of national highway from Kohima to Dimapur. Tenyidie is the common language spoken by the Tenyimia community.

Through an in-depth exploration of the *kenyü* observance, the work demonstrates the underlying philosophy of the traditional practices and its role in instilling moral and ethical values while regulating the society in the past. The work also brings to light about the nature of the society as reflected in the various beliefs and taboo observances. It provides an insight into the traditional value system and how it remained integral to the Angami Naga cultural tradition and continues to guide society in maintaining peace and order in everyday life.

## **Understanding *Kenyü* and its Significance:**

The concept of *kenyü* in Tenyidie cannot be fully translated into English with a single word that carries the same weight and significance. While "forbidden" is a commonly used translation, it falls short of capturing the profound depth and impact of *kenyü*. When the term *kenyü* is employed, it goes beyond a mere prohibition; it invokes a complex range of emotions including reverence and fear, extending beyond the realm of punishment alone.

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<sup>1</sup>Refer to Souvenir Special Issue: "A study of the Common Origin of the Tenyimia Communities," Tenyimia Union General Secretary's Report, "Extract of Various Minutes/Resolution of Tenyimia Union during the Period of 25/03/1995-22/02//1996." p.29-30., 1996.

The essence of *kenyüis* difficult to articulate in words, as it encompasses a cultural and moral understanding deeply embedded in Tenyimia Community. Those who are familiar with its meaning can sense the fear that accompanies it, and they recognize the potential consequences that may befall individuals who transgress its boundaries. *kenyü* is not solely concerned with following rules; it represents an intricate web of social norms and ethical guidelines. It prompts individuals to consider their actions and speech, aiming to ensure they align with the accepted standards of the community. The word resonates with a profound awareness of the potential repercussions that come from violating these norms.

It is said that during their migration, these traditional beliefs emerged from the ancestral location known as Makhel and subsequently disseminated throughout various regions inhabited by the Tenyimia community.<sup>2</sup> ‘The villagers must comply with specific rules and regulations; otherwise, it is deemed as *kenyü*, a violation of traditional norms that is looked down upon by the community. The villagers strongly disapprove of noncompliance and can face severe consequences, even death. It is the responsibility of the villagers to fulfill their civic duty by following these rules in order to uphold peace and order in the village. Numerous prohibitions, categorized as *kenyü*, have been handed down since the village's inception and possibly even earlier.’<sup>3</sup> The cornerstone of Angami culture lies in the concept of "*kenyü*," denoting a prohibition or taboo. But what does it truly signify when something is labeled as *kenyü*? Essentially, *kenyü* serves as a preventive measure, dissuading individuals from engaging in wrongful acts. It further embodies a moral code of conduct that guides the Angami people in leading an honorable and harmonious existence. In essence, *kenyü* entails the prohibition placed on individuals to refrain from actions deemed inappropriate within society (Kire 2019:87). Therefore, it is also understood as an unspoken set of guidelines that fosters mindfulness in both speech and behavior, encouraging individuals to align with societal expectations and avoid actions that deviate from established norms.

**Philosophy behind *Kenyü*:** The philosophy underlying *kenyüis* akin to the concept of sin in a religious context, but it encompasses a broader set of principles. It functions as a decree with severe consequences, as transgressors are not only personally accountable for their actions but also bring stigma upon their entire family, village, and future generations. *Kenyüis* strictly

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<sup>2</sup>Information provided by KhruomoKepelhouchaon 10/09/2017, Kohima, Nagaland.

<sup>3</sup> Information provided by KhruomoYalhouon 2/10/2017, Kohima, Nagaland.

followed without regard for age or gender.<sup>4</sup> There are several brief writings on this traditional practice that provide only surface-level descriptions. According to Hutton, the term "kenna" is used without any explicit mention of the underlying basis or justification for the "prohibition," which is why the word "tabu" has been somewhat avoided. The Angami word itself does not imply the reason behind the prohibition. The usage of the word "kenna" is so broad that it can encompass not only the violation of strict rules related to magical or religious observances but also breaches of social laws, such as theft, or even insignificant matters of practicality (1921: 190). *Kenyü* is an implemented philosophy aimed at controlling, correcting, and pre-emptively addressing human behaviour. Its origins lie in the intention to discipline individuals and foster a civilized society, explicitly upholding the values of social etiquette and ethics for the sake of harmony. Without external coercion, *kenyü* serves as a guiding force, directing people's conscience toward embracing virtuous moral values. It is directly linked to acts of compassion, love, respect, and selflessness towards the underprivileged, including the poor, needy, and elderly within the community.

Numerous principles and guidelines are associated with *kenyü*, such as respecting and obeying parents, elders, and village priests. It also entails forgiving enemies and caring for orphans, destitute individuals, and those with disabilities. Notably, there have been instances where individuals in states of extreme anger, anxiety, or despair have demonstrated self-control, forgiveness, mercy, and love as a result of the influence of *kenyü*. 'There are rules and regulations which needs to be adhered to otherwise it is considered as *kenyü*, which become a part of the traditional norms and it is frowned upon if it is not followed by the villagers. The villagers strongly disapprove of not adhering to these rules and would face serious consequences to the extent of dead. It is the civic duty of the villagers to follow these rules to maintain peace and order in the village. There are various prohibitions considered as *kenyü*, which have been passed down since the establishment of the village and even earlier.'<sup>5</sup> It refers to restrictions applied to the individual. *Penyie* refer to taboos (forbidden) applied to the community. (Pienyu 2017:41). 'The most important aspect in Angami culture is "*kenyü*" which means prohibition or taboo. What does it mean to say that something is *kenyü*? *Kenyü* prevents people from doing wrong. It is also the moral code of conduct they follow to live a good and harmonious life.

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<sup>4</sup> Information provided by Neikuonuo Soloon 2/10/2017, Kohima, Nagaland.

<sup>5</sup> Information provided by Khruomo Yalhou on 2/10/2017, Kohima, Nagaland.

Kenyü is the prohibition of an individual from doing wrong in the society.(Kire 2019:87 ).It is understood as an unwritten code which prompts awareness in one’s speech and action to do what is acceptable in society and to refrain from what is contrary to social norms.

**Philosophy behind *Kenyü*:**The concept is equivalent to sin in religious sensebut it has a bigger philosophy attached to it. It is like an edict because violators were held accountable of punishments which stigmatised the whole family, village, and their descendants as well. It is strictly adhered to irrespective of age or sex.<sup>6</sup>There are several small works about this traditional practice which are rather superficially narrated. The opinion given by Hutton in regard to *kenyü* does not carry much weight but he did discern the logic behind the *kenyü* and why people were aware of it. Hutton writes,

‘First of all we have “*Kenna*” (or “*kenyü*”), that is to say, “prohibition”. Now this word “*kenna*”is used without any reference whatever to the sanction on which the “prohibition” rests, and it is for this reason that the word “*tabu*” has been rather avoided, since there is nothing in the Angami word to suggest the reason of the prohibition. So loose is the use of the word “*kenna*” that it may refer not only to the breach of the strict rule of a magico-religious observance ot to the breach of a social law, theft for example, but to the most trivial matter of pure utility.’(Hutton 1921:190)

Outsiders failed to grasp the deeper meaning and the logical aspects of the traditional practices. It is observed that *kenyü*is a philosophy implemented to control, correct, and provide precautionary measures towards human behaviours. Itis also said to have originated and designed mainly to discipline the people and to create a civilised society, to explicitly uphold the values of social etiquettes and ethics for a harmonious society. With no external force or compulsion, *kenyü*directs and guides people’s conscience to possess good moral values. It has a direct correlation to showing mercy, love, honour, and sacrifices to the poor, needy, and elders in the society. Numerous principles and guidelines are associated with *kenyü*, such as respecting and obeying parents, elders, and village priests. It also entails forgiving enemies and caring for orphans, destitute individuals, and those with disabilities. Notably, there have been instances

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<sup>6</sup>Information provided by Neikuonuo Solo on 2/10/2017, Kohima, Nagaland.

where individuals in states of extreme anger, anxiety, or despair have demonstrated self-control, forgiveness, mercy, and love as a result of the influence of *kenyü*.

**The Co-relation of *Kenyü* with Ethical Principles and Civic Sense:** Angami Naga is renowned for their honesty and integrity. It is one of the strongest qualities that define the nature of the Angami people. Hutton in his monograph about the Angami Nagas writes about the honest nature of the people and how in everyday life activities truth prevailed in every way. He further mentions that people did not exaggerate in narrating incidents or events but ‘on the whole, truth is the rule and falsehood the exception’ and that they are capable of very great loyalty and fidelity (refer to Hutton 1921:38-39). This uprightness has made the Angami people agreeable and reliable. And this inherent honesty has contributed to their amiable nature and established them as a trustworthy community. ‘The culture of honesty of Angamis does not only define their cultural identity but also defines their uniqueness from the rest of the Naga communities’. (Kire 2019: 86-87). We find a linkage being established between the *kenyü* observance and the honest nature of the Angami people and it is clearly expressed in the work of Kire wherein she writes, ‘this culture of honesty among Angami people is actually nurtured by their moral conduct of taboo called *kenyü*. Anything that is *kenyü* is prohibited or taboo or considered as bad to practice. Therefore, anything that is *kenyü* displeases God. So, whoever displeases God, it is believed that he or she will never live a good life. Angami people take *kenyü* so serious that they have altered the patterns of their living accordingly so that they do not breach their moral conduct or *kenyü*’. (Ibid:87). Therefore, it is plausible to say that many of the refined cultural practices among the Angami Naga are associated with the *kenyü* observances.

Looking into everyday life and activities, people are conscientious to avoid any potential problem or dangers out of not maintaining *kenyü*. ‘It has become a norm to be cautious while working, eating, washing, talking, or revilement. The belief in *kenyü* encourages civic sense. To let people see, smell or step upon on excrement was a *kenyü* and it is deemed to *bemengathor* (shameful). Hence, ancestors were very careful about it. This ancestral doctrine governs and guides the community. Also, by abiding its observance, no curse passes onto the future generations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Information provided by Sachü B. K. and Khroumo Kepelhouchaon 12/08/2018, Kohima, Nagaland.



A practice which is very striking especially in rural areas that reveals how people were imbued with the moral and ethical principles was a practice of leaving their houses unlocked. Till today, people used to just latch their door with a stick whenever they go out. This practice is rooted in the shared understanding among the Angami community that stealing is not only morally wrong, but it is also believed to displease both God and humanity. In fact, it is considered a severe taboo (*kenyüthor*) even to touch the stick that signifies the absence of the house owner. This taboo is strictly upheld by everyone, as violating it is deemed a grave offense.<sup>8</sup> During ancient times, the act of stealing cattle was a prevalent issue that was taken very seriously. Stealing was a matter of serious concern in Angami society. To identify the perpetrator and administer strict consequences, the community implemented a traditional system known as '*kerüguchiekhri*'. Additionally, in order to eradicate such wrongful practices entirely from the village, stringent punishments even to the extent of capital punishment were imposed, following a seven-fold approach. A significant historical incident took place at Daphfütsukhel in Kohima village, where a thief was apprehended by the community using an effective traditional method. Oral historians have recorded how this event unfolded at the D' Khel public ground. The initial step involved placing an effigy made of a banana tree at the local ground. The village elders loudly called upon all males, regardless of their age or status, to participate in the public piercing of the ritual effigy. Each member solemnly pledged their innocence regarding the theft in question, while willingly subjecting themselves to the curse that would befall them and their family if found guilty. In this manner, an unidentified thief met his demise through the collective action of the community.<sup>9</sup> Another example is that while engaging in jhuming and terrace field harvesting, children often find joy in joining their parents halfway through the process. They take delight in gathering the fruits of their parents' labour such as maize, paddy, guava, cucumber, and more to bring home. Some people even leave their heavy loads inside a communal resting shed known as *Cha Pru*. There is no hesitation for they have the faith and trust that their belongings will remain safe or unharmed because it is strictly forbidden and consider *kenyüto* steal.<sup>10</sup>

**Beliefs as Builder of Social Relationship:** Following the principles of *kenyü* certain refined cultures have emerged within the Tenyimia community, which effectively encapsulate their

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<sup>8</sup>Information provided by Khruomo Neisevi-ü on 20/6/2023, Kohima, Nagaland.

<sup>9</sup>Information provided by Kreditsu Kuo-o on 10/9/2018, Kohima, Nagaland.

<sup>10</sup>Information provided by Khruomo Neisevi-ii on 20/06/2023, Kohima, Nagaland.

traditional cultural values. One's character and behaviour, referred to as *menga* (shame), *kedietheo* (truth), and *kedzünga* (courtesy) in Tenydie, serve as determining factors in assessing a person's moral standing. These values hold immense significance in establishing harmonious relationships both within the family and in broader social interactions. The Tenyimia people prioritize these traditional cultural values over material wealth, recognizing their profound importance. They adhere to these values so strictly that individuals who fail to uphold them may face severe consequences, including social ostracization from the village.

Nagas, known for their hospitable nature, recognize the Tenyimia people as exceptionally friendly and always ready to warmly welcome visitors, regardless of economic circumstances. Tenyimia individuals are renowned for their inherent qualities of love, generosity, hospitality, and open-mindedness. From the most financially challenged to the wealthiest, they willingly offer assistance and sacrificial love to others. Their greatest source of happiness, satisfaction, and love stems from generously and cheerfully giving to those around them.<sup>11</sup> Tenyimia people are esteemed for their open-mindedness, simplicity, and polite demeanour, even among other Naga tribes. They take great delight in hosting strangers, ensuring they feel at home, and embracing them with their distinct culture of kindness. These intangible qualities form a core part of the Tenyimia identity and are highly valued assets, positively influencing other Naga tribes as well. Notably, the Tenyimia exhibit exceptional care and concern for the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and those with mental illnesses. Disregarding or ridiculing such individuals is considered a significant curse. Prioritizing kindness in both words and actions is essential for seeking blessings upon oneself and the community as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

***Kenyüas* a Regulator of Social Norms/Human Behaviour:** Here are a few examples of what is considered as *kenyüas* information provided by VenyoSaneilie<sup>13</sup>

1. To close community water sources. (Rivers, drains, streams, etc.)

According to belief, performing such an action is believed to shorten the life of a person responsible.

2. To close public pathways.

As above, the belief holds that the culprit's lifespan will be shortened.

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<sup>11</sup>Information provided by KeretsiiMedo on 10/9/2017, Kohima, Nagaland.

<sup>12</sup>Information provided by KeretsiiMedo on 10/9/2017, Kohima, Nagaland.

<sup>13</sup>Information provided by VenyoSaneilie on 7/6/2023, Kohima Nagaland.

3. To refuse to adopt a child.

Certain people choose not to accept illegitimate children born out of wedlock. Similarly, some decline to adopt orphans or needy people, but it is considered as *kenyüthor* (strictly forbidden) for the fear of experiencing infertility.

4. To wrongfully encroach on land or properties of others.

Engaging in such actions is regarded as a major sin and might bring about both physical and spiritual ruin. Moreover, there is possibility of curse befalling upon the descendants of the person involved.

5. To mock or disregard physically challenged people.

Due to the fear of encountering a similar ailment people express kindness and love towards physically challenged individuals, as it is believed that such compassionate actions will bring them blessings.

6. To illegally inherit the property of a deceased person.

Engaging in such behaviour can bring curse affecting both the person involved and their future generations.

7. To suppress the rights of a widow, orphan, or a senior citizen.

Similarly, the same punishment may befall upon the person responsible and their descendants may also face the same consequences.

The significance of the term *kenyü* in the culture is so profound that its mere mention serves as a reminder to abstain from what is deemed *kenyü*. Before embarking on any endeavor, it is considered *kenyü* to commence without first conducting ceremonies and offerings to God. When meals are served, a small portion of food is set aside and offered to God, accompanied by prayers and gratitude for the sustenance provided. Similarly, when initiating work, the eldest member of the group offers prayers, invokes blessings, and performs rituals. The practice of *kenyü* instills a reverential relationship with God, permeating various aspects of their everyday lives. Some important instances are cited where *kenyü* is observed in everyday life.

- i) Disrespecting elders, even at sunset, is strictly forbidden due to the significance and value of acknowledging their wisdom and guidance for achieving success in life.

- ii) Inflicting physical harm upon parents is deemed *kenyü*, as it inevitably leads to a shortened lifespan and a lack of success. Individuals who engage in such actions will find themselves devoid of blessings and forever unable to surpass others in life.
- iii) It is considered *kenyü* to use disrespectful names when referring to parents, elders, or even one's spouse. This caution arises from the concern that such language may lead to disrespect among family members. Ancestors have emphasized the importance of the phrase '*kenyüthorrei a ngumezhiethie*,' which signifies the understanding that it is inappropriate to issue commands and instead, it is better to request favors kindly. Similarly, spouses traditionally address each other as father or mother, as a sign of honor and respect. Similarly, among siblings, the younger ones use terms like *adi/abo* (elder brother), *aboü/anei-ü* (elder sister), *ami*, *apfiizhau*, *athi* (uncle), and so on to address their older siblings.<sup>14</sup>
- iv) Accepting bribes is considered *kenyü*, as it involves receiving something that doesn't rightfully belong to us. Moreover, it is widely believed that those who engage in bribery not only displease God but also invite misfortune and potentially bring curses upon future generations.
- v) Paying only half of the wages to those who have worked for us is deemed *kenyü*, as it results in the blessings that should rightfully come to us being transferred to them.
- vi) Eating in a cross-legged position is considered *kenyü*, as it is believed that such a posture invites danger and emergencies in life. This belief stems from the notion that accidents tend to occur more frequently when someone is sitting cross-legged.
- vii) Uprooting or relocating traditional boundaries or erected stones are regarded as *kenyü*. Any individual who engages in such actions is deemed guilty of theft. Furthermore, if someone deceitfully takes an oath to occupy or encroach even a

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<sup>14</sup>Information provided by Kuo-o Kreditsu on 10/9/2018, Kohima, Nagaland

small portion of land, they are liable to face severe consequences, and the sins associated with such actions may affect future generations.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

Traditional observances and practices are considered as a great legacy. The paper reveals the richness and complexities of the Angami cultural traditions which are often overlooked or misrepresented. It encourages a more nuanced understanding and appreciation of the intangible heritage that defines the uniqueness of the Angami Naga community. *Kenyü* is a complex and multi-faceted concept deeply ingrained within the Angami tribe, it serves as a moral compass, guiding individuals to adhere to societal expectations and avoid actions that deviate from established norms. Beyond personal accountability, *kenyü* extends to the reputation of one's family, village and future generations emphasizing the collective responsibility to uphold virtuous values. This concept shares similarities with the notion of sin in religious context, encouraging individuals to embrace compassion, love, respect and selflessness. By prioritizing honesty and integrity, the Angami Naga people have cultivated a culture of trustworthiness and hospitality, distinguishing from other Naga communities. People till today believes that observance of *kenyü* brings blessings not only in this life but in the next life too and saves the next generation from any malediction. In fact, today it has become like a social etiquette which everyone is expected to adhere from private to public places. *Kenyü* plays a significant role in guiding the Angami Naga people towards an honorable and harmonious existence, shaping their cultural identity.

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## **Traditional Institution of Folk Literature and Culture in Manipur with Special Reference to UmanglaiHaraoba**

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### **Abstract**

The UmanglaiHaraoba "An Appeasement of Sylvan and Ancestral Deity" is a ritual festival particularly observed by the Meitei community with sanctity in the Manipur and outside the state to some extent. Lai Haraoba itself is a living university for the preservation of culture identity and it imparts knowledge on a variety of subjects. It embodies the elements of common ancestry, integrity and communal harmony among the various indigenous communities residing in Manipur. This festival reveals the cosmogony-theory of the creation of the Universe then the Earth and the living creature especially human being. The objective of the paper is to find out the role of UmanglaiHaraoba in an innovative approach as a traditional institution of folk literature and culture in Manipur. The text of Lai Haraoba is an oral tradition which has its root in the pre-literary Meitei society and is therefore older than the earliest examples of the archaic written Manipuri. It is significant that although the archaic script probably gets back thousand years or more, the Lai Haraoba was never preserved in written form. This tradition included praise-hymns to the Gods and goddesses. This religious and social festival, besides being the repository of different facets of culture, is the biggest source of a variety folk literature in Manipur.

*Keywords:* Umanglai, Lai Haraoba, folk literature, universe of knowledge, traditional institution

### **Introduction:**

Manipur has been known to the people of India and across the globe since many years for her unique identity and qualities. The state is the home of many ethnic tribes and communities



with their distinctive lifestyles and beliefs. The land has a rich traditional culture of its own and has many spectacular contributions to the world of culture. The Meitei people live with our heads held high because of the rich cultural heritage left behind by our ancestors.

Umanglais, the tutelary, ancestral, domestic, sylvan and clan deities of the indigenous people of Manipur which are worshipping especially by celebrating a ritual festival popularly known as UmanglaiHaraoba, literally it is translated as 'An appeasement to the Sylvan deity.' There are about 150 Umanglais residing in above 700 shrines in different parts of North-Eastern India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. As the Laiharaoba consists of fertility rites, some of the Umanglais are very popular for begging child by the infertile couples. Some of the Umanglais are closely associated with worshipping for sick, weak and handicapped children. Worshipping of Umanglai is a compulsory ritual programme of the wedding ceremony of Meitei community. Thus, there is an inseparable relation between Umanglais and Manipuri society. So, each and every locality in Manipur is compulsorily having one shrine of Umanglai as there is such strong traditional belief of Umanglai culture.

UmanglaiHaraoba, in fact is observed as a socio-cultural festival or the performance of ceremonial rites to appease the Umanglai, the Sylvan deity” and is considered as the unique contribution of the indigenous peoples to the domain of world culture. The Meitei peoples in Assam, Tripura, Nagaland, Bangladesh and Myanmar also celebrate UmanglaiHaraoba. The world's famous Manipuri dance (Ras Lila), polo and *Nat Sankritana* (recognized by UNESCO), etc. are the products of Umanglai culture.

Laiharaoba, the vibrant festival, is widely helpful in the socialization and nation making process of the indigenous peoples. It embodies the elements of common ancestry, integrity and communal harmony among the various communities residing in the region. In short, it can be said to reflect the culture of the indigenous peoples in totality, irrespective of caste, creed or faith. The ritual festival is the greatest single key to the religion, culture and history of Meitei people of Manipur. Lai Haraoba itself is a university (the Universe of Knowledge in the Meitei society), which is preserving and imparting knowledge on a variety of subjects. Identity and civilization of the Meitei nation are clearly reflected in this festival. UmanglaiHaraoba also reveals the cosmogony-theory of the creation of the Universe then the Earth and the living

creature especially human being. It is the school of philosophical thoughts of Meitei community and also the school of oral and folk literature, dance and music of the region.

The objective of the paper is to find out the roles of UmanglaiHaraoba in an innovative approach as a traditional institution for folk literature and culture in Manipur. The text of Lai Haraoba is an oral tradition which has its roots in pre-literary Meitei society and is therefore older than the earliest examples of the archaic written Manipuri. It is significant, however, that although the archaic script probably gets back a thousand years or more, the Lai Haraoba was never preserved in written form. This tradition included praise-hymns to the Gods and goddesses and folk songs which shared similar literary genres to the material which is now contained in the oral text of the festival 'Lai Haraoba.' This religious and social festival, besides being the repository of different facets of culture, is the biggest source of a variety of folk literature in Manipur. It is also an attempt to study the history of Manipuri literature and language from the literary genres - liturgical prayers, lyrics for prosperity, dancing songs, love lyrics, etc. of the Lai Haraoba.

### **The Oral Text:**

The rich traditional knowledge of Manipur has not only been passed down orally from generation to generation (oral tradition), but it has also been described in ancient classical and other literature. The old Manipuri folk literature is also well known in the repository of SahityaAkademi, New Delhi. UmanglaiHaraoba has been one of the most powerful organs in the preservation of folk literature and culture of Meitei society. Some of the main rituals of Lai Haraoba like *Lai Yakeiba*, *Ougri*, *Khencho*, *HijingHirao*, etc., are also the most important parts of the old Manipuri literature. Such old texts are also found in manuscripts.

Most of the text of the Lai Haraoba is an oral tradition, not a literary one, and it was and it is still the responsibility of the Amaiba 'priests', Amaibi 'priestess' and *Penakhongba* 'Pena singers' to preserve the texts. There are indeed differences in the texts being used in the various forms of Lai Haraoba, and some are quite considerable. This is due partly to the different *Lais* (Gods and goddesses) who are addressed, and also to local variations. In general, however, the basic text of the Lai Haraoba represents a tradition that has remained substantially unchanged

over time. Although the archaic Manipuri script (called *Meitei Mayek*) probably goes back thousand years or more, the Lai Haraoba was never preserved in written form. But now a good deal of valuable work has been carried out by Manipuri scholars to preserve the text of Lai Haraoba in written form. Furthermore, the Lai Haraoba text as it stands today is only a part of that oral tradition of pre-literature. This tradition included praise-hymns to the Gods and goddesses and folk songs as well. The hymns and folk songs shared similar literary genres to the materials which are now contained in the oral text of Lai Haraoba, and it is very likely that the Lai Haraoba absorbed some oral texts which originally had little to do with the essence of the festival.

The Lai Haraoba is a sprawling complex of song, dance and ritual which has clearly grown up over a period of time, and incorporated within itself a number of diverse elements. These are enclosed within the overarching structure of the coming of the Lais' Gods and goddesses' to be present at the festival on day one and their return to the heaven on the final day. On the beginning of the festival, the Lais are called forth from the waters by the Maibi, it is called *Lai Ikouba* (Lai Eekouba= calling the Gods and goddesses from water) and ceremonially it is taken in procession to the shrine (*Lai Higaba*=bringing the Lais by boat). At evening, the Penakhongba sing songs to sleep the Gods or goddesses by chanting and playing the *Naosum* (lullaby), and each morning the Gods or goddesses are greeted with *Yakeirol* 'awakening song in the early morning'. On the central days the Lais are symbolically brought out in the courtyard to witness the rituals. The main rituals may be grouped into the following broad sections:

1. The Laibou (birth) cycle consists of dance sequence depicting creation, an invitation to sexual congress, the creation lyric (*Anoirol*), and a mimed dance with antiphonal singing demonstrating the life-cycle;
2. The Panthoibi cycle is a series of lyrics largely to do with fertility, agriculture, Handloom and handicraft, etc.;
3. A third cycle, performed beneath a canopy (*Phijang*), consisting of complex dances, accompanied by songs, which are meant to portray the creation of the universe; and
4. On the last day only, performed a series of dances and lyrics which symbolize the gathering in of the universe into one (*Ougri*) and ending in a song of rejoicing (*Khencho*).

At the end of the festival, the deities return to heaven by means of a *HijingHirao* 'boat'. This final section begins with the cutting of the tree to make the vessel, following which it is rowed to heaven and it is called Lai Nongaba 'going to the heaven'. This concluding episode mirrors the coming of the Lais at Lai Eekouba and Lai Higaba on day one. To this main structure, other interludes are added. There are numerous cleansing and apotropaic rites, and offerings of flowers and fruits. At set points, the Amaibi becomes possessed and delivers oracles. In its traditional form, the end of the Lai Haraoba was also the occasion for communal and sporting activities.

Thus, in the ritual dances of Lai Haraoba we see the performers demonstrating the cycle of life of a human being- from the foetus in the mother's womb, to birth and to habitation with erection of house, cultivation and weaving of cloths for offering to the gods- by gestures of hands and body. They also demonstrate how the undulating surface of the newly created earth was levelled by the youthful gods and goddesses. In re-enacting those acts of the Almighty and other divine beings, the Meitei believe that their pleasure evoked and in return the mortals on the earth are blessed with happiness and prosperity. There are also a few dance numbers and songs in such a performance charged with erotic elements along with the reproduction of the romantic episodes between the divine couple- NongpokNingthou and Panthoibi. In view of all this, the festival is regarded by modern scholars as a 'fertility rite'.

An analysis of the lyrics of the Lai Haraoba into literary genres throws some light on the way in which the festival as it is now celebrated is constituted of several originally independent units. Our present understanding of archaic Manipuri, however, does not at the moment permit us to suggest earlier a possible dictation of the oral texts and these genres may be the earlier or whether they developed simultaneously. It seems reasonably clear, however, that the liturgical prayers must have provided the basic framework within which the other oral lyrics were absorbed. Alongside this approach attention will also need to be given to the different origins of the diverse traditions which were from time to time incorporated into the text of the festival as a whole.

### **Indigenous Music and Ritual Songs:**

Manipur presents a wide spectrum of music which is the best way to revive and refresh the daily monotonous lifestyle of the people residing in the state. Both the hill and valley people of the state are very much fond of songs and music. *KhutlangIshei* 'Call and response song',

*Pena Ishei'**Pena song'*, *Lai HaraobaIshei Lai Haraoba song'*, *Nat Sakritan*, *ThabalChongbaIshei 'songs sung in the folk dance festival'*, *KhubakIshei*, *Nupi Pala*, *ManoharSai*, *MoirangKangleirollIshei (MoirangParva)*, *KhongjomParva*, etc. are some of the popular folk songs of the Meitei community. It is accepted by all that the folk dance and music of Meitei community is originated from UmanglaiHaraoba. The world's famous Manipuri dances (*Ras Lila/JagoiRas*), *Khamba-ThoibiJagoi*, *Thang-Ta* (Manipuri martial arts) and *Manipuri Nat Sankritan* (recognized by UNESCO), etc. are the products of Umanglai culture. Performance study, philosophical study and other studies about the traditional music, therapeutic elements found in the folk music and ritual songs, etc. should also be conducted at various educational levels. Many indigenous musical instruments are still preserved through this ritual ceremony i.e. UmanglaiHaraoba. *LangdePung*, *Sen*, *Pere*, *Pena*, *Tharaochi*, *Khung*, *Singa*, *Senpung*, *TaretSenphang*, *UningUtong*, *Langmei*, *Charik*, *Nongthrei*, *Kondo Konjei*, *Toudri*, etc. are the main indigenous musical instruments used in Lai Haraoba. While several instruments are used in Lai Haraoba music, the most original and characteristic one is the *Pena*, a one-stringed fiddle.

The ritual songs and hymns may be said to have ushered in the dawn of early Manipuri poetry or, for that matter, Manipuri literature. They are not folk songs which should have been, as community believed, on the lips of every man and woman in a society and handed down to the following generations. In case of these sacred songs not only were they meant for particular ceremonial functions, ritual observances and festive occasions, but they also required a *corps de' elite* of performers to render them. No doubt, some of them are devoid of literary merit, but the rest definitely set a pace.

## **Conclusion**

From the above shown facts and circumstances it is brought to light that the sacraments of Meitei Umanglai-Haraoba is not merely a Meitei theistic or religious festive observance but also the source of almost all the cultural heritages in the socio-religious, socio-economic, socio-recreational and alike fields. It is also one of the most important source and resource of dancing, musical, balletic and melodramatic arts. It is the most interesting and heart capturing social function in the Meitei native indigenous and cultic theme. In short, the Lai Haraoba festival is a genuine festival of the Meitei that has raised this stylized dance to the domain of a very high artistic and

aesthetic expression and has produced one of the beautiful and authentic traditional schools of religions dancing in the world. This is the unique contribution of Manipur to the world of culture.

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## On The Transformation of Folktale into A Puranic Tale

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### Abstract

This paper, which, in all possibility, is the first study of its kind in Odia, invites attention to the changes that the story of Tapoi, which is an Odia folktale, undergoes as it is retold in the puranic mold and tries to interpret the same. It observes that in its retelling there is no complete disconnect from the source narrative and that in its puranic version, there is a distinct folktale flavour.

*Keywords:* folktale, puranic tale, Tapoi, khudurukiniosa, goddess Mangala

### Introduction

This paper deals with the transformation into a puranic tale (more correctly “minor-puranic” tale, to which category belong the osha and the brata tales and the mahatmyas) of the story of Tapoi, which is a very popular Odia folk tale. A religious observance, named “Khudurukuniosa” is associated with this tale. It has more than one versions and I am aware of three. One of these I take as the folktale, knowing that it is a rendering of an oral narrative by an academic. I have done so, assuming that we would perhaps never come to know its oral version, that is the source story. The compiler-writer characterizes it as a lokagalpa (folktale) and under the circumstances, I have chosen to go with his characterization. Besides, the story has the simplicity, naturalness and the un-otherworldliness of a typical folktale. This story is not associated with Khudurukuniosha, which means that it is not recited during the observance. Because it is not a puranic tale, it is only to be expected. The other two are the puranic versions of it, one of which is associated with the osha in the above sense. The paper is divided into two parts. The first

presents the three versions of the Tapoi story and the second deals with the transformation of the folk tale into a puranic tale.

This is most probably the first study, in some detail, of the transformation of a folktale into a puranic narrative in Odia. With respect to the celebrated work *Sarala Mahabharata*, a retelling of the canonical narrative in Sanskrit, it is generally observed that some episodes or sayings in it have origins in folktales and folk sayings (see Sarangi, Nrusingha (1999, p. 129). But no study, to the best of our knowledge, deals with this issue in any detail. This paper aims to initiate discussion on the same.

## I

It is part of our collective cultural knowledge that the Sadhabas (members of the business community), of Odisha had a very profitable trade relation with the South-east islands of Java, Sumatra and Borneo. The maritime trade of ancient Odisha forms the backdrop of the tale in surely all its versions.

The First story:

This story, entitled “*Tapoi Katha*(the story of Tapoi)” occurs in KunjaBihari Dash’s “*LokagalpaSanchayana*”.

Tapoi was the only daughter of Tanayavanta, a very prosperous trader and she was the youngest of the eight children he had. The child was the darling of, not just her parents, but her brother as well. She lived in luxury. She was friends with the minister’s daughter and some of the girl children of her community. Like the children of her age, they played on the swing and played making food with sand and dust.

One day, as she was playing cleaning grains with her winnow, an old woman arrived on the scene. She made a face at her and said that it did not befit her to play with such stuff as poor children play with. She should ask her parents, she told her, for a golden winnow to play with and for a golden moon as well. When her parents came to know about it, they called the most skilled jewellers around and asked them to make a big golden moon studded with diamonds. Soon misfortune arrived. The moon was half-made when Tapoi’s father died and when it was



fully made, her mother died. The funerals were observed in a manner that behoved the status of the family.

After the rituals were over, Tapoi's brothers decided to set sail for the distant islands for trade. They made all arrangements for the family and told their wives to look after Tapoi well, indulge her in every way and ensure that she did not suffer even the slightest discomfort. The women did what their husbands had asked them to do.

One day an old beggar woman came to their house for alms. She told the eldest woman of the family that they must not indulge their sister-in-law, who was much younger to them and that all that they were doing to her would do them no good. The girl would tell her brothers all kinds of things against them and turn them against them. They must send her to the forest to graze their goats. There, in the forest, one day or the other, a tiger or a snake would kill her. They could tell her brothers when they returned that she had died of illness.

From then on, Tapoi's bad days started. The child was forced to wear torn clothes and was sent to graze the family's goats in the forest. A little rice was all she was given to eat. Except for the youngest, her sisters-in-law made her life miserable. The eldest was the cruelest. Once a week, when the turn of the youngest sister-in-law came to give her food, did the girl eat her fill.

One evening it was stormy and the goat named "Gharamani" got lost in the forest. Tapoi's eldest sister-in-law went wild. She threatened her with dire consequences if she did not bring the goat home that very night and she looked for a knife to cut off her nose. The terrified girl ran into the forest to find the goat. She shouted "*gharamani, gharamani*" loudly many times but to no effect.

Then with a prayer in her heart to goddess Mangala, she called for her and she heard the goat bleating. She returned home with the goat. The eldest sister-in-law cooled down a bit but did not give her food that night. The food that she gave her on the following day was so bad that the girl threw it away and starved. She decided not to return home that evening. It would be much better, she thought, to be gobbled up by a tiger or bitten by a snake in the forest than undergo torture at home day in and day out. As the night fell, she was frightened and wept aloud bemoaning her fate.

That very night her brothers returned and were still on their boats when they heard the piteous cry of the girl. They sent their youngest brother to find out who was crying and to cut a long

story short, the brothers and the sister met. When they saw her piteous condition and heard from her how she had been tortured, they were furious. The following day when their wives came to the boat welcome them ceremonially, they asked them where Tapoi was. They told their husbands that she could not come because of a nasty headache. They asked their wives to go one by one and offer worship to the goddess in the boat. Dressed as a goddess, Tapoi cut off the noses of her six sisters-in-law, one after another. When the youngest sister-in-law went to her, she threw away the knife and embraced her. "I am alive because of you", she told her, "You are my mother."

The six women with bloodied nose decided not to return home and ashamed, they went deep into the forest, where they fell prey to a huge tiger. A few days later, Tapoi was given in marriage to a Sadhaba called Birnanchi. In terms of splendour, the wedding was nothing short of royal.

### **The Second story:**

This story occurs in MayadharMansingh's *OdiaSahityaraItihasa*.

It is different from the first story in just two ways: After being badly thrashed by her cruel eldest sister-in-law, Tapoi, tired and hungry, walked back to the forest to look for the missing goat. It was raining and was getting dark. The ground was wet and her feet were covered with mud. She could hardly walk. As she was entering the forest, she stumbled on something and she found that it was the murti (image) of the goddess Mangala, the gramadevati (the protector goddess of her village). She worshipped her by offering her the broken rice given to her by her kind-hearted youngest sister-in-law. In this story, there is no mention of her finding the goat. Instead, as she was cursing her fate and was wailing and wailing, around midnight, she met her brother as in the first story. Incidentally, it is this story of the three, in which there is no mention of Tapoi's finding the goat and this may not be an accidental omission in the narrative. It might have been deliberate. The poet Mansingh was inclined towards rationalism. For a person so inclined, Tapoi's meeting her brother would have been a coincidence but not her finding the goat after the worship of the goddess in the deep darkness of the forest in that rainy night; it would have been more of a miracle.

The second difference concerns the ending. Six of her brothers whose wives were eaten up by a tiger in the forest, remarried and Tapoi and her brothers and sisters-in-law all lived happily.

There is no mention of Tapoi's wedding.

### **The Third story:**

It occurs in *TapoiOKhudurukuniOsha* (Tapoi and KhudurukuniOsha), a Dharmagrantha Store publication. ArabindaPatnaik's *OdishareLokadharmaraParampara* contains, essentially, this story.

In this story, the brahmin widow who advised Tapoi's sisters-in-law not to be indulgent towards the girl and to send her to the forest to tend the family's goats instead, was a celestial, an apsara, in the guise of a human. She was Tapoi's co-wife in the celestial world and her name was Lila. She was jealous of her and couldn't stomach the fabulous life she was enjoying in the mortal world.

For some mis-demeanour or the other, apsaras were cursed by either the gods or the sages to be born in the mortal world. After the designated period was over, the cursed one would return to her world. Now, Tapoi had been cursed by Indra, the lord of the gods, to spend sixteen years in the mortal world and the story is about her restoration to the celestials' world. It may be noted that her suffering on earth was not due to god Indra's curse. Lila was the cause. As a human, Tapoi had no memory of the celestial world.

Just a few days were left for Tapoi to complete her exile on earth. Chitrasena, her gandharva husband, who had missed her sorely for all these years, pleaded before Indra to allow her to return to him. Indra told him that he must bring back Tapoi the day she completed her sixteenth year on earth. Tapoi had just been married to the virtuous son of the prosperous sadhaba named Biranchi and she was very happy at her in-law's house. On the eighth day of her wedding, she completed her sixteenth year and the moment that happened, Chitrasen appeared as she was returning home from a ritual worship, accompanied by her relatives and before anyone could make sense of what was happening, he sat her in his floral chariot and flew to the celestial world. As they paid their respects to Indra, Tapoi regained her apsara form and lived happily with Chitrasena. If at all she ever remembered her life on earth, the story makes no mention of it.

To return to the six sadhaba women with bloodied noses, who had entered the forest hoping they would be killed soon. In the lokakatha, they were devoured by a huge and hungry tiger. In the puranic version, they were scared when they saw the tiger and died of fright. To cut the story short, by Lord Shiva's grace, they were restored to life and their noses were completely healed. Then they went to their respective parents' house.

When Tapoi left, her brothers realized that being a divine, she was never really their own. They felt very bad and had a strong sense of guilt that they had been unfair to their wives. People also blamed them for having been very unfair towards their wives. Then they heard a voice from the sky that they were in their respective parents' place. Each sadhaba went to his wife's place and pleaded with her to return. They all did and happiness returned to the family.

The story continues. These sadhaba women were the first to observe the osha and worship goddess Mangala for the welfare of the family. On Sundays in the month of Bhadra (also known as Bhadraba), they observed the fast. With coloured rice and other rangoli materials, they drew goddess Mangala and then they drew boats and also drew the figure of Tapoi seated on the deck in one of these. This they didn't do to express their repentance for the unforgivable wrong they had done to her; on the contrary, they recalled how she had cut off their noses and laughed and ridiculed her. More likely, it was for fear of her that they drew her. But they didn't give her the knife. "If we give her a knife, she will cut off our noses again", they said. Then, in front of the goddess they placed coconuts, bananas, cucumbers and other local fruits and fried paddy sweetened with jaggery syrup in various forms and offered them to her. We may note that here it was not Tapoi's worship of Mangala but the sadhaba women's and Tapoi is part of the worship offered to the goddess. She couldn't be left out because she had become an integral part of the narrative for that particular worship of goddess Mangala. This is not Tapoi's Khudurukuniosha and this osha of the sadhaba women has disappeared from our osha – brata calendar.

Now, it is this story of Tapoi's restoration in the celestial world that is recited in the Khudurukuniosha. It is very likely that this indeed is the story that people know today, not its lokakatha version.

Turning to the osha, Khudurukuniosha today is not the married women's osha; it is the unmarried girl's osha for her brothers. It derives from Tapoi's worship of goddess Mangala. In the puranic version of her story, when she returned to the forest to look for the goat in that dark, rainy

evening, she came across a few girls who were worshipping the goddess and joined them. She had nothing to offer to the goddess, barring the handful of broken rice that she had with her. In this *osa*, the goddess, who bestows prosperity on her worshippers, is worshipped as the goddess who longs for this food of the poorest of the poor. She has since come to be known as “Khudurukuni”, which is the popular spoken form of “khuda-rankuni”, that is, “the one who longs for broken rice”. Come the month of Bhadra or Bhadraba, as it is called in Odisha, and every Sunday of the month, young unmarried girls observe the ritual fast and worship goddess Mangala for the safety, prosperity and the general well-being of their brothers. These days, girls observe the fast for their own well-being as well.

The brahmin girls do not observe this fast. It seems that they are not even welcome to the worship. A Bhubaneswar-based brahmin housewife told me that when she was a child, her mother had asked her specifically not to go to the puja. The worshippers wouldn't like her to be there, she had warned her. This is not a caste-based restriction; it is a specific story-centric restriction. The brahmin girls are excluded because a brahmin widow was the source of Tapoi's misery.

But there is an irony in this. If she hadn't suffered, she would have never become part of our cultural memory. She would have lived in luxury for sixteen uneventful years on earth and then joined her celestial spouse. Hers would have been a terribly boring story, if at all one ever cared to write it. The jealous apsara of the celestial world, in the form of the brahmin widow of the mortal world, saved her story from such a fate. It is she who immortalized her.

The girl who observes this *osa* is engaged in its ritualistic doings throughout the day. She is expected to collect flowers in the morning, have her bath and join other girls in “balunka” puja (ignoring details, it is the worship of Lord Shiva in the form of a linga made of seven handfuls of sand or earth, as available) right near the river, pond or well, where she had had her bath. In the evening, she must join the girls in the worship of the goddess during which the story of Khudurukuniosa is recited. These days many girls in both urban and rural areas are unable to observe this *osa* because they go for tuition on Sunday mornings or evenings.

Years ago, this *osa* was observed in mainly the coastal districts of Odisha, which is understandable because of its association with the maritime trade of ancient Odisha. Its equivalent, “Bhijuntia” has been observed by unmarried girls and married women both in

Western Odisha on the day of Mahastami during the Durga Puja. They observe it for the welfare of their brothers alone, not for their family's welfare or their own. Now because of intra-state migration and consequent cultural interaction, many migrants in the state and many locals are observing both Khudurukuniosa and Bhai jiuntia. Some say that even in the parts of Odisha where this *osa* (ritual fasting) is not observed, people know the story of "KhudurukuniOsa".

## II

In the first story, there is no fasting, no *osa*, no worship of goddess Mangala and no food offering to her and the widow, who was the cause of Tapoi's suffering, wasn't a brahmin. None from the world of the divines intervened in the affairs of Sadhaba family. Tapoi, in this story, was no divine banished from her heavenly abode for sixteen years, which she had to spend as a human on earth and she had no spouse in the world of the celestials. The second story is minimally different from the first. Introduced into this story is the idol of goddess Mangala, the village deity and Tapoi worships her with food offering. The name of the goddess and her worship in the form of an idol might have given it a puranic touch but it remains an earth-bound tale, as the first. Both these stories have the folktale flavour.

The third story is not. Like the puranic tales, in which the tellers are gods or sages or wise, venerable persons and the listeners are divines or sages or kings – Lord Sri Krishna tells the story of Savitribrata to Yudhisthira, sage Agasti tells the story of Sudasabrata to Baibasuta Manu (alternative spelling "Vaivasvata"), and Suta tells the story of KartikaMahatmya to the sages in Naimisaranya, for example) the Tapoi story of this story is told by Lord Sri Krishna to his spouses: Rukmini and Satyabhama.

The torturers of Tapoi were not devoured by a tiger; when they saw the tiger they died out of in fact, there was divine intervention in favour of them. By Lord Shiva's grace their noses were completely healed. They returned home with dignity, as their repentant husbands pleaded with them to return. They were happy as was Tapoi with her spouse in the world of the divine.

It would appear very un-purana like in this puranic tale that the evil-doers were not punished. But it is not so because they were not really the agents of their malicious and sinful doings against her; they were merely ignorant instruments in the hands of Lila. Since they were not agents; so they were not to blame for their action. Therefore it cannot be said that the story

condones malice and wrong-doing. What in this story is un-puranic, taking into consideration the major puranas, is that humans are viewed as mere instruments and have no agency at all in the pre-determined world.

The relationship between Tapoi and her brothers in the folktale is different from the same in the puranic version. In the former, it does not change; in the latter, it does. After Chitrasena takes her to their heavenly abode, the brothers do not look upon her as their sister. They see her as someone who never belonged to them and they become emotionally indifferent to her. The same happens to Tapoi. Once she assumes her apsara form, her brothers on earth never came to her mind. She had no memory of her life in the heavenly abode when she was in the mortal world and she had no memory of her life on earth when she returned to her own loka, namely, swarga (roughly, heaven).

This changing relationship reminds one of the episode in *Sarala Mahabharata*, in which Arjuna sees Abhimanyu in the swargaloka. Arjuna was not in the battlefield that day. He heard about his son's death that evening when he returned to the Pandava camp. He was disconsolate in the extreme. Krishna told him that right then Abhimanyu was fighting against a powerful demon in swarga. Arjuna told him that he would believe him only if he could show him his son engaged in fighting. So Krishna took him to heaven. When the divine Aadi, who was Abhimanyu in the mortal world, having taken his birth there at Krishna's behest, saw Arjuna, he warned him to be very careful lest he got hurt by his arrow. Arjuna realized that his son, who had died only that very day and on whom he had showered deep affection all those fourteen years he was with him, did not recognize him. For him, the relationship with Arjuna had ended and he had no memory of it. Deeply disturbed at the heartlessness in the abode of the divines, Arjuna pleaded with Krishna to take him back to the mortal world. He had understood the nature of relationship.

But he lost that, once back on earth. He was assailed by maya (illusion) and was in distress again. This is unlike Tapoi's brothers. Once they realized that Tapoi was not really was their own, they adjusted to that realization. But unlike theirs, Arjuna's situation was an absolute narrative compulsion. The Great War at Kurukshetra was to go on and needless to say, Arjuna's participation in it was necessary.

There is one thing in the puranic version of the Tapoi story that is not in the spirit of the most celebrated puranas. In the latter, those who are born in the world, have to die, even if they are

gods. As the highly acclaimed sixteenth century Odia poet Jagannath Das puts it in his *SrimadBhagabata*, which is a sacred text for the Odias, *martyamandaleddehabaahi / debatahoilemarai*(Whoever is born in the mortal world / Even if he is a god, he must die. There are exceptions though, such as god Hanuman, king Vibhishanaand Ashwasthama, among others.

Then there are those who are not immortal but attain swarga without passing through death: in *VyasaMahabharata* and *Sarala Mahabharata* (and in the retelling of this work in other languages as well), it is Yudhisthira and in JagannathDas's *SrimadBhagabata*, it is Jara, not Yudhisthira or anyone else but Jara, the one who fatally wounded injured Krishna, not Yudhisthira or anyone else. Jara in his mortal body went to the swargaloka because of Krishna's grace.

Tapoi had biological parents in the mortal world and she enjoyed no such grace as did Jara to go to the swargaloka in her mortal frame. Nor was she the embodiment of Dharma on earth as was Yudhisthira. Her going to swarga is not in the spirit of the puranas.

Lacking in deep philosophical explorations in the puranas into the questions of the human condition, the nature of agency in a pre-determined world, of the purusarthas, the human's relationship with God, God's interventions in the affairs of the humans, among a host of similar questions of great significance, and retaining the thematic and structural simplicity of the narrative of the folktale, the story of Tapoi in its puranic version, has the unmistakable flavour of the folktale.

In sum, we have discussed here three versions of the story of Tapoi and have considered the first as a folktale, the second too as such, despite a few differences and the third, as the puranic version of the tale. Then we have dealt with the changes in the folk narrative as it was transformed into a puranic one. In the end we have suggested that despite its transformation, the narrative remains a folktale in spirit.



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**Note:** Earlier versions of the first and the third tales were published in *Samachar Just Click* as “A story of Tapoi” and as “Khudurukuniosa” on September 24, 21 and October 7, 21 respectively.

## **Traditional Art & Craft and Issues of Sustainability at Raghurajpur Heritage Village of Odisha: A Sociological Overview**

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### **Abstract**

Odisha has a glorious past, basically known for its superb artistic skill and craftsmanship. The crafts are made by rural artisans inspired from mythological stories and natural surroundings. Spirituality has been the fundamental basis of such creative works reflected in local crafts and culture to continue with their ancient skill despite of material poverty and several challenges. Raghurajpur, the heritage village is popularly known for its intricate Pattachitra painting, palm leaf work and Gotipua dance. The present study aims at explore the socio-spiritual philosophy, man-environment relationship in the Raghurajpur art & craft and identify major challenges of the local artisans. The study has adopted ethnomethodology, FGD and the method of observation to go deep into the social, economic and cultural life of the people at Raghurajpur. As the study reveals, the village is still in under-developed state despite of national recognition of heritage village since last twenty-three years. Due to some political and administrative reasons, developmental projects have not been carried out successfully leaving the poor artisan at their receiving end. People of all age-groups including women have their share of contribution in developing the local economy of the village. Lack of education and awareness, poor infrastructure, lack of accessibility to market, financial constraints and lack of technological knowledge have been major challenges to them. Role of middleman and issues of copy right are also found as major obstacles on the way. Local tourism and local economy are more affected during the period of pandemic and natural disasters. Consequences of such adverse situation further deteriorate their socio-economic condition with very less contribution or no contribution from the central or state Government. Hence, its high time to think about the protection and preservation of this rich cultural heritage. There should be effective steps particularly from state Government in association with central Government to act upon it towards promotion of the local tourism and local economy.

**Key Words:**Heritage village, Art & Craft, ‘Pattachitra’ painting, Environment, Sustainability, Spirituality

## **Introduction**

Our country has always been a repository of its indigenous knowledge, transferred from one generation to another. Art and Crafts as the integral part of Indian culture flourish in the remote corners of the country. Traditional art and craft in India have a long past and is traced back to prehistoric age that depicts the cultural image of the ancient society influenced by the spiritual and aesthetic values (Mitra, 1920). Dr. Coomaraswamy in his book on Arts and Craft in India says, “The most ancient part of Indian art belongs to the common endowment of ‘Early Asiatic’ culture which once extended from the Mediterranean to China and as far south as Ceylon..”. Artists or craftsmen have shown their master skill in each of their fine creations based on the locally available material and technology. Meaning of art and craft as defined by Cambridge dictionary, “The skills of making objects for decoration and practical uses by hand”. Traditional art and craft are those crafts which have been self-prepared by men with natural process in a particular locality since many generations. This traditional knowledge not only transfer the skill of the local people but also the ideas, philosophy and values attached to it from one generation to the next. This is other wisely known as handicraft, reflected in the creation of the craftsman or artist in many forms and patterns.

With the gradual depletion of existing natural resources and alarming climatic condition, the life and the lifestyle of the people has been severely affected. Hence, it recognizes the requirement of a sustainable lifestyle even in the form artistic creations (Cohen, 2017). Indigenous and traditional knowledge always act towards environmental sustainability (Harish et al., 2016). Sustainability and sustainable lifestyles is one of the important goals under SDGs, 2030. As per UN definition, sustainability is our collective goal for a better future and the sustainable living means the human understanding on their lifestyle choices that has impact on the world around us.

Traditional knowledge in craft related works is explained and understood from the connection with the nature, religion, community of living and social relationship (Bamford (2012). Simple tools, locally available materials and traditional techniques are used in making handicraft products which are recyclable in nature and do not harm the ecosystem. There is rising awareness among urban educated mass, who are known as urban “conscious consumers” (Wood,

2011) in favour of consuming natural and organic product free from hazardous chemicals. Though, the general preference of the people is still inclined towards purchasing what is cheaper and glittering, which is mostly factory produced with harmful substance. Now, it is more essential to protect our genuine traditional art and craft with its indigenous knowledge and prevent it from being culturally eroded. What we wear, how we decorate ourselves and our surroundings have to be responsibly done without disturbing our ecosystem to ensure a good living for our future generation (ILO, 2017). UNESCO also recognizes the need of the hour to protect and safeguard our traditional knowledge of craftsmanship (UNESCO, 2017). The handicraft industry of India as well as Odisha is popular for its indigenous artistic skill and incredible craftsmanship. The spiritual, mythological and social world view reflected in their craftworks adorned with artistic and cultural value witnessing the rich glorious cultural heritage of the country (Dash, 2011). Now unfortunately, handicraft industry in India is facing lots of challenges in the current globalized and liberalized market system, owing to machine based low-cost products (Jena, 2007). Dash M. and B. Bhusan (2021) in their study on the challenges of Odisha handicraft business have criticized the ineffective role of the Government. According to them, “The government agencies are not giving financial fillip to handicrafts industry to the required extent. The performance of the existing institutional infrastructure, both financial and marketing terms is far from satisfaction. Artisans are depending on the middlemen for raw materials, finance and market for the finished products because of their illiteracy, ignorance and poverty”. There are several factors such as lack of proper education, unorganized handicraft sector, financial constraints, role of middle-man, poor access to market and technology which are responsible for slow growth or no growth for Indian craft industry (Datta, & Bhattacharyya, 2016).

### **Research Methodology**

The study on the traditional art & crafts of Raghurajpur heritage village of Odisha related to issues of sustainability in contemporary time is a qualitative study based on the basis of the observation. The present study rest upon following objectives;

- To understand and explore the socio-spiritual philosophy behind traditional knowledge of the Raghurajpur Art & Craftwork.
- To discover man-environment relationship in the genuine craftsmanship of local artisans.

- To identify major challenges towards sustainability of the village and its traditional practices.

The study has adopted ethnomethodology and FGD method. Thirty numbers of artists and craftsmen across caste and gender have been interviewed by the help of unstructured interview schedule in the process of primary data collection.

### **Area under Study**

Along the coast of Bay of Bengal, Odisha is typically identified for its past glory in rich craftsmanship, exquisite monuments, architectural skill and superb artistic ability. Raghurajpur, the heritage village is in the Puri district of Odisha, 12 km away from the district head quarter and 55 km from Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha. The village is situated at the southern banks of river Bhargavi with beautiful natural surroundings mostly covered under the green shades of coconut trees. The village has 150 families and near about 1000 population out of which 868 are adult and rest are minor. All family members are engaged in one or many forms of art and crafts such as dance, music, ‘pattachitra’ painting, leaf-plate painting, stone and wood carving, paper-made toys making etc. Village is basically a linear type from east to west where the houses with well decorated with painted walls, found in two rows facing each other. In middle of the rows, a line of small temples of deities with a wide space in front of it is found. It is basically used as the community meeting place for the villagers.

Pic 1: Linear housing pattern with decorative walls in Raghurajpur Village



Art and crafts particularly ‘pattachitra’ making is the major source of livelihood for the artist inhabitants of Raghurajpur village. All the family members including school going children

are engaged in this work. Every household has at least one artist or 'chitrakar' contributing to the traditional craft culture of the village and some of them are national award winners too for their distinguished skill in the field of art and craft. In addition to that, the village is a birthplace of internationally acclaimed Padma Vibhushan awardee Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, the exponent of Odissi dance; Padma Shri awardee Guru Maguni Charan Das, the revivor of ancient 'Gotipua' dance form; and the famous 'Pattachitra' artist Shilpi Guru Dr. Jagannath Mahapatra. Because of the outstanding cultural contribution of the village in various forms of artistic creativity, Raghurajpur was declared as the 'heritage village' in 2000 by Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).

### **Findings and Discussions**

Findings of the study rest upon the philosophy behind the traditional knowledge of the artistic skill, practice of sustainability in man-environment relationship and the challenges encountered in the process.

### **Socio-Economic Profile**

Majority of older population are school dropouts and qualified up to 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> standard whereas the present generation is more willing towards higher education. Some of them are graduated from nearby colleges. Due to focus on free and compulsory education by Government, all children above the age of five are enrolled in near Kapateswar High School established in 1953. 'Pattachitra' painting is the ancestral occupation of the Raghurajpur village hence, this is the main and primary occupation to them. Family income varies from time to time depending on the seasons of sell but the average income of the family members is Rs.10,000 to Rs. 20,000 per month as disclosed by some villager respondents. Price of the 'pattachitra' is determined by the size, quality of work and on the basis of demands and supply of the market. Villagers have shops at their houses or house verandas. Occasionally they join in craft exhibition programs organized by the Government.

The sexual division of labour in carrying out various craft activities is well observed. Though both male and female members of the house are engaged in craft work but basically sculpturing on big-sized heavy materials of wooden or stone pieces are carried out by men whereas women are engaged with small or tiny sized wooden and stone sculpturing and painting.

In 'Pattachitra' making, men of the house who are well-trained in drawing fine lines since childhood, mostly engaged in drawing and painting whereas women of the house prepare all raw materials starting from crushing the coloured stone and making colour-paste to preparing the cloth or palm-leave canvas called 'patta' for painting.

Raghurajpur families are mostly joint in nature. This unique art binds all family members in single thread despite of the current trend of nuclear family structure. Most importantly, women of the village are potential contributors in family income. Women of the family gradually learn all skill and techniques of such craft work after coming into their in-laws family. Sasmita Jena, a single parent taking care of her children and family with the help of her old mother-in-law by selling own products in her house. One woman artist of the village Sukanti Swain is said to be the first female artist from Raghurajpur to win the 'shilpi guru' awards for her artistic excellence at the national level. Though earlier, the work of art and craft was being performed by the people of 'Maharana' and 'Chitrakara' caste only but now, other caste group members are also doing the same, also known as 'karigara' or 'chitrakara'.

Pic 2: A woman selling her hand-made craft products at the veranda of her house



### **The Socio-Spiritual Philosophy behind the Art and Craft:**

Odisha is basically known for its spiritual faith in Jagannath cult or 'Vaishnava cult', a cult that propagates the ideas of divine servitude; a faith to view work as a service to the Lord Jagannath which is done as a consecration to the Divine. It helps to infuse the values of morals, discipline, constraints and maintain concentration, peace and joy at work while doing it. Almost all the products reflect the ideas of devotion or 'bhakti' and that turn out in a beautiful way. During the period of 'Snanapurnima', a 15 days ritual is observed just before the world-famous chariot festival, when devotees are not allowed to see main deities in Jagannath temple at their usual place, but see the 'pattabesha' of the deities or 'patta'-painting of the deities. During several occasions, 'patta'-paintings of different deities are also worshipped inside the campus of Jagannath temple. Paintings of inside structure of the temple premises and sacred chariots during 'Ratha yatra' are done by 'chitrakaras' of this village. They paint all over the wooden chariot of Lord Jagannath to give it aesthetically a beautiful look by the use of different natural colours. But only male persons are allowed to paint inside the Jagannath temple and during chariot festival.

Themes of the Indian scriptures remains as the most popular content in all paintings. Since the days of early childhood, parents and grand-parents use to tell mythological stories to their children so that they could grow with the spiritual knowledge and help in carrying forward the legacy of traditional skill with the same spirit and vigour. Abhimanyu Bariki, a 35 years old artist has learnt the skill of 'pattachitra' painting from his father. He says, his father receives ideas in dreams or imaginations and then reflects that idea in his work. Since the age of three, he has started listening the epics of Mahabharat, Ramayana, and other mythological stories from his father.

Pic 3: Pattachitra painting on mythological stories of Ramayana.





### **Sustainable Practice in Man-Environment Relationship:**

The word 'Pattachitra' is the combination of two words; 'Patta' which means the canvas made by a piece of cloth usually of Tusser fabric for its longevity or dried palm-leaves or wood; 'Chitra' means art or graphic representation of the content reflected on 'patta' using colours. Artist or the 'Chitrakara' uses 'Tuli' or brush and natural colours to paint on the canvas. 'Pattachitra' painting on cloth is usually a handloom cloth or tusser silk fabric preferably for its durability. 'patta' is prepared through a long process by coating the cloth with layers of mixture made from tamarind seed's glue and white chalk.

Use of natural and organic ways to obtain colours for painting are derived from different stones and vegetables. For different colours, conch shell is used in crushing and making white colour out of it. Similarly, black colour is collected from the soot of the lamp, green from different leaves, red from 'Hengula' stone, brown from 'geru' stone, blue from 'khandneela' stone and yellow from 'hartal' stones. All these stone powders mixed with the gum of 'kaitha' (wood apple) and 'ouu' (elephant apple) are used to prepare the desired colour pastes. Earlier, painting-brushes were used to be made by the hairs of wild mouse and buffalo in making fine and thick lines respectively but now, they are using brushes burning the edges of

normal paint brushes in support of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960. In order to protect the 'patta' from weeds, starch extracted paste from 'Sabudana' or sago is prepared and applied on the cloth 'patta' in canvas making before painting on it.

Pic 4: A Village artist showin organic colour making process





Pic 5: mud coated empty coconut shell in the process of drying



Pic 5: Coconut, Betle nuts and Wood Apple cultivation as raw material

Crafts for home and office decorations and toys, locally available natural materials such as wood, stone, betel nuts, dried palm-leaves, cow-dung, 'polanga' and coconut fibres are used which are locally sustainable. Raghurajpur is well-known for masks made by papier mache. It is made of light driftwood and then painted with bright colours, popularly used in 'Jatra' or folk theatre.

Traditional art and crafts have the flexibility to respond to the changing environmental condition. The emerging needs of reusing or recycling waste materials in association with traditional craft knowledge has motivated artists of Raghurajpur village to adopt innovative methods of the resource use. Crafts on used glass bottles, old invitation cards, used coconut

shells have added according to the taste of modern consumerists. For decorative items, used coconut shells are dried properly and then a coat of clay and cow dung is applied and dried on direct sunlight before making colourful craft on its surface.

Moreover, the natural surroundings of the place has been a great source of inspiration to the craftsmen to derive ideas and reflect it in various artistic patterns. Villagers heavily depend on the local resources of soil, river and plants of that area. Pictures of trees, birds, flowers, animals are mostly drawn in 'pattachitra' painting symbolising ecological harmony and sustainable living. Villagers have also added to the green environment by farming and cultivating various plants such as coconut, betel nuts, polang etc. to meet their raw-material requirements for craftwork.

Pic 6: Home decorative items prepared with waste materials



One of the traditional dance forms 'Gotipua', is performed by young boys, dressed as women to offer their devotion to the Supreme accompanied by devotional music while tuning to the musical instruments of table and harmonium. To the villagers of Raghurajpur, dance is viewed as a medium of spiritual offering which not only adds to the aesthetic ambiance of the place but also inspire them in cultivating the spiritual faith in life. The unique dance steps which require strength of the body and some 'mudras' (gestures through fingers) carrying the subtle messages for social well-being. Men in female costume is socially acceptable in this dance form which shows a fine blending of feminine & masculine attributes and breaks the age-old gender stereotypes. Odisha has received a distinct status for such unique style of 'Gotipua' dance at national and international platforms.

### **Challenges and Constraints:**

Twenty-three years have been passed in between since the declaration of Raghurajpur village as the 'heritage village', but the place is still in the midst of poverty and deprivation. Lack of education and awareness, poor infrastructure, lack of accessibility to market and, lack of political will are major obstacles on the way to progress. Previous disaster Fani, and now, the recent pandemic COVID-19 have severely damaged the local craft economy as majority had no scope to sell their products. During Fani, a large numbers of coconut trees were uprooted due to cyclonic storm causing shortage of fibre for the handicraft coir-works. As a result, craftsmen of the village had to travel long distance to buy required fibre materials.

Village has one primary health centre without adequate facilities. Pregnant women have to depend on District head-quarter hospitals for maternal care and related issues. A central Government project was undertaken for the overall development of the village few years back but the project is still not completed. Toilets have been constructed but without water supply. Road condition from Chandanpur to Raghurajpur is not visitor friendly as the tourist bus has to stay at nearby market Chandanpur, two kms away from the village and the visitors have to travel hiring auto or by walk. The village also lacks proper drainage system and tap water provision adversely affecting the rural tourism of the place. Basically, the village suffers due to lack of political will and apathy of the local administration as said by the village man Akash Swain.

Lack of adequate market facilities, role of middle-men and duplication of the original art are serious sustainable issues related to traditional craft occupation. Less educated artists unaware of global demands fail to be directly connected with the modern market system and are forced to take the help of the middlemen who actually take away the surplus. Merchant capitalists or middlemen usually sell the original products of Raghurajpur village by their own name without even giving credit to them. Consequently, the artist remains deprived of getting due recognition from the outside world despite of their superb skill and remain at the receiving end.

Profit of the local artisans solely depends on rural tourists who come from outside of the state only during the months from October to January. Unfortunately, due to lack of proper marketing strategy the village unable to attract enough local consumers of the state. Some artists have adopted survival strategy to add diversities in their products keeping in view of the demand of the world market. But it has its own merit and demerits. Though it is economically satisfying to some extent but at the same time, the originality of such craft is somewhere lost getting disconnected from the spiritual values. For example, the use of synthetic colour and painting on different contents other than the mythological stories etc. In order to reduce the manufacturing cost of the product, some artists are using artificial synthetic colours available in the local market which affecting sustainability of rich craftsmanship. Because of poor condition of living and financial uncertainties, new generation is gradually showing less interest in their ancestral occupation and more interest in jobs and other business.

### **Conclusion and suggestions**

Raghurajpur Village represents the rich cultural heritage of the state of Odisha. As a heritage center, it not only attracts tourists worldwide but provides a distinctive identity for its unique sustainable craftsmanship. But unfortunately, the socio-economic condition of the artist villagers has not been up to the mark rather grappled with multiple challenges due to pandemic situation, poor marketing skill and lack of awareness. It seems, instead of giving adequate attention to preserve and promote the precious skill of the artisan communities, we remain satisfied with the hoardings and advertisements. The art will eventually die out, and the artists will succumb to financial pressure if they are not given enough attention. There should be necessary steps particularly from state Government in association with central Government to act upon infrastructural development of the community surroundings, promotion of the local tourism

and provision of adequate and accessible marketing at the doorstep of each household. As a matter of right, access to better health service and quality education for a healthy social living should be the priority for all round development of the craft village of Raghurajpur. To protect the identity and integrity of such precious craft knowledge, duplication of original products and production of machine-made printing products must be banned. Regular monitoring and upgradation of the traditional skill without compromising the genuineness of the traditional craft skill is required for financial benefit of the artisan community. And moreover, there should be motivation and encouragement for more research and innovation in the field of traditional art and crafts to protect and safeguard our rich culture.

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## **Bauls, the Wandering Minstrels of Bengal: The Asceticism, Creative Subversion and Artistic Persona of a Performative Group**

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### **Abstract**

Bauls, the wandering minstrels originally from Bengal, are known for their soothing songs charged with the philosophy of body and soul. Music is their medium to be united with their 'Moner Manush'(Man of the Heart). When people are fighting over religious issues and creating segregation among them, this Baul sect is talking about love and communal humanity. They do not believe in the worship of idols and their philosophy is a blend of Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. Music for them is not just a source of entertainment, but a medium to communicate their thoughts with the common people. Lalon Shah, the forerunner of this Baul tradition has tried to dissolve the barriers like caste, class, gender, religion etc. and his main concern is humanity. Lalon's philosophy is the philosophy of searching the 'Moner Manush' that has no caste or class discrimination. It is Lalon Shah who has made Baul songs accessible to people and established his gharana a distinct one. The objective of the present article is to show- what is the philosophy of the Bauls, who are the Bauls etc. The present paper also exhibits how Lalon Fakir propounds existential humanism through his songs. The study explores that women have a significant role in Baul philosophy and they are honoured within their sect. It indicates a stable gender equation that exists in Baul community. Lalon also talks about the emancipation of women and the equality of men and women in society. Finally, the article portrays how Rabindranath Tagore was also influenced by the songs and philosophy of Lalon Fakir.

*Keywords:* Baul, Fakir Lalon Shah, Moner Manush, Sadhana, Humanism, Rabindranath Tagore.

## Introduction:

The essential identity of Bengal is closely linked with folk music, culture, and rituals. Such folkart forms include Baul, Jhumur, Palagaan, Bhawaiya, Bhatiali, Kirtan, Kabigaan, etc, which are still popular to the rural areas of Bengal. Basically, Bauls are a group of mystic minstrels or bards who wander from village to village to earn a living by performing. They are mainly found in West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Bangladesh. Etymologically, the word 'baul' is derived from Sanskrit 'vatula' (windy, affected by the wind disease, mad), or 'vyakula' (restless, disordered) [Capwell, 2011, p.10]. However, mad is not used in the pejorative sense, but it is used in a positive sense of love for God. The origin of Baul is shrouded in mystery but the word 'baul' is found in Vrindavana Dasa Thakura's *Chaitanya Bhagavata* and Krishnadasa Kaviraja's *Chaitanya Charitamrita*. It is believed that Baul tradition is a syncretic outcome of the three religious praxis- Sahajiya (Bajrayana Buddhism), Bhakti (Hindu Vaishnavism) and Sufi/ Dervish mysticism (Islamic Marifat). The Bauls criticize the external religious practice, rituals, caste system and other forms of social injustice. Because of their non-conformist attitudes, mainstream religious institutions announced 'Fatwas' against the Bauls (Jha, 2014). Jha in the book *Baul- Fakir Dh Wongso- Andoloner Itibritt* mentions a song of Khodabaksh Fakir that describes an incident of Baul Kheda (expulsion) in Murshidabad district. The song narrates-

...they feigned a meeting and invited us,

...some Fakirs were captured and made to swear on their religion,

...fear of beating and lynching too,

Made the Fakirs swear over and anew,

Alas, but they do die at heart. [Dutta & Dutta, 2019, p.11]

In this context, we can refer to a scene of the film *Moner Manush* where Lalon Fakir and his disciples learn martial arts at the advice of Harinath Mukherjee (Kangal Harinath) for fighting against the Hindu and Muslim leaders. These mystic singing minstrels have a grave influence on

Bengali culture. The Bauls believe that their goal is to discover the Moner Manush (man of the heart). They use music as a path of spirituality. But Bauls believe that one cannot find Moner Manush not merely through singing but through meditation and spiritual training. They also believe that Moner Manush can be found not in the temple or mosque but in every 'self'. They believe in the love for man and in serving the society through this love.

### **Categorization of Baul Sect, their appearance and their instruments:**

The Bauls are divided into three main categories- 1. **Grihi Baul**: one who lives in a family system; 2. **Udaas Baul**: one who renounces everything; 3. **Shilpi Baul**: one who sings and performs. Bauls are also categorized on the basis of their singing style- 1. **The Wandering Bauls**: who wander around and collect alms. They sing in high pitch and use quick, metrical verses; 2. **Non-Wandering Bauls**: they stay at home and their songs are soft, gentle and full of melody. In Charles Capwell's book *Sailing in the Sea of Love*, we find a detailed description of the dress and instruments of the Bauls. Commonly Bauls wear a white half-dhoti and geruya-coloured alkhalla. Hairstyle of a baul is noticeable. Hair is not cut and a top bun is made. They use a choker necklace made of basil beads. They sometimes wear stones, metals, copper bracelets etc. But no item is used for the purpose of decoration. During their performance, they sometimes wear a pair of sashes and guduri (a patchwork coat) over alkhalla. Female Bauls generally wear a geruya-coloured sari and make a top-knot. Capwell divides the instruments used by Bauls into a basic and an adjunct group. The basic group includes six instruments- Gopiyantro (ektara), Khamak (gubgubi), Dotara, Ghunur, Nupur, Duggi. The adjunct group includes Violine, Sarinda, Kartal/Mridanga, Khol, Tabla, Khanjoni, Harmonium, Flute etc. Ruchir Joshi made a documentary *Eleven Miles* on the life of Kartik Das Baul. Here, a renowned figure of Baul, Paban Das Baul says- "the body itself is their temple, their mosque, their place of worship." He also says "through the human body and soul, I have found my temple, my mosque. The human form is my temple." For the Bauls, the songs are a map of their bodies, their minds. These are the love songs of the world. Baul is the state of mind. Bauls do not believe in the division that keeps people away from each other. Here, Sadhan Das Baul says that "a baul is one who is in love with the entire world." Ruchir Joshi says that the whole thing that the bauls have about being Radha and loving Krishna. Bauls believe that their god is inside them and that can be accessed only through serious devotion. To be a baul one needs to think like a baul. The main person, the Guru

is Krishna and one is always in the position of Radha who is waiting. One has to crave, want, desire, interact and be happy.

### **Lalon Fakir and Religion of Baul:**

Lalon Fakir or Fakir Lalon Shah is considered as the ‘Baul Samrat’ in the history of Baul tradition. Though, it is believed that he was born in 1774 in the village called Kushtia but there are many controversies regarding his life and religious identity. It is rumoured that along with the zamindar family, he went on a pilgrimage to the temple of Jagannath and he contracted smallpox. Then he was abandoned and he was saved by a Muslim couple Malam Shah and his wife Matijan. Later upon returning to his community, he was reckoned as an outcaste by the society because of his association with Muslims. This event is said to have changed the course of his life and thoughts. M. Maniruzzaman, a researcher also concludes that Lalon was born as Hindu but later he became a disciple of Siraj Shain (Maniruzzaman, 2015, p. 1-11). Lalon Fakir is considered as the forerunner of this baul tradition. He had no formal education but his thinking was beyond the grip of traditional learning. He made Baul music accessible and admissible to the educated class. The human body occupies a central position in Baul philosophy. Lalon has described the human body in his music as “Arshi-nagar”, “cage”, “boat”. Lalon’s music talks of the inherent divinity of the body, searching within the self for meaning and discovery of moner manush. Like, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Ramkrishna, he did not believe in caste or class. Lalon’s philosophy talks of manobotabad (humanity and humanness). For him, there is no discrimination based on race, caste or class. He talked of two castes of this world- Man and Woman, else are useless. His song ‘Jaatgelojaatgelo bole’ narrates the existing caste division of society-

Jaatgelojaatgelo bole

Eki ajobkarkhana

Satto kaajekeona Raji

Sob dekhi ta nanana

(Caste no more, caste no more they say)

What a strange manufacturing/ concoction is this?

No one is ready for truthful action

That is all I see)

Lalon also says-

Jokhontumibhobeele

Tokhontumi ki jaatchile

Ki jaathobejabar kale

Sei kotha keno bolona

(What caste were you in when you came to the world

What caste did you choose in it

What caste will you be when you leave

Think a little on this).

He contravened the religious doctrines and his philosophy was free from all sorts of religious creed. He was not concerned of his religious identity but his songs are adequate enough to confront the question on his identity.

People ask, what is Lalon's caste?

Lalon says, my eyes fail to detect

The signs of caste. Don't you see that

Some wear garlands, some rosaries

Around the neck? But does it make any

Difference brother? (Lalon Fokir song)

Lalon's song becomes more relevant when there is violence in the name of religion. His songs tear apart the false religious dogma. He gave shelter to the fallen human beings and made a 'bazaar of pleasure' (Anandabazaar). But it was not only the pleasure, there was a battle against the hierarchical authorities of the society. It was a battle of 'ektara' against caste and class. Lalon with his ideas and philosophy affected the society a lot and he can be called a social reformer. Historians have compared Lalon with Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the reawakening of Bengal. He believed that the main aim of life was to search for the 'Moner Manush' (Man of the Heart). His philosophy was- search for himself= search for others= search for everyone= search for the supreme.

### **Lalon Shah and Existential Humanism:**

Sartre proposes existential humanism in his 1945 lecture but Lalon's humanism precedes Sartre's existential humanism. Sartre states- "Existentialism is a Humanism, if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man or, as Heidegger has it, the human reality. What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world- and defines himself afterwards. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism. And this is what people call its 'subjectivity'." (Sartre, 2007, p. 17). The primary drive of existential humanism is man's search for the meaning of his existence. Sartre propounds that "since man is thus self-surpassing, and can grasp objects only in relation to his self-surpassing, he is himself the heart and centre of his transcendence. There is no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. This relation of transcendence as constitutive of man (not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of self-surpassing) with subjectivity (in such a sense that man is not shut up in himself but forever present in a human universe)- it is this that we call existential humanism" (Sartre, 2007, p.23). Sartre defines it as 'humanism' because man himself is the maker of his destiny. Lalon also talks of the search for a divine identity which is not the God but 'the man of the heart' (Moner Manush) and it has the power to provide solace. Thus, man's existential crisis and Lalon's search for the solace become equivalent and Lalon's existential humanism is optimistic in the true sense. Sartre also elongates that existential humanism is optimistic as it never dips man into despair- "what man needs is to find himself

again and to understand that nothing can save him from himself. In this sense existential humanism is an optimistic philosophy" (Sartre, 2007, p. 32). Lalon's philosophy states that man struggles to find 'the man of the heart' and he may find his 'Moner Manush' outstripping all the pain and suffering. Man is always in search of that inner self (man of the heart) and this query allows him to transcend all the man-made boundary of social conventions and religious dogmas. Lalon's songs help to overcome the segregation, division, and injustice of the society.

### **Moner Manush (Man of the Heart):**

Baul sadhana is not merely for the homeless fakirs. People who are in a family can also conduct the sadhana. Lalon shah says, "Ghore ki hoynafakiri (sadhana), keno holirenimajadeshantori..." (Is Fakiri not possible in home!, why you go denying family...). The origin of the Baul sect exhibits their marginal condition in society and it leads them to their covert sadhana (meditation) for the 'Moner Manush' (Man of the Heart). Lalon Fokir, the spoke-person of this marginalized sect, has not followed any particular religion, but he has tried to dissolve the segregation among different religions. According to Lalon, Bauls pursue the following path-

The Vedas on the Right

The Quran on the left

Fakir's path is in the middle.

Man is the primary concern for Lalon. Lalon believes that by considering God as the supreme power, man succumbs to rigid religious, cultural, and socio-economic differences and it has turned man into a helpless being. Lalon argues if this world is created by one supreme being, then why there is so much discrimination. Through his meditation for 'monermanush' (man of the heart), Lalon Fokir has tried to discard the class, caste, and religious binaries. The best worship takes place within one's heart. In baul philosophy, human body is the prime thing. The importance of the body is explained in many baul songs. For instance-

Amar matro dui khan chaka ek khan gadi,

Tar opore teen moholabari...

Gadi amarbarirbharetolmolay

Ami karechairekarerakhiekhun ki upay?

This literally means that 'I have a car with two wheels, on top of which I have a three-storied house'. This refers to our own body with two legs and stomach, chest (heart) and head as the three layers. In the chest lies the jewel, manushroton, or 'man of the heart'. This is known as 'dehatattwa' of Baul philosophy. That supreme being resides not in the mosque or in the temple, but in the human heart. Thus, exploring the innermost essence of one's self leads to the discovery of 'monermanush'-that is the absolute truth of a Baul. The human body is consisted of Panchabhuta and it is the dwelling place of God. So, the human body is the place where one can find the supreme being. In Baul philosophy, there are two important things- Chakra (wheels) and Padma (lotus). The lowest chakra of the body is Muladhara Chakra that rests in the abdominal area of the male body. In Muladhara, there exists a coiled serpent power, that is called Kula Kundalini Shakt. It is the passive female power that is the cause of creation. The lotus exists in Muladhara Chakra. The three nerves Idea, Pingala, Susumna unite here and this uniting place is known as Triveni that is the force of all life. Man of the Heart plays in the lotus. It wanders around according to the body condition. Through Sadhana, Baul tries to move the 'Man of the Heart' in the upward direction. The Murshid/ Guru guides his disciple to control lust and desire and to unite with supreme power. In Baul philosophy mana (mind) also plays an important role to get 'moksha'. Liberation of soul is achieved through soul union with the supreme being. Thus Bauls get non-physical joy through his guru's instructions. Guru helps shishyas to find the Moner Manush. Moner Manush is nothing but the existence of the divine within one's body. Bauls crave for that 'man of the heart', as Lalou sings-

"Milon hobekotodine

Amar monermanusher o sone"

When there shall be meeting?

With the person of my liking!

### **Influence of Baul on Rabindranath Tagore:**

Rabindranath Tagore's poetic style was also touched by the idea of Baul philosophy. He is often called the greatest baul. In 1930, he talked of Bauls in his Hibbert lecture which is known as *The*



*Religion of Man* where he says that Bauls are an ancient group of wandering minstrels from Bengal, who believe in simplicity in life and love. He was so much influenced by baul philosophy that he called himself Rabindranath Baul. Tagore in his essay 'Baul Gan' (1927) has stated-

“Those who have read my writings know that in many of them I have conveyed my deep love for and attachment with Baul songs. When I was at Silaidaha, I had frequently met Baul groups and discussed with them. I have borrowed Baul sur (tune) for many of songs and in many of my songs a combination of Baul sur and other ragas have been knowingly or unknowingly. From this it can be realized that Baul sur and speech have easily merged together in my mind.”  
(Tagore, 2000, p. 553-554)

He also played the role of a blind baul in his play *Phalguni*. He also collected a manuscript of more than two hundred songs of Lalon and published a compilation of twenty songs in his magazine *Prabasi*. His famous song reflects the Baul philosophy-

“Amar pranermanushachheprane”

The man of my heart dwells inside me.

Tagore was highly influenced by Lalon's existential humanism and this is evident in his following statement-

“The man of the Heart, to the Baul, is like a divine instrument perfectly tuned. He gives expression to infinite truth in the music of life. And the longing for truth which is in us, which we have not yet realised breaks out in the following Baul song:

Where shall I meet him, the Man of my Heart?

He is lost to me and I seek him wandering from land to land,” (Pradhan, 2002, p. 15).

Before the publication of songs in *Prabasi*, the Bauls were not well recognized in Bengal. From his early childhood, Tagore was conversant with the Bauls because of the fair in Bolpur where the Bauls used to perform the songs of Lalon Fokir. It is also argued that Tagore could have encountered Lalon Fokir when he moved to Kushtia as a Zamindar. Tagore himself acknowledged that Lalon's songs influenced many of his songs included in *Songs*

*Offering*(Maniruzzaman, 2015, p. 42). The song of his play *Dakghor*“bhenge mor ghorerchabiniyejabikeamare?”(“will you take me out, breaking the lock of my door”) is modelled on the popular Baul song “dekhechhiroopsagoremanermanushknachashona” (“in the sea of beauty I have seen the man of the heart in the form of raw gold”).

Bauls do not believe in particular forms of religion, they are self-learned men who are in search of their ‘Maner Manush’ or the man of the heart. They believe in man whom they call ‘achinpakhi’ or ‘self’. This simple philosophy of life influenced Tagore a lot. In *The Religion of Man*, he said- he discovered that he was not a follower of his religion, but of the religious institutions. After a time, he gave up the false pretence and lost his connection with religious institutions. At that time, he got a chance to listen to a song from a beggar baul and he was deeply influenced by this song. It spoke of a longing of the heart for the divine who is in man and not in the temple or mosque or church. The song addresses to that ideal and says-

Temple and mosque obstruct the path

And I fail to hear they call or to move

When the clerics and priests angrily crowd around me. (Tagore, 1931, p. 75)

Tagore also did not believe in any religious dogmas, but only believed in love. All the man of any caste or sect are equal. The same thought is expressed in a Baul song-

Jibe jibe chaiyadekhi

Sabi ye tar abatar

O tui nutanlilakeedekhabi

Jar nityalilachamatkar

(Seeing the God’s creature

All are his prophets

You get nothing to show

As because he is showing).

Bauls' 'manermanush' or 'the man of the heart' is equal to Tagore's 'Jiban devata'. God is humanized by Tagore. He does not mean humanisation in the sense of God, but it is the God in man. This 'jivan devata' is equivalent the Vedantic concept of 'Tat Tvam Asi' (I and you are identical). Tagore's theism believes that God comes down to the earth and resides in man. So, 'Jivan devata' is God in man. Tagore said- "I felt sure that some being who comprehend me and my worlds was seeking his best expression in all my experiences" (Tagore, 1931, p. 96). This being (Jivan devata) is not exactly the God, but his own higher self. The same thought is expressed in the baul song- "monermanushmonermajhe koro anwesan" (find out your own God within yourself).

### **Guru-Shishya relation in Baul:**

Baul lineage is transmitted not from father to daughter or mother to daughter, it is from Guru to Shishya. Transmission is a process that includes both teaching and learning. This started in the ancient Vedic times. Initially, the pupil has to watch the Guru and when Guru thinks that he or she can be his disciple, he transmits the knowledge. Guru helps him to know the essential truth that will help him to search the Moner Manush. Bauls believe that this Guru-Shishya parampara is divine and the Guru tries to furnish a new higher self of shishya. Guru is Bramha, he has the insight about what the disciple needs. It is the Guru who guides the Shishya. Lalon Fakir venerated his Guru/ Murshid Siraj Sain throughout his life. Monimohon Das says-

"Oh Guru! You are Bramha, you are Vishnu, you are the revered god Shiva

Have mercy on me Guru

...

Guru, I am all bereft,

No path for me awaits, no thing for me in this world except for some shelter at your feet." (Dutta & Dutta, 2019, p. 15)

### **Women Status in Baul Sadhana:**

In the book *Lalon: Prasanga and Aprasanga*, we find the idea of woman in the eyes of Lalon Fokir. For Lalon, women are equal to men. Lalon followers state that a woman seems to be God

to them. So, the relation between men and women is sacred and blessed. This alludes to the easeful and stable gender relationship between men and women in Baul community. Women are the means of their sadhana and they open the door to moksh for the sadhaka. In baul philosophy female (Prokiti/ Radha) is the primordial creative force. A baul song can be mentioned here-

“Eber mole meye hobo mohotsongo

Cheyenebo”

After I die this time, I want to reborn as a girl, I will ask to be put in the company of greatness.

This kind of thinking subverts the traditional patriarchal gender role. So, woman posits an important place in baul philosophy. Generally, women are prohibited to join holy rituals while she is menstruating. But in Baul belief, she is regarded as holy at this time. So many years before the concept of ‘women studies’, Bauls are upholding for the independence of women. Lalon talks about the emancipation of women and the equal status of women in society. He considers women as important for the creation and without them, it is not possible for men to conduct the spiritual journey in search of ‘monermanush’. In Baul philosophy, men and women are equal in status as Lalon says-

“Adam bolo konnure hoy

Ma houa ki sei nurenai...”

It means, if Adam is the light (nur) and Eve is made from Adam, then both share the same thing. Eve is also a mother, so through Eve (woman), the love of God is spread everywhere. In patriarchal society, women’s identity is in flux, but Lalon claims woman as the mother, the creator. Lalon speaks for the independence of women and says-

“Kulerbouhoyemone r kotodinthakbighore,

Ghomtafelecholna re mone sadh-bazare.”

(How long will you stay at home as house-wife

Now leave your feminine code and come to your land of your own will).

These words become more significant for the illiterate women than the theories of feminism.

But Sombrata Sarkar, in his book *Dui Banglar Baul Akhra*, points out that the respect that Lalon Fokir, Duddu Shah, Padmalochan gave to the women is not always given to the baul women of Bengal (Sarkar, 2017, P. 226). He has met many women like Krishna, Kalyani, Sumitra who are thrown away by their partners. Now, they are solely dependent on 'madhukori'. In some cases, women are treated as 'seba-dashi' by their male partners. But overall women are honoured within the Baul community. According to June McDaniel, "In the history of religion, it is rare to find a tradition in which women are ritual equals, in which nonprocreative sexual activity is more valuable than the reproductive variety, in which menstruation is both positive and spiritual, and in which women's body is sacred and the dwelling place of a deity which neither male nor female, but includes aspects of both" (McDaniel, 1992, p. 27). Lalon finally says-

"Mayerevojie hoy tar bapertikana

Nigombichare sotto gelo je jana

Nigumkhobornahijene, keba se mayerechene

Jahar upor din duniyadilenrabbana."

(By worshipping mother, one can know her father

By occult consideration, truth becomes known

Without occult knowledge, he who says that he knows the mother

To whom the lord has bestowed the world).

So, one can affirm his or her identity by worshipping his or her mother, not father. It clearly indicates the dignified status of women in Baul philosophy.

### **Role of Baul Music:**

Baul songs are approved by UNESCO as 'a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' on 25 November 2005. For the Bauls, music means a lot, it is the fresh air, music is everything, their God, their temple. It is their identity, it is their mode of communication, it reflects who they are. Baul songs are an amalgamation of songs, dance and narrative. The audience of Baul songs also feels well connected with the singers and the songs. For them, it

becomes an interpersonal form of communication where they feel that the singer is directly in communication with them. The Baul fakirs travel from place to place and sing songs about the philosophy of life. They use music to express their thoughts, to explain things to others. The songs are the medium through which they can find their 'Moner Manush' who resides within them. Most of their songs speak of humanism, love, harmony, and brotherhood. Baul songs are not simply an instrument of amusement, they are competent enough to propagate deep-rooted thoughts. As most of the people from Baul sect are illiterate, they follow the oral tradition and their songs are propagated from generation to generation by listening and memorizing. They use common, rustic language but these songs portray the contemporary society and philosophy of life in simple terms. Lalon Shah is the harbinger of this tradition and his songs are known as 'Lalon Geete' and his songs convey the social, cultural matters of the then society which are still relevant in the present outset. The most prominent theme of his songs is his protest against caste and class discrimination. The primary motto of Bengal Renaissance, that is the communal harmony finds a fresh voice through these songs. Lalon Fokir shows his anguish against the religious barrier through the song-

“Fokirikorbikhyapakon raga,

Ache Hindu-Musalman dui vaghea...”

(How can you be an ascetic

Hindus and Muslims are divided).

Discerning the communal conflict of the contemporary society Lalon sings-

“Keu mala keutashbigolai,

Taite ki jaatbhinnobolai:

Jauakimbaasharbelai

Jeter chinhoroykar re.”

It means, different people follow different rituals to worship the Almighty but that does not make one man different from other. When men take birth on this earth, they do not come with particular religious marks with them. So, the discrimination based on religion and caste is

meaningless. Lalon also says- if you circumcise a boy, he becomes a Muslim but what is the rule for a woman then? So, in a word, Lalon's songs spread the message of peace and harmony among men and raise the voice against social, cultural and religious segregation.

**Conclusion:**

Bauls, as a social sect, cannot keep themselves indifferent from the problems of the society. Social, economic, cultural, and religious issues foreground the theme of their songs. Their philosophy is 'man' centric and they raise their voice against the social binaries like gender, class, caste, and religion. During his lifetime, Lalon's songs gained much popularity among the common folks but the intelligentsia was indifferent to his songs. But later the urban intelligentsia of Bengal and Bangladesh showed interest in the songs of Lalon. Lalon's songs convey the message of harmony to the world and by his meditation for 'monermanush', he has tried to dissolve the difference among mankind. In course of time, Baul songs and baul philosophy have crossed the border of Bengal and have reached different corners of the world. The first journey of the Baul happened in the early 60s when Purna Das Baul and his brother Kartik Das Baul, Sadhan Das Baul were invited to New York. It happened because Allen Ginsberg came to Kolkata and discovered Baul poetry. Deven Bhattacharya's book *The Mirror of the Sky* raised interest in Baul poetry. The music and appearance of the Bauls have transmitted over years. Now, there are many renowned paid performers and everyone does not wear orange clothes. But what has not changed is their philosophy- search for the Moner Manush. Their music has the essence of universal love and peace and their ultimate aim is to attain humanity.

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**Subversion through Eroticism and Cultural Metamorphosis:  
An Study of the Indigenous Customs and Performative Artifacts of the  
Rajbanshis of Cooch Behar**

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**Abstract**

This paper aims to provide an alternative reading of the rituals and folk practices of the indigenous populace of Coochbehar district, namely the Rajbanshi community. It is alternative not in the sense that we try to show the changing contours of the lifestyle and art forms of the Rajbanshi people, but in a way that highlights their often neglected implications and connotations. Sexual dissidence will be manifested through folk rituals such as *HudumDeoPuja*, *BishohariPuja* and countless compositions of the *BhawaiyaSangeet*, a staple feature of the Rajbanshi Cultural output. The main traits of these aforementioned cultural practices hint at deviant morality, transitional scopes of performative expression and dissidence aimed at patriarchy and society at large. Deification of nature and Pantheistic animism are the two main guiding philosophies behind these practices. We shall also evaluate the impact of the changing socio-political atmosphere and how they have impacted the production and dissemination of the *BhawaiyaSangeet* genre, so cultural materialism will be the theoretical framework for uncovering the ever-transforming landscape of *BhawaiyaSangeet*. Performative expressions of the rituals, folk practices and the variegated interpretative possibilities offered by the *Bhawaiya Songs* will also be taken up for close analysis through the lens of **Gender Criticism** as it will be elementary in understanding the undertones of sexual dissidence and their cultural ramifications. A closer look at these art forms will establish the fact that they are essentially micro-narratives in nature and they beautifully capture the insulated ecosystem of the Coochbehar folk and how they stand in stark contrast against

mainstream urbane mass-media driven forms of entertainment. This gives us an opportunity to reconstruct the definition of the 'dissident' and the 'dominant' within a particular socio-cultural system. Hence the evaluation of these art forms as a means of reclaiming agency and autonomy by marginalized groups will be of particular interest and enquiry.

*Keywords:* dissidence, cultural materialism, society and environment, transition, performativity, ecofeminism

## **Introduction**

The most effective and discernible change in the socio-cultural landscape of Cooch-behar has been in the way people of the district have viewed and historically responded to somewhat arcane modes of supplication and divinity. Such a change has long been in the works even though anthropologists and chroniclers of cultural studies have noticed it only recently. The vast and varied population of the district provides ample opportunities to the any avid ethnographer to document, classify and theorize the multiplicities of faith and living in a border adjacent district such as Coochbehar. Especially from the point of view from a literature student, such a complex socio-anthropological field is of great interest as it tends to point towards the nexus between life, art and cultural expression. This presents unique opportunities to those who are conducting research in a cultural landscape that has plenty to offer in terms of oral literature but has significant shortage in terms concrete, archived texts and other literary or non-literary documents. In such a unique situation and especially in the absence of hardcore literary works regarding life and customs in Coochbehar, it becomes imperative for the researcher to minutely observe and evaluate any piece of cultural texts that he might come across. One way of meeting such a challenge is to observe and reflect upon the various indigenous belief systems that have manifested themselves over the course of multiple generations and treat them as representative social documents of the prevailing notions of morality and indigeneity.

This paper wants to examine the varied nature of the folk practices of Coochbehar district and provide a reinterpretative discourse of the century old customs that continue to shape the aesthetic imagination of the local inhabitants. These customs, rituals and cultural practices have emerged out of a mnemonic consciousness that is forged by pantheistic belief, animism, ecological divinity and agrarian lifestyle. As the wake of globalism, capitalist progressivism and

the undeniable specter of consumerism do not even spare the isolated nature the Coochbehar folk, these practices have undergone discernible changes and have offered up new avenues of analysis and meaning formation. However these multifaceted ways of cultural evolution are not academically studied and certainly not analysed in a way so as to enable critical thinking, even though the semiotic possibilities offered by endless. This primarily is due to the paucity of critical writing on the Cooch-behar folk and also because of the fading nature of the agrarian lifestyle. So the rituals, which will be elaborated upon later in the paper and the performative gestures stand at a complex intersection of marginality, liminality, agency and expression. A proper evaluation of this socio-cultural spectrum is long overdue and this paper aims to fill that void. The art forms that will be taken up for considerable attention are, BhawaiyaSangeet, ChatkaSangeet, and Cultural Idioms that are mostly used by women of the Rajbanshi Community. We are also going to focus rituals such as HudumDeo Puja, PentiKhela, ShaitolBratkatha and KushanSangeet. This will serve as the basis for our understanding the cultural hotbed that Coochbehar is and fulfill the purpose of academic enquiry and inquisitiveness and KushanSangeet. This will serve as the basis for our understanding the cultural hotbed that Coochbehar is and fulfill the purpose of academic enquiry and inquisitiveness.

The art forms that we are taking up for close study are significant not only because they are popular and idiosyncratic, but also because they are full transgression and creativity. They can even be said to serve the purpose of providing subversive expression, artistic dynamism and emotive ambivalence at the same time. In a district as isolated and as insular as Coochbehar, these ritualistic artifacts and cultural art forms represent a vibrant trend of artistic autonomy that is informed by communal living, reverence towards nature and an undying spirit of upholding the tenets and values that prioritize individual expression within an overarching structure of earthy wisdom and fortitude. We shall now turn our attention to the specific instances of these cultural activities. The ritualistic artifacts will be elaborated upon later in the paper.

### **Research Methodology**

For the analysis of the folk performances, live sessions of these activities were attended, online recordings of the performances viewed upon and local people were consulted with. What emerges out of these sessions is the fact that the socio-cultural milieu that informs the production

and preservation of the aforementioned performative gestures is extremely nascent and subject to regional variations. However some overarching features do prop themselves up and they can be seen as emblematic of the overall scene. One needs to be wary of making gross generalisations while interpreting and observing them as these performances are often subject to audience reception, personal belief and community-based approaches to cultural production which tend to vary. Despite all of these, we can unearth multiple sources meaning-formation, subversion and moral ambivalence.

### ***ChatkaSangeet*, Erotic Subversion and the Boundaries of Moral Ambivalence**

Professor Ashutosh Bhattacharya defines *ChatkaSangeet* as the lighthearted version of the predominant genre *BhawaiyaSangeet*, the mainstay of the cultural milieu of Coochbehar district. He goes on to claim that *Bhawaiya* and *Chatka* are like the different sides of the same coin.

*ChatkaSangeet* generally lacks the depth and splendor that characterizes *BhawaiyaSangeet*. It is genuinely lacking the thematic plethora of *BhawaiyaSangeet* such as the pangs of separation, the ecstasy of romantic union, the unclaimed experiences of desire and longing and the vagaries of human heart that drastically impact the mundane lives of ordinary men and women. These limitations of theme and context however, are easily nullified by the perennial popularity and undying relevance of the *ChatkaSangeet* genre. The broad and somewhat coarse nature these songs have sustained their appeal even though they might not be considered as classically acceptable forms of artistic entertainment.

Now it would be a gross misrepresentation to say that *ChatkaSangeet* is only synonymous with sexually overcharged narratives of adultery, illicit love, clandestine affairs and raunchy tales of gender relations. *ChatkaSangeet* is all these and much more. The dissimilarities with *BhawaiyaSangeet* extend far beyond thematic concerns. These two genres are different in terms of melody, intonation, music notes, rhythm and tempo. A composition of *BhawaiyaSangeet* is usually quite longer than that of a *ChatkaSangeet*, which is marked by brevity and temporality.

The reasons behind the germination of *ChatkaSangeet* are very practical and rudimentary. The sonorous nature, high thematic concerns and stately melody of *Bhawaiya* do not really please the senses of the rustic folk after a hard day's work. *ChatkaSangeet* tries to fill this void. Its

comely nature, seductive tales of debauchery and passion usually satiate the demands of folk entertainment. Take for example the following verse:

***Purushtomarbarit ache kai( Lover, I hope there is none at your home)***

***Oiknaamarnagevoi( I don't want to get caught)***

***Gatiyanatirdange Jodi kamorvangidei( If we get caught, the neighbours would cane us)***

The female response to such a predicament is even more comic and apt:

***Ache ektapaglavashur( Well, my stupid brother-in-law is at home)***

***Dekhiaothitnapa ( But don't worry about him, he will not suspect us)***

So the theme of sexual dissidence and subversion is built into this genre. Examples abound such as the next verse:

***Barohaatsharikhan an dhakemorgao ( My youth cannot be hidden even by such an illustrious piece of cloth)***

***Aronadhakemorgao ( No matter how much I try it)***

***Biyarghataknaasite sat chawalermao( I got pregnant, even before my marriage was fixed)***

So this verse elaborates upon the theme of pre-marital sexual relations and the woman's ensuing unplanned pregnancy, which is a matter of great distress for the woman and her kin. Rustic sensibilities and hypocrisies regarding female chastity, planned parenthood and patriarchal subjugation of women are severely deconstructed in this verse, which point towards an evolving nature gender relations and female subjectivity. This in effect causes cultural transition which forces society to take stock of female sexuality and the vivid expressions of it. The resultant product superbly takes the audience to the intersections of performativity, resistance and subversion

## **Ecological Concern and the Feminine in *BhawaiyaSangeet***

Pantheistic piety and the deification of nature constitute the core philosophy of the famed *BhawaiyaSangeet* genre and the compositions of this genre genuinely try to foreground the importance of ecology. Nature is almost feminized in these songs to the point of reverence and is attributed divine status. A close study of a few of the songs will lead us toward finding the underlying note of ecofeminism and the epistemology of nature. Take for example the following verse-

*Nadir baanasilre ( The river is flooding)*

*Teesta nadir baan (The mighty Teesta river is overflowing)*

*Ghorgrihasti, maiyachawadhariyapalanbandhu re ( Gather your family, collect your belongings and run to safety)*

So Nature is shown as a formidable entity, capable of wrecking havoc and not to be taken lightly. This corresponds to the animistic belief that natural forces are to be respected, a central tenet of Ecocriticism and founding principle of Ecofeminism.

However this segment is not just preoccupied with nature and its multiple manifestations. In fact, the ethical exploration of femininity and multifarious depictions of female subjectivity constitute the bedrock of this artistic genre. Examples abound, such as the following verse:

*Oki gariyalbhai( Where are you Brother Gariyal ?)*

*Kato rabami panther dike chahiya re ( I have been waiting for you, been longing for you)*

*Jedingariyalujan jai ( The day you set sail for destination)*

*Narirmonmorbujiyaroi re (Your beloved becomes sad and gloomy)*

*Gariyal* here refers to the drivers and ferrymen who dot the countryside, going from one village to another providing much needed transportation and connectivity. So the female urge for being reunited with her beloved is emphatically voiced in this verse. Such verses abound in the

rich treasure house of *BhawaiyaSangeet*. It has become clear that these musical compositions do not shy away from attributing agency upon the female narrator and foregrounding the feminine voice. This can be seen as foreshadowing the transgressive nature of meaning production and semiotic interpretation that can be perceived as extremely subversive in a deeply patriarchal society.

We shall now turn our attention towards the ritualistic artifacts that shape the way people in Coochbehar approach divinity, holistic growth and faith in the benignity of things. The ongoing spate of globalization, advent of consumerism, the clutches of capitalism and an overall disenchantment with rustic living might have pushed these practices into the backseat, but they still hold sway over the minds of the people of this district. No doubt, these practices are no longer in the forefront of public arena but they cannot be relegated to the status of oblivion as perennial belief in the lasting legacy of animistic faith never really dies. Our survey would focus on the note of sexual dissidence and its cultural consequences in these practices and how they still offer up new avenues of semiotic interpretation. Such as study would no doubt, involve gender criticism, evaluation of the concept of the Maternal and the changing contours of Faith in a deeply agrarian society that is standing at the crossroads of modernity, tradition and folk wisdom. However saying that these rituals are obsolete and outdated is a terribly reductive argument as people still engage in them and try to keep their traditions alive by constantly reminding their future generations about it. This way the transmission of heritage takes place and the practices in turn are rejuvenated.

### **Female Body, Fertility and Benevolence as seen in *HudumDeo Puja***

*HudumDeo* as a ritual is deeply associated with natural bounty and divine benevolence that is supposed to manifest itself in the form of heavy rainfall, which in turn would increase agricultural production manifold and bring in economic prosperity. So this ritual is rooted in earthy practicality and resourceful use of nature's gifts. However the method of performing this ritual is in itself quite unconventional and disruptive of patriarchal sensibilities regarding purity and propriety. Men are barred from participating in this ritual and the entire process is carried out by women. This ritual almost advocates for matrilineal supremacy as mothers symbolize fertility which is a metonymic representation of agricultural bounty. The word *Hudum* itself refers to a

mythical bird, origin of which is unknown but is believed to be derived from Lord *Varuna*, the Hindu God for rain and monsoon.

Women gather around in a secluded place near the village and perform this ritual. Seclusion here is not just a requirement for sincerity but also is meant to serve as an inhibitor from the male gaze as the women are required to perform this ritual stark naked. The desertion of clothes can refer to symbolic termination of societal bonds and may also mean a lasting association with purity and sincerity while human beings are at their most natural state. Women chose a place away from the public eye, enclose the place by draping tarpaulins in a circular way across poles, then strip naked and place a banana tree in the middle of the ground and metaphorically worship it as an avatar of the mythical *Hudumbird*. The women also paint a symbolic vagina on the base of the banana tree. The group leader plants the tree while she is buck naked. The word *Hudum* can also be seen as a distorted version of the Rajbanshi word *UdumorUdang* which colloquially means nude hence the naked state of female devotees is explicable. Let's analyse a popular verse related with this ritual for better understanding the sexual implications of this ritual:

*Hilhilachekamortamor (My body quivers)*

*Shirshirachegao( There is a strange sensation)*

*Kunthekona gale Hudumerdekhapao ( Where can I find Hudum ? )*

*Konthe gale dekha hoi ( O, tell me please where is Hudum ? )*

*Dekhaholiedehotajurai( OnlyHudum can quench my thirst and please my body)*

So these verses are extremely graphic and suggestive of female sexual desires and various pangs. The female body is shown as a living entity full of demands that can only be met by the *Hudum* bird, the harbinger of good rain. Rain here is used as a metaphor that quenches the human heart and irrigates the land. So the direct equivalence of fertile, agricultural land with the desirous female body is an act of attributing autonomy and agency on women, which in a deeply patriarchal society almost amounts to dissidence.

**Domestic Life and Cultural Anthropology seen through the prism of *Bishohari Puja***



The genesis of *Bishohari Puja* is contiguous with the myth of Manasa Devi, the goddess of snakes. Worshipped mainly in Bengal, Manasa is seen as a house deity and is worshipped mostly by middle-class householders, Rajbanshi and Non-Rajbanshi alike. However *Bishahari Puja* is primarily a Rajbanshi act of devotion. In Rajbanshi households, Manasa is also known by many names such as, *KaniBishahari*, *Thakurani* etc. During the ceremony of *Bishohari Puja*, animal sacrifices are made such as goats and pigeons.

The actual act of performing this ceremony, involves recounting the tale of Behula and Lakhinder. So naturally the narrative regarding, Chad Saudagar, Behula's final boat ride, Lakhinder's death from snakebite, and Chad Saudagar's insolence and vanity comes into the play. For aficionados of cultural anthropology, the actual ceremony of *Bishahari Puja* is not as important as the music accompanying it. The religious values surrounding this puja, gives birth to a completely hybrid song genre called, ***MaroiGaan***, a hybrid mixture of domestic sensibility and divine idealization. There are certain segments of *MaroiGaan*, which are- *Sandhya Maroi*, *GotaMaroi* and *RakhalMaroi*. All these different segments usually try to give a poignant summary of the famed *Behula-Lakhindertale* and provides sermon regarding feminine virtue and domestic happiness. Behula is shown as the ideal female self and prospective brides are encouraged to emulate her piety and devotion towards her husband.

However this last component in *Bishohari Puja* is slowly disappearing, as the younger generation of women no longer finds resonance with the selfless love and self-annihilation of Behula. They are quick to realize that such sermons regarding the construction and fetishistic preoccupation with the ideal female self is actually patriarchal propaganda wrapped in the cloak of divinity and morality. Which is why the musical compositions that once thrived around the quantum of *Bishahari Puja* is now a dying art. This can be seen as the consequence of cultural materialism. Thus the classic tale of Behula and Lakhinder is shown to have anthropological relevance and the cause behind the slow disintegration of it is in itself a case study of ideology, faith and individuality. Thus *Bishahari Puja* satiates academician's thirst for cultural anthropology and brings out the challenges that emerge when a particular religious component is encountered for the first time by an unsuspecting generation of new devotees. This points towards the constantly shifting pain of ideas and values that impact people's approach toward tradition and legacy.

### ***Jatrapujo and The Space for Spiritual Autonomy & Cultural Progressivism in the Rajbanshi Community:***

DurgaPujo (the yearly autumnal celebration of Goddess Durga in the Bengali Calendar) is a mainstay of Bengali Social and Cultural life in towns and villages across the state of West Bengal. Regardless to say this cultural behemoth of a religious celebration is also observed with much fanfare and pomp in the district of Coochbehar and here it also has a local colour and tone that has set it apart from the other districts and has given it a character of its own. This difference comes from the fact that Coochbehar has had a royal family which has created its own traditions and over the course of time it has manifested itself on the minds of the people.

The legend goes like this: The founder of the Coochbehar monarchy, Biswasingha Ray, in 1510 had the idea of worshipping the deity of Goddess Durga. This sincere act of devotion enabled him to receive the grace of the Goddess and found the Koch Monarchy. The son of BiswaSingha, MaharajNaranarayan, invoked the deity in 1562 before starting his expedition of Assam. The deity that he worshipped has come to be known as Barodevi (The Supreme Deity). This particular tradition of the royal house has now found government patronage after Independence.

Another legend describes that King Narnarayan had been saved from the wrath of his brother's murderous plot by Devi Bhabhani (Goddess Bhabhani) who foiled the attempt to kill the incumbent king. As a gesture of gratitude, Naranarayan instituted the practice of worshipping the deity of Devi Bhabhani, who later on came to be worshipped as the Devi Durga (Goddess Durga) in the royal family. This cemented the place of worshipping the goddess in the populace of Coochbehar. Keeping true to the tradition of the kings, the act and occasion of worshipping Goddess Durga is known as the invocation of Barodevi (The Supreme Deity).

The essence of this particular instance of highly context-specific ritual lies in its focus on and foregrounding of agrarian values. By the phrase agrarian values we do not mean morals and ethics that are particular to an agrarian society but the ways of living of the members of that particular society, their inhibitions, priorities and aspirations. From such a viewpoint, the only way to properly address this issue is to make sure that we don't lose sight of the fact that the

invocation is not only an affirmation of localized faith, but also an exhibition of Rajbanshi interpretation and reception of a Pan-Bengali cultural phenomenon. The differences that give this ritual its local colours and fervor are have mainly developed because the devotees are rooted in an agrarian society and have mainly developed because the devotees are rooted in an agrarian society and they know how to make their presence felt.

This particular instance of invoking the Barodevi, stands outside the purview of hegemonic Bramhincal Hinduism in the sense that people from the community itself can perform the rites and if needed can employ the services of AdhikariBramhins (a particular sect) who are themselves part of the Rajbanshi community. This individualized and highly independent form of devotion marks the distinct characteristics of the ritual and is one of the many reasons why it has managed to hold sway over the community for such a long time. Such perennial charm and the palpable grace of the Barodevi is the reason why the annual invocation of this particular goddess occupies such a reverential place in the community.

The fixture and schedule of this puja is slightly different than that of Durga Puja. The difference in occurrence and the way people respond to it have historically set it apart from mainstream DurgaPujo celebrations. Unlike the beginning of the DurgaPujo celebrations, the invocation of Baro Devi commences on the tenth day in the month of Ashwin (Autumn in the Bengali Calendar). It is generally understood that the following seven days after the end of DurgaPujo is the time when ideally the invocation of Baro Devi should take place. The Rajbanshi Community has been observing this particular fixture for the longest time, unencumbered by any sort of scriptural interpretation or guidelines. To the outside observer this might seem like an aberration or even an instance of heretic defiance but for the indigenous Rajbanshi Community, this is just the way they have been observing their faith, untarnished by dogmatic religiosity.

The ritual is particularly concerned with the values of domestic piety, monogamy, reverence towards one's vocation, farming equipment and an overall devotion towards one's homestead, eco-system and habitat. The beginning of the puja involves conducting a thorough cleansing of the household by the ladies of the family, which is followed by stamping the ceremonial vermilion and wet-clay onto the various farm equipments such as pickaxes, spades, shovels, hammers, saws among others. This is done to show gratitude towards the tools by which

people earn their living. This resonates with the Wordsworthian idea of endowing inanimate objects with benevolent spirit and utilitarian purposes. This is followed by hanging and embellishing different corners of the household with flowers and auspicious symbols made of dried out and dyed jute.

There is another aspect to this invocation of Baro Devi that often gets unnoticed. Many people observe the *SarswatiPuja* (The Worshipping of Goddess Saraswati, Deity of Intellect and Education). This is done to seek blessings from the goddess to enable good fortune and grace. Young members of the family apply vermilion and wet-clay marks on the books to commemorate the occasion. The whole affair has the air of being shrouded in sanctimonious righteousness. People distribute the holy Prasad among their neighbors to share the joy.

One thing that stands out is the fact that these rituals are not bound by any particular Bramhminical traditions, that is to say they don't need the presence of Bramhin priests to officiate the occasion. People from within the community are at liberty to conduct the ceremony according to their best understanding, or if the need arises they can seek the guidance of the AdhikaryBramhins as mentioned earlier. This goes to show that folk practices are not bound by any sort of scriptural rigidities and people are in fact free to choose their own modes of devotion as long as they are sincere, keeps with the tradition, fulfills the supplicant's aim, upholds moral values and restores faith in the human goodwill.

The most noteworthy component of the Jatra Puja is the ceremonial beginning of the Agricultural season, marked by the worshipping of the haal (plough). This makes it a metonymical representation of the values that are associated with the agrarian society and how it foregrounds the significance of the fertile land and its bountiful impact upon the mass.

In a sense this act of worshipping the plough is indicative of the greater philosophy behind the JatraPujo. The reverence towards Goddess Saraswati, the seeking of good fortune from Baro Devi- all these acts of benevolence and piety are in fact synonymous with the innate human wish of rising above one's station and finding material comfort. Community elders say that the worshipping of Baro Devi and JatraPujo are meant to safeguard the community's economic condition and uphold the family values that are glue that holds society together.

### **Observations and Deductions from these Acts of Localized Faith:**

People don't always conform to set rituals and they have their own interpretation of strict religiosity which is informed by historic consciousness, prevailing socio-cultural norms and community standards of morality and ethics. This only reaffirms their faith in the benign aspects of life and longing, which in turn impact the way they perceive the many complexities of the performative gestures of spiritual consciousness.

Most of the gestures and rituals associated with this puja are informed by a deep ecological consciousness, one that does not undermine the gratifying influence that nature has upon human civilization. Agrarian societies mostly depend upon their natural surrounding for sustenance and sustainability. The Rajbanshi Community who are the primary participants in this ritual makes it a point to be ecologically conscious and environmentally sustainable, which gives the whole affair a veneer of greater acceptability and charm.

The most significant part of the invocation of Baro Devi Puja is its independent, autonomous status, away from all sorts of scriptural rigidity and epistemological chauvinism. The absence of Brahmin priests and the relatively self-reflexive nature of the ritual point towards an interpretative aspect of it which often goes unnoticed. The onus is on the community members to execute the ritual as well as they can and ensure that the future generations get inspired by it enough to engage in it and uphold it. This method of cultural transmission over successive generations is a great indicator of how seriously the community takes their heritage.

Attributing benign and divine status to the whole practice brings out the inherently pantheistic nature of the process, which directly corresponds to one of the central tenets of folk cultures all over the globe, which is: accept nature for what it is, always be grateful for its bounties and respect the many possessions that she has endowed you with.

This ritual talks to the aspirational and upwardly mobile nature of the supplicants, most of whom come from the Rajbanshi Community. So it is not only an instance of localized faith but is also a moniker of where the community is heading, a bellwether for times to come. To the observant eye this ritual will always have a place of special significance as literature is an account of dialectic and in this instance the change is informed by history and centuries of spiritual progressivism.

The rationale behind supporting an archaic tradition such as the worshipping of Baro Devi is rendered plausible by the active participation of the members of the community while also staying truthful to the tradition. It is not just an act of faith but also a way to strengthen community ties while paying due diligence to the demands and whims of the changing times.

## **Conclusion**

The cultural landscape of Cooch Behar district is undergoing a huge change and the specimens that we have tried to study and analyze can only be perceived as the tip of the iceberg. Some important findings do emerge which are:

- i) Rituals and customs are not static and are subject to interpretative variations.
- ii) Cultural artifacts are mostly a process of human idiosyncrasy and they can never be viewed as a finished product.
- iii) Sexual dissidence is often a by-product of evolving consciousness regarding the self and is not subject to the predominant moral bent the contemporary age.
- iv) Cultural transition mostly takes place unknown to the participant and its impact often goes unrecorded through a couple of generations.

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## **The Idea of Peace in Traditional Songs of the Santal**

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### **Abstract**

Song (*sereng*) is an integral part of Santal culture. It is not sung for entertainment only, but also in the socio-religious occasions. Their oral history (*nagam*), creation stories, socio-cultural life are portrayed in songs which are handed down orally from generation to generation. The song is interwoven with dance, rituals, social ceremonies and festivals. A number of scholars who have done works among the Santals have emphasized the significance of songs in their culture. Therefore, we can understand Santal society and culture in their structural and cognitive dimensions to a great extent through the songs they are performing traditionally. Although peace is often considered to illusive in today's world yet the human quest for peace remains an untiring journey. Most interestingly, the Santals exist as a peace-loving harmonious society nurturing a 'pleasure complex' mostly expressed through their dances and songs. The present study aims to inquire how the idea of peace is expressed through their songs. The work done among the Santals living in the Jangalmahal districts of Jhargram, Paschim Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia in West Bengal however, reveals that the word 'peace' (*suluk*) has not much used in their songs contrary to a common-sense perception. Here, the paper interrogates whether the relationship between structural and superstructural levels may be linear one. Taking cue from the concept of cultural materialism of Marvin Harris, the paper argues that the manifest element of a social structure may not be a superstructural reality in cultural expression.



**Keywords:** Santal, Song, Peace, Culture, Society, Superstructure, Cultural Materialism.

### **Introduction**

Song (*sereng*) is an integral part of Santal culture. It is not only sung for entertainment but also it is sung on their socio-religious occasions. Apart from expressing their emotions, joys and sorrows, this creative genre depicts the socio-cultural life, origin, dispersion, oral history, behavioral and moral orders of the Santal culture and society. Archer (2007) classified the Santal songs on the bases of the event or occasion in which these are sung. According we find forest songs(*birsereng*), cultivation songs (*hororohoosereng*), initiation songs (*cacochatiarsereng*), social dances' songs ( *Lagre, Dahar, Golwari, Dasae*), marriage songs ( *don sereng*), ex-communication song ( *bit lahasereng*), festival songs ( *Sohrae, Baha, Karam* ), Witches' song, mourning songs, annual hunt songs. According to Archer (*ibid*), these songs reflect many aspects of the socio-cultural life of the Santal like induction to the tribe, rules of sex, love, conflict with parents, accidents, breakdown and divorce, fertility etc. It can be said thatthey have songs from birth to death rituals. Besides that they sing different kinds of song during their religious festivals like *baha, dasai, sahorai, sakrat ,langre, dong* etc. throughout the year. It is noticed that the nature of Santal traditional songs reflects theirpast realization, experience always contain their history, indigenous knowledge, their social Philosophy etc.

### **Santal People**

The Santals are the largest Scheduled Tribe (ST) of eastern India living in the states of Jharkhand (27,52,723), West Bengal (25,12,331), Odisha (8,94.764), Bihar (4,06,076)<sup>1</sup>. They are also seen to inhabit in Bangladesh and Nepal. In the states of West Bengal, they have literacy rate of 47.30 per cent which is below the average rate of literacy (57.93 %) of the ST population of West Bengal. The Santal are mostly found to concentrated in the western and south-western parts of the state of West Bengal where the present investigation has been conducted. In spite of their distribution over a large tract of territory cutting the national boundary, they exhibit a great degree of uniformity with regard to their language, social customs, religious activities and rituals. Santali, included in Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India is a rich language which has developed Ol-chiki script. The language is now taught at the college and university levels, and it is also a medium of instructions at the school level at some parts of the state. Therefore, it can be said that now the tribe has its own system of writing in which many of the oral traditions are now

transformed into written forms. By traditional songs we have meant those songs which are transmitted orally and anonymous by authorship. It can be attributed to the collective creativity.

The characteristic Santal village has a *Majhithan* (seat of the headman of the village) and *Jaherthan* (sacred grove). The village has *akhra* where the dance and songs are performed apart from village roads. The village council traditionally represented by *Majhi* (headman), *Jogmajhi* (assistant headman), *Naike* (priest) and *godet* (messenger) maintains the order at the village level. At the extra-village level, they have Paragana organization to maintain law and order among the Santals. The tribe is divided into 12 (actually 11) exogamous clans. The tribal endogamy is observed. The major gods and goddesses of the Santals include Lita/ Thakur, Marang Buru, Turuko Moreiko, Jaher era, Gosae era. On the occasions of different festivals, these deities are worshipped. The Baha, Mak'more, Ero Sim, Hariar Sim, Janthar, Karam, Dasai, Sohrai, Sakrat, Magh Sim are the rites and festivals of the Santals, held round the year. During these festivals, the Santal sing traditional songs for the occasion and dance in group with the accompaniment of the musical instruments namely tamak (unifacial conical drum), tumdak (bifacial cylindrical drum), tirio (flute), banam/ kendri (fiddle). The Santals have elaborate life cycle rituals and ceremonies of which they have songs for marriage and death. The annual hunt (sendra) is another community level event which expresses their solidarity. Only the males are allowed to go for hunt. They also have songs for the event of annual hunt.

From the foregoing discussion, one can understand that the socio-economic life of the Santals is connected to the aesthetic and supernatural worlds. Thus, songs and rituals are part and parcel of their social and economic activities. Therefore, an interconnected relationship of solidarity emerges among the Santals.

Now, the obvious question comes where the root of this persistence of cultural tradition among the Santal lies. The answer rests in the nature of the social organization of the Santal people who give much premium on the harmonious and peaceful existence. Therefore, 'peace' remains the cardinal axis of the Santal ethos. In the next section, we shall explore this dimension in some details.

### ***Suluk: Idea of Peace***

The idea of peace is primarily judged in a political context with regard to absence of war or violence. However, the presence of conflict does not altogether negate the existence of peace in a society. Miller (2005:55) defines peace as:

‘ A political condition that ensures justice and social stability through formal and informal institutions, practices, and norms.’

Though it indicates a political situation, yet the social dimension of peace is also hinted at in this definition. In a disciplinary perspective, peace studies is mainly associated with macro-level considerations of inter-state relationships. However, the conditions of peace which Miller (2005) discussed can be applied in the understanding of peace at the micro-level perspective. These conditions include (i) balance of power, (ii) legitimacy in decision making, (iii) recognized and valued interdependence and cooperation, (iv) reliable and trusted institutions for resolving conflicts, (v) sense of equality and respect, (v) mutual understanding of rights, interests and flexibility. It can also function in informal way which we shall see in the present study. Again, the idea of peace can never be fully comprehended if we do not take connotation of the term for mental or internal peace (Das,2004). The anthropological understanding of the ‘internally peaceful society’ hints at the same direction as envisaged in the idea of mental peace, non-warring and social tranquility (Fry,2007). Besides these, the peace is identified with the material well-being and socio-economic progress (Bonisch,1981). The peace has been called the ‘greatest good’ by the Greek philosophers (ibid).Bonisch (1981) argues that the peace remains to be an aim and process to achieve that aim.

With reference to peace, we may cite what Culshaw writes about the Santal society. It runs as the following:

‘Since that date the history of the Santals has been peaceful and some measures of progress has been achieved.’ (Culshaw: 1949: 6)

In Archer’s writing, we also get a hint towards the peaceful existence of the Santals. He wrote:

‘Within this neat and ordered setting most Santal lead calm and happy lives.’ (Archer:2007:24)

The book of traditions and customs of the Santals (*Mare HapramkoReakoKatha*,Mitra,1917) provides some instructive materials that help us to understand the ethos of peace in Santal society. Here we find instructions regarding village level cooperation ( *atoregopororean*), working together ( *gateygatey kami*), coming together of the villagers in solidarity ( *atorenkoreakomit sat rean* ). In this text, they write about themselves that the Santals do not

abruptly get angry like the *dedeko* (non-Santals/ others) or the *Turuba* (Muslims). Another feature of the Santal character which is mentioned here is that the HorHopon (i.e. Santals) never entertains cruelty and enmity in mind. They may get angry, but never allow it to overpower them for long. Now all these features indicate an internally peaceful society that is likely to express this ethos of peace and happiness in other forms of cultural manifestations like songs.

The idea of Peace (*suluk*) in Santal Traditional Song is one of the significant aspects because their songs contain message of peace (*suluk*) how peace may be established and sustained. In general, peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups. In *Jamsimbinti* of the Santals, there is a proverb “*sulukgemuluk e dohoya*” which means peace can preserve the country. It speaks of wellbeing of all beyond individual interest. Harmony in nature is found in the mythological narrative of *Jamsimbinti*. In this context, the methodological and pragmatic necessities of the understanding of peace in traditional Santali songs are grounded.

### **Understanding Peace in Santali Songs**

In the 1960 and 1970 Scholars from many countries tried to define the peace and got numbers of views along with *Johan Gultangs* definition. The ‘critical peace research’ is increasingly characterized as an applied science which has to analyze those conditions that enable, endanger, or prevent peace. George Picht (1975) mentioned a critical manner situation that Science of war has reached its culmination. But there exists no science of peace. The established powers and institution interested in maintenance of the status quo. The perpetuation of the status quo in today’s world is bound to lead the war. Those who want to create peace have to change the world and seek a new order. Any new order will destroy the new structure. Peace worked above all as a desirable social ideal and meant prevention of disaster and destruction maintain and development of human achievements. Also progressive social theories from past and present emphasize the ideal of harmony relations between men and peoples without conflicts. This idea was connected with ideas about the nature and structure of society. In the context peace was often understood as a means to implement other societal and individual goals (Bonisch. A 1981).

The traditional Santal song plays a vital role to carry the message of Universal peace. Always this song express voice against conflict emphasizing their collective existence and solidarity. Raban Baskey's (2000) collection of songs titled *Kita Pitiya* (meaning 'date palm leaf mat') does not contain any song directly related to peace. Baskey (2003) wrote a book named *Horsamajrenbangaburuko* in which we find many songs sung during religious practices, these songs are related to the nature and the rituals of respective religious activity. We may get idea by interpretation of song. Hembram (2016) published a book named *Mare HorSereng* that contains 87 old Santali songs, but none of these songs directly expresses the idea of peace. In spite of that there are some traditional songs which are in unwritten form reflect the idea of peace. Neither Tudu's (2016) book on Santali songs nor Hembram's (2022) historical treatise on the Santali songs gives us any song that clearly reflects the idea of peace. In fact, we too come across a very few songs dealing with peace compared to the huge corpus of songs of the Santal people in course of our fieldwork on the rituals and festivals of Santal and associated songs thereof in a considerably large area of Jangalmahal districts of West Bengal during 2021-2022. Intensive studies have been done in at least ten villages inhabited by the Santals. In the context, our question is why the Santals have so few songs on the theme of peace (*suluk*) despite nurturing a happy and peaceful existence. To answer this question, we can investigate the relationship between thought and behaviour. Marvin Harris (1979, 1995) tried to understand this relationship in his theory of Cultural Materialism and he wrote the following on cultural materialism:

'This research strategy holds that the primary task of anthropology is to give causal explanations for the differences and similarities in thought and behavior found among human groups.'

(Harris, 1995, 277)

He divided the cultural system into three major parts – infrastructure (production, reproduction); structure (relations of productions, domestic life, law and order etc.); superstructure (religion, art etc.). These aspects of culture are interrelated and exert influence on each other. However, Harris writes that the extent of influence cannot be exactly predicted since the elements may have their autonomy. To quote from Harris, it reads:

"...cultural-materialism asserts the strategic priority of etic and behavioral conditions and processes over emic and mental conditions and processes, and of infrastructural over structural and superstructural conditions and processes; but it does not deny the possibility that emic, mental, superstructural, and structural components may achieve a degree of autonomy from the etic behavioral infrastructure." (Harris, 1979, 56)

Now, we may try to explain the nature and prevalence of the idea of peace in Santal songs. The attempt gets its ontological necessity in the similar researches on the peace and non-conflict (Fry, 2007). Fry (2007) is confident when he says that tremendous variations in belief systems are evident in ethnographic records of societies across the globe. He adds that the studies suggest a shift in belief system favouring non-violent mitigation of conflicts which is well ‘within the range of human possibilities’ (ibid,222).

The present study is unique in a sense that it differs on the ground of its micro-level approach while the earlier works on peace cited here have dealt with the subject at a macro level. Moreover, those studies had been oriented mainly towards international peace initiatives. For those studies peace was considered primarily a political business. In the present study, it is endeavoured to know how people give the idea of peace in their songs and how this idea is internally connected to other aspects of culture.

### **Santal Songs: Reflections of peace**

The Santals have different types of songs about which we have already referred to in the beginning. But we have found the idea of peace reflected in only two types of songs – *Langre* and *Dong*. These songs are emic categories of their culture and depict the inner feeling and their attitude. The songs are sung by both the men and women on different occasions with accompaniment of musical instruments. The dance (*enech*) and song (*sereng*) may be performed simultaneously. Like dance, the song is also sung in group, however an individual gifted with the skill of singing is sometimes seen to lead the show. The songs are transmitted orally. But now these oral songs are being collected in books. With a higher level of dispersion and heterogeneity at the socio-economic level, this transformation from orality to written tradition would certainly play an adaptive advantage in retaining the tribal identity. This is probably one major factor that contributes to the preservation of traditional songs and singing. These glimpses of this intangible heritage can be understood from the following examples.

#### ***Langresereng***

The word *Langre* is derived from *Langa* and *ere*. *Langa* means tiredness, *ere* means to forget i.e to forget the tiredness after getting exhausted from whole day work, this song/dance is performed. The Santal perform this on any day of the year in their spare time. Besides *langreenejsereng* (Langre dance and song) is performed on the last day of any religious festival like *Baha*, *Mak' more*, *soharay*, *sakrat* etc. It is done mainly in *akhara* (dancing ground or arena in the village). It is often said by the Santals that '*Langreenejserengoktodobongaburukomanmi chin tekoargohijutahej*' (during perform the *langreenejsereng*, Gods, Goddess used to come down for dancing with them). *Langreenejsereng* unites all the villagers every night to rejoice. *Tamak*, *Tumdah*, *regra* etc are the musical instruments played by the men and the women dance in a row around the men performers. Here only traditional song is sung.

This following song narrates a mythic-historical event. There is one myth in Santal Society in which *Kayda* and *Badoli* clans once embroiled in a conflict over land in Kandhar area. Till now the reflection of this conflict prevail in society so *Kisku* and *Mandido* not make any marriage bonding. When they were fighting to death, then this song was sung.

*Chetelagitkomapaghkankoydako*

*Chetelagitkogopojkanbadoliko*

*Dhaodhao Kandahar re*

*Simalagitkomapaghkankoydako*

*Dadilagitkogopojkanbadoliko*

*Alo jape tupungagosai*

*Alo jape mapa a gosai*

*Makamaka hating pegosai*

*Bitabitasundaipegosai*

[Translation

Why Koyda are fighting for

Why Badoli are killing for

Furiously in Kandhar

They are fighting for border of land

They are killing for pond

Don't fight o God

Don't kill o God

Divide among them  
 Distribute among them.]  
 (Source: Fieldwork)<sup>3</sup>

In this song solution of such conflict has been given in sharing the same, dividing and distributing the land amongst themselves. This song defines the truth that “*alosepemapaghaalosepegopoj a, makamaka hating pebitabitasuraype*” meaning no need to kill each other just divide and distribute equally amongst them. This is the ideal way to live side by side peacefully with neighbours and also applicable for the inhabitants of the neighboring villages. They say that this principle is equally true for peoples of different countries. They believe that no conflict can be solved through fighting. An old Santal of the studied village opines: ‘We should always share our happiness and sorrow with neighbors for looking after the interest of each other. This is how the Santal are living side by side for Generation.’

We have another Langreenejsereng expressing the same theme. This is one of their common song they sing rotationally.

*Abo atohr do*  
*Sebelgekoror do*  
*Dukjalarengjetetengihotomdeyaya*  
*Sagaydebonsajao a*  
*Sulukdebontengoy a*  
*Manmihoponjonnomdebodulartalaya*

**[ Translation:**

The people of our village  
 Converse in sweet way  
 Suffering, hunger and thirst – Forget everything  
 We build our relation  
 Let’s build our **peace**  
 Let the life of human be placed in our loving heart]

(Source: Fieldwork)



This song brings to the fore the essence of peaceful living in the village. They may have their individual suffering and bodily needs food and drinks, but they would not forget to keep a sweet tongue. Here the utterance “*sulukdebotengoya*” comes when they are asking for peace among themselves even. Here it is mentioned that they afford to overcome all their hardships of life through peacefully cohabitation. Naturally mutual cooperation is very necessary to live any village together and this type tendency will lead to *suluk* (peace).

### ***Dong sereng***

*Dong* is one of ritualistic practice among the Santal community when a grown-up girl and boy get married according to the social norms then the *dongenejsereng* is performed. In the Santal society there are at least four types of marriage system depending upon the economic potentials of the parties. These systems are to argument the financial situation of the parties and give relief to their economic standing. Nevertheless, there are no any frightful dowries in any of the four systems. During their marriage ceremony, many steps are there. Songs are sung according the steps of marriage with certain meanings related with the particular step.

The following song is sung when the parents of two parties meet and exchange their respects .

*Abo do ho renejhor*  
*Jomanua do banutabon*  
*Kurihoponbeoharlota dah te*  
*Kora hoponbeoharthamakuirte*  
*Mocha kathatejiwi do larejpeho*  
*Joharbeoharte one do larej*

### **[Translation:**

We are poor people  
 Not enough food to offer  
 Women show respect through *lota dah*  
 Men exchange respect through *thamakur*  
 Let be satisfied through positive conversation  
 And also through the *johar* and gentle behavior]  
 (Source: *Radio Sereng* Collected by RabilalTudu)

In this song they emphasize on their behavior rather than food or any material exchange. The woman of the house traditionally shows respect to a guest by offering *alota dah* (water filled in jug) while one comes to the house. The male members exchange *thamakur* (tobacco). Therefore, *lota dah*, *thamakur* and sweet conversation bring in a good relationship among the members fostering a peaceful coexistence. There is one proverb in Santali “*jom nu khan do mocha kathage sores a*” i.e. respect through positive conversation is greater than offering any food. It also reflects their attitude towards keeping sweet relation.

Apart from songs, the idea of peace is reiterated in their prayers to their deities. These prayers are called *bakher* which is uttered in the forms of incantations at the time of ritual processes. In connection with the idea of one such incantation has been discussed to show the relationship of the peace with their worldview.

### ***Bakher***

It is the incantation of the Santals while worshiping their gods and goddesses. Through this incantation they convey their message to *gosai* (God) for their well-being. They chant this *bakher* collectively while *naike* (priest) does the sacrifice. During the *bakher* they always mention the name of respective *bonga* (God) to whom they are offering.

The following *bakher* is done during *jantharbongaworship* in the month of *aghar* (middle of November to middle of December) at the outskirts of village by the *naike*. The *Jantaharbongaburu* is observed in order to protect their paddy and also to appease the surrounding *bonga* (Gods and Goddesses) for getting relief from any distress. They offer fowl or pig to *banga* while uttering the following *bakher*:

*Johargosai ne en do jantharnutum tele amamkanchal am kan*

*Suk teSawarteaatangnka me gosai*

*Jarge dah jari dah kohoyaguchapeaguy me gosay*

*Khet re khari re ir ale an ale petejalolapuralo*

*Jogejanggesaharkoaharkp ma gosai*

*Gelerebilirechereako chute ako hot akohadapako*

*Hakakodamankakoam*

*Aturemahara re rog aghkobighin a ko*

*Alomlagamhochoyamaraohochoy*  
*Bayrikobadikoneldaram me daramkakoam*  
*Des re disom re sukgesulukgeerka am tarsekaam*  
*Jiwi re jati re gun kobirdako bit kabarelka am gossai*

**[Translation:**

O gosai in the name of Janthar we are giving thee  
 Take it in **peace**  
 Bring down rain water and fill  
 Don't let the grain waste in our field and yard  
 Let the seedlings sprout  
 Village from any disease germs  
 Protect from any kind of attack  
 Suppress the enemies  
 Spread **peace** and happiness across the country and outside the country  
 Awaken the good quality, be conscious in the soul and mind]  
 (Source: Fieldwork)

Through this *bakher* they want that their crops are saved from germs (*poho*) or other animals, bird etc. They pray for rain water for irrigation and wish for the seedlings to sprout properly. Through this *bakher*, they long for their village to be free from diseases also free from enemies. In spite of that they pray for universal peace and well-being of human being by awakening humanity among them.

**Discussion and conclusion**

Peace is a matter of delicate balance. Still, it is achievable as the study of the idea of peace in traditional Santali song indicates. The Santals have an agricultural economy and sedentary way of living. The land is precious for their subsistence. In the plains and peneplains where the Santals have been living for generations depend on the surrounding ecology and environment which is expected to provide them with rainwater for irrigation, fertile soil for cultivation, forest ecosystem

to sustain other forms of life. To conation all these properly, one has to build a harmony with the nature. This infrastructural necessity gives rise to a structural arrangement which has family life based on mutual love and respect, clan organization binding people in reciprocal obligations, stable village council to ensure law and order by traditional means. Their songs speak a volume of the harmonious and cooperative existence in the village. This ethos of peaceful co-existence is likely to be reflected in their superstructure represented through songs as the postulates of Cultural Materialism suggest (Harris, 1979). Various scholars who studied Santal society and culture, have characterized the Santals as peaceful citizen keeping a decent living. However, quite contrary to this dominant value of peace among the Santals, their expressive tradition of songs shows surprisingly frugality in upholding the idea of peace by numbers. This paradox takes us to inquire into the relationship between behaviour and thought in Santal culture. By our investigation, we come to see that the structural and infrastructure may not absolutely control the superstructure (Harris, 1979,1995). It cannot be predicted that the all the social structural realities will be equally reflected in the arts and religion as it happens in the case of idea of peace among the Santals. One probable reason for the comparatively lesser occurrence of 'peace' as an word or dominant theme of a song is that the idea of peace is so self-evident that it does not need reiteration to manifest. Here the lived-experience outlived the worded-experience. The mechanisms for ensuring peace in Santal society is , however, clearly understood from the songs referred to above. Fry (2007) mentions of the verbal means of conflict resolution. He adds the values of equality, autonomy,sharing enhance the idea of peace. Giving examples from tribal societies, he goes on to declare the 'Human potential for peace' which is true for the Santal society too. The Santals songs collected here emphasizes the values of sharing (land, tobacco), equality ( lota dah), discussion ( sweet conversation) and love. Moreover, the songs are in tune with their prayers which are offered for universal peace.

### Endnotes

1. The numbers in parentheses indicate the Santal population in the respective states according to 2011 Census of India.
2. Koyda and Baduli indicate Kisku and Mandi clan members respectively. The clan members belonging to Kisku and Mandi constructed forts named *Koydagarh* and *Baduligarhin Chai Champa*.
3. The fieldwork has been conducted intensively among the Santals living in Medini (Binpur – I Block) in Jhargram district, Odolbani( Bandowan Block) in Purulia district, Borobagkuchla ( Garbeta –III ) in PaschimMedinipur district, Dharmapur ( Raipur Block) in Bankura district of Jangalmahal area of West Bengal.

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**Songs, Dance and The Festive Fervour: People of Bihar (India) and The  
Festival of Colours The ‘Holi’**

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**Abstract**

Songs, dance on the beats of *dholak* (a kind of drum), besides playing with colours, exchange of sweets and the festive greetings are some of the main features of the Hindu festival the ‘Holi’. To mark the festival people of Bihar, the one of the major states in India, usually sing *phag* (folk songs) while in enthusiastic mood, then they come out to celebrate this festival. *Phag* chiefly describe, how do the Hindu gods, the Rama, the Krishna and the ascetic Shiva play with colours and celebrate the ‘Holi’ with their near and dear ones. These folk songs not only enhance the gaiety or joy of the celebrators but help combining the folk cultures with their religious beliefs. This article depicts the role of different types of the traditional ‘Holi’ songs in the creation of festive fervour of the ‘Holi’. An attempt has also been made to analyse the impact of these songs on the psychology of the celebrators, which in turn affect the way of their celebrations.

*Keywords*- Bihar, festival of colours, Holi, Folk songs, religious beliefs, festive fervour, folk-culture.

## 1. INTRODUCTON

Singing traditional folk-songs has remained one of the important devices of folklore available to non-literate societies to transmit society's dominant values over generations. The Indian state Bihar is very rich in its folk traditions (Sahay 2006). Folk tales and folk songs of Bihar are not only famous in India but also in neighbouring countries like Nepal and Myanmar (Sahay 2000). The Holi folk-songs, which had become popular in Nepal through *katha-vachan* tradition, are still popular there (Servan-schrieber 2001).

During field visit it was noticed that in Bihar, the folk-songs of Holi, the *phag*, are popular both in the urban as well as in the rural areas. It was noticed that in rural areas, a week before the festival, in the evening, the villagers sitting in a public place either under the shadow of a tree or on the *chabootra* (platform) of a temple start singing *phag*. They also play *dholak*, *daphali* (a kind of small tambourine) and *jhanjh* (a sistrum). Children keep playing there and some times also repeat the line of songs in jovial mood. Women after finishing their household works sit nearby. All in festive moods talk with each others cut jokes and enjoy the festive evening. This way this verbal art plays important role in bridging the social interaction between the performers and the audience besides creating a very healthy and enjoyable fervour.

The mythological stories associated with the Holi, the way of its celebration and the folk-lore sung during this festival are closely embedded with each other. These songs chiefly describe how do the Hindu gods, the Rama, the Krishna and the ascetic Shiva play with colours and celebrate the Holi with their near and dear ones. People, when listen these songs, start imagining their gods



and goddesses also play the Holi like them and their imaginations make them emotional. In addition these songs enhance the joy of the celebrators and help them combining their folk culture with their religious beliefs.

The Holi is played in different ways in different parts of India. In some places it may be played in an aggressive way. While in some regions, the aggression is physical, as in *Barsane* Holi of Rajasthan (a state of western India), where women wield clubs against men, in some regions it is verbal abusive, as in North India. In the *Bhojpuri* (one of the dialects of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh) and Hindi speaking belt women's verbal aggression may be described as a form of cathartic abuse (Guha 1983).

This article explains the role of the different types of the Holi songs in making the festive fervour. An attempt has also been made to analyse the impact of such songs on the psychology of the celebrators by evoking their emotions and feelings, which in turn affect the way of their celebrations of the festival.

## 2. HOLI: AN INTRODUCTION

One of the major festivals of India Holi is celebrated on the *Purnima* (full moon day) of *Phagun* (February-March). In different states of India, people celebrate this festival by different names and follow different traditions. In Bihar, this festival is also called *Phagua* and the month *Phagun* is characterized by singing *Phag* (traditional Holi songs). It is the time of harvesting of *rabi* (winter) crop. The lush of green fields, scented breezes of the flowers *Palash* (*Butea monosperma*), the excitement of ripening mangoes, intoxicating *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) trees, melodious songs by *Koel* (Cuckoo), and the *Phag* musical tradition evoke the joyous mood of colour and camaraderie. By far everybody get delighted much during this period.

## 2.1. MYTHOLOGICAL STORIES AN THE LEGENDS

Holi has various mythological stories and legends associated with it. The most popular is about the burning of a demoness, Holika, and the saving of the child Prahlad, the symbol of truth and virtue. Story goes that there was a demon king Hiranyakashyap who demanded every body in his kingdom to worship him but his pious son, Prahlad became a devotee of lord Vishnu. There upon he wanted his son to be killed by hook or by crook. He asked his sister Holika to enter a blazing fire with Prahlad in her lap as Holika had a boon by virtue of which she was made immune to fire. However, Prahlad was saved by lord himself due to his extreme devotion and Holika was burnt to ashes, for, her boon would have worked only when she would enter the fire alone. Since then, people light a bonfire, called Holika (*Holika dahan*) on the eve of the Holi festival and thus celebrate the victory of good over evil.

Another story says that in the kingdom of Pirthu there was a demoness Dhundi who used to trouble children. She was chased away by children on the day of the Holi. Since then children take special delight in the tradition and are allowed to play pranks at the time of *Holika dahan*.

On this occasion some celebrate the death of evil minded demoness Pootna also. While executing the plan of Krishna's devil uncle Kansa, the demoness tried to kill infant lord Krishna by feeding him her poisoned breast milk. But cunning Krishna sucked her blood to her death. In accordance with those who view the origin of this festival from seasonal cycle, believe that Pootna represents winter and her death as the end of winter.

In south India, people worship Kamdeva, the god of love and passion for his extreme sacrifice. To evoke the interest of lord Shiva in the worldly affairs in the interest of earth, Kamdeva

shot his powerful love arrow at him. Shiva who was in a deep meditation, have enraged to open his third eyes which reduced Kamdeva to ashes. However, after entreat of Rati, The wife of Kamdeva, Shiva was pleased to have restored him back.

## 2.2. THE CELEBRATION

Just before a month of the Holi, a dead tree branch, symbolizing the demoness Holika, who is to be burnt on the eve of the Holi, is erected on the ground, mostly at the important crossroad or in an open place. From this day onward, people start piling dry wood near this erected branch. On the eve of the Holi, people gather near this pile of wood and lit huge bonfire called *Holika dahan*. To render great fullness to Agni, god of fire stalks of dry *jhangri* (green gram plants) wheat, barley plants and so on are offered to Agni with all humility. Burnt grams are called *horhain* the local dialect and people eat it with great pleasure. Ash from this bonfire is also considered sacred and people apply it on their forehead, believing that it will protect them from evil forces.

Next day of the *Holika dahan* is the time for the play of colours. Shops, offices and educational centres remain closed for the day and people get all the time to get crazy. Bright colours of *abeer* and *gulal* (coloured powder) fill the air and people with great excitement pour coloured water on each other. Children spray colours on one another with their *pichkari* (water-squinter) and throw water balloons on passer by. Young girls, boys and senior citizens form their own *tolis* (groups) and they move here and there applying colours to each other and exchanging greetings saying *Holi hai* (it is Holi). They sing songs and dance on the beats of *dholak*. The leader of the group plays *dholak*, hanging against his neck and shoulder.

The Holi gives chance to lovers to play with colours without inhibitions. It is said that once lord Krishna complained his mother Yasoda about his dark colour comparing that with fair Radha,

his beloved. Yasoda jokingly said Krishna to make Radha dark by applying colour on her face. Naughty and mischievous, as it were lord Krishna applied colour on Radha's face and made her look like him. This trend soon gained popularity among the masses and even today people are following it with gaiety.

Some people consume *bhang* (cannabis) on this day. It is so much a fun to watch otherwise sober people making a clown of them in full public display. Some time the title of *MurakhSrimoni* (great fool) is given to the person who proves himself a funniest person by way of his acting and appearance.

In the evening after taking bath people wear new clothes and meet their relatives and friends. Applying *abeer* (red coloured powder) on the forehead of friends and younger people they give a warm hug to them. Some juniors in respect put *abeer* on the toes of the elders and take blessings from them. Women prepare edibles such as *gujiya*, *mathri*, *dahiwada*, and *malpua* on this occasion. People enjoy these foods, sharing with one another.

It is believed that the spirit of the Holi encourages the feelings of brother/sisterhood in the society and even the enemies turn friends on this day. Though it is the festival of the Hindus, people of all communities and religions prefer to participate in this joyous and colourful festival.

### **3.ANOTHER ASPECT OF HOLI**

It is believed that with the advent of the Holi time, when season changes from winter to summer, people may be subjected to suffer from viral fever, hence applying natural coloured powders results in some what of medicinal significance. The colours are made of *neem* (*Azadirachata indica*), *kumkum*(red powder). *haldi* (turmeric), *bilva*(hard apple), and other medicinal herbs. For wet colours, flowers of *palash* are soaked in water over night and are boiled

to produce yellow coloured water, which also has medicinal properties. Unfortunately now people have started playing the Holi with synthetic colours easily available in markets. Similarly a special drink called *thandai* is also prepared with dry fruits and very small quantity of *bhang* (cannabis), but it, too, has medicinal benefits.

#### 4. BIHAR

Bihar, one of the states of India, is situated in the north-eastern part of the country with its capital at Patna. To the north of Bihar is the kingdom of Nepal. On other sides Bihar is surrounded by three Indian states: Uttar Pradesh to the west, Jharkhand to the south and West Bengal to the east. Culturally Bihar is a part of the Hindi heartland of India. The people of Bihar are called Bihari.

More than 80 per cent of the inhabitants of Bihar are Hindus. Muslims make the largest minority population. Sikhs, Jains and Christians also inhabit in the state.

The economy of Bihar is mainly based on agriculture and trade. The chief crops, grown here are barley, maize, paddy, sugarcane and wheat. Almost eighty percent of the total population of Bihar live in villages. The state has very low literacy rate. According to the World Bank States report (2003) Bihar is one of the poorest states of India.

The *Chhatis* a major festival of Bihar and is celebrated a week after *Deepawali* (*the festival of lights*). The *Chhatis* about worshipping the Sun God. *Teej* and *Chitragupta Puja* are the other local festivals. *Shravani Mela* at Sultan Ganj, which is celebrated in the month of July-August, is of great importance for the people of Bihar. The Sonapur cattle fair held approximately fifteen days after the *Deepawali* is the largest cattle fair in Asia. Besides these, all the major festivals of India are also celebrated in Bihar such as *Makarsankranti*, *Sarswatipuja*, *Holi*, *Eid-ul-Fitr*, *Eid-ul-zoha*,

*Muharram, Mahashivratri, Buddha Purnima, Rakhi, Mahavir Jayanti, Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja,* and *Christmas*, enriched with occasional or befitting folk-songs.

## 5. THE FOLK-SONGS: THE *PHAG*

It has been mentioned earlier that the folk-singers of Bihar start singing *phags*, before a week approaching the Holi. These folk-songs which chiefly describe how the Hindu gods and goddesses play the Holi with their family members and friends are popular not only in Bihar but all over India especially in north India with minor variations, here and there. Some of the popular *phags* are written below:

*Aaj Biraj me Holi re rasiya, Holi re rasiya, barjori re rasiya*

*Udatgulallal bhai badal, kesar rang me bori re rasiya, Holi re rasiya*

*Bajattal, mridang, jhahj aur majrin ki jori re rasiya, Holi re rasiya*

*Phengulalhaanthpinchkari, maratbhar-bharpinchkari re rasiya, Holi re rasiya*

*Itne me aayekunwar Kanhai, utaurkunwari Radha kishori re rasiya, Holi re rasiya*

*Nand gram me jure haisakha sab, barsane ko gori re rasiya, Holi re rasiya*

*Daud mil phagparsarkhele, kahi-kahi Hori-Hori re rasiya, barjori re rasiya*

(Today all are playing Holi in Brij. Gulal has made the sky red and surrounding has become saffron. *Dhol*, *mridungum* (an Indian drum), *ghanj* and *majrin* are being played. All are throwing *gulal* and coloured water on each other. Krishna is playing Holi with his beloved Radha. In the village of Nand (father of Krishna) all friends are playing Holi together. They are shouting Holi-Holi and are playing with *gulal* and coloured powder).

*KhelatRaghpati Hori hosange Janak kishori,*

*It Ram, Lakhan, Bharat Shatrughan, ut Janak sang gori, kesar rang bori*

*Chhidkatgulal samaj parspar, malatmukhan pe rori,*

*Bajatjhanjh, mridungum, dhol and tori, grih gah bhai navsatsanjori,*

*Saghab Dev bhai, suman sur barse, jai-jai machechahuaauri, Khelat Raghupati*

*Hori..*

(In Ayodhya Ram is playing Holi with Sita. There is a group of Ram, Lakshman, Bharat and Shatrughan and another group of Janak's daughter (Sita) and her friends. All are playing with saffron coloured water and rubbing *gulal* on the face of each other. *Jhanjh, dhol* and *mridungum* are being played. All are in happy mood. Gods are showering flowers on them from the sky).

*Aaj Sadashiv khelat Holi,*

*jatajut me gang biraje, mrigchhalaruchhori*

*teniaankhesundarchamkela, sarp gale liptori.*

*AdbhutroopUmajidauri, sang me sakhikarori*

*hasant, lajat, muskatcharnma, sabhesidhiektori,*

*Leyi gulal Sambhu par chhidke, rang me unhukenari*

*bhai lal sab deh Sambhu ke, Gauri karethithori.*

*Aaj Sadashiv khelat Holi...*

(Lord Shiva is playing Holi. Goddess Ganga is present on the top of his hair and he is wearing the skin of deer. His third eye is shining and a snake is present around his neck. Goddess Parvati is looking very beautiful. She is playing Holi with her numerous friends. Chandrma (Moon god) is also present there. He is laughing, smiling and feeling shy. Parvati throwing *gulal* on Shiva and has made his body red. Parvati is joking with Shiva. Lord Shiva is playing Holi).

*Sadashiv khelat Holi, bhootjamatbatori,*

*girikailashkeuppar, vat chhayachauauri.*

*Pret baitaltanechahudisikeanupamsaajsajori,*

*Chhabi Indrashan sori.*

*Aak, dhatura, sankhiya, mahua, bhaangpisori,*

*nahiaghatmatbare, bharibharipiyatkatori.*

*Aapnemukh pot liye le adbhutroopbanori,*

*Hansi Girija muhn mori.*

(Lord Shiva is playing Holi with a group of *bhoot* (ghost) and *prait*. It seems that there is shadow of *Vat* (Banyan) tree over the Kailash Mountain. The entire surrounding is looking yellow and the whole mountain resembles the seat of lord Indra. All are drinking a drink made up of *aak*, *dhatura*, *mahua* and *sankhiya* (a type of country liquor). Lord Shiva and the ghosts, instead of applying colours to others, are daubing themselves. Seeing all these happenings Shiva's wife Parvati is laughing, turning her face in opposite direction).



*Bambhole baba kahbarangabatpagariya,*

*kahba baba kejaharangaile, aur kahbarangailepagariya.*

*Kasi baba kejahragaili aur Baijnath pagariya.*

*Tohra bail kebhusa devo bhangiyadaibogagriya,*

*base hamarenagariya, ho baba base hamarenagariya.*

(Bhole baba (other name of Shiva) where had you gone to colour your turban and *kurta*? In Kasi Bhole Baba had gone to colour his *kurta* and in Baijnath for colouring his turban. After seeing the Baba all are requesting him to stay in their village and remove the sorrows and pains of the villagers. All are promising that they will give grass to the bull of Baba and a pot of *bhang* to him).

*KhelatAwadhपुरी मे फग, Raghurwar Janak lali,*

*Bharat, Shatrughan, Lakhan, Pawansut, juth-juthliyebhag.*

*Bjatanhat taal pakhawaj, umari-umarianurag, gawatgeetmali.*

*Bhari-bhari thar abbeerwa, gulal, kesar, chandan, kesariyabhari thar*

*Abarakh, abeer, kumkum, seer rangaliyepaag.*

*Keasr keech gali.*

(In Awadhपुरी Ram is playing Holi with Sita. Bharat, Shatrughan, Lakshman and Hanuman have made their own group. *Raaga Pakhawaj* is being played and all are in joyous mood. All are singing and exchanging love for one and all. Bronze plates full with *abeer*, *gulal* and saffron colour are

kept there. The turban of every one has become colourful and the lane has become muddy with saffron coloured water).

In urban area people do not get time to sing in the evening. However, they sing these songs while playing with colours. Children also repeat a few lines of *phags* while collecting wood near Holika for *Holika dahanand* also while playing with friends.

Girls and women do not sing like men sitting in a public place. They sing while performing household duties, making sweets and sewing new dresses for the Holi. Girls while playing with colours with their friends, dance and sing like this:

*Mai to Holi khelungiunkesaath,*

*Jo hai Nand kedulare, jo hai Radha kepiyare.*

(I will play the Holi with that guy who is the darling of Nand and beloved of Radha).

*Mohechhedona, mohechhedona Nand kelala*

*ki mai hu Brijbala, nahimai Radha teri.*

*Kahe pakad li mori kalai, teriduhaioye Krishna Kanahai,*

*harzaitubansiwala, ki mai hu Brijbala, nahimai Radha teri.*

*Mohechhedonaoye Nand kelala...*

(Do not tease me oye you son of Nand. I am a daughter of Brij but I am not your Radha. Why did you hold my wrist, oye Krishna Kanhai. Oh! You naughty flute player, I am a daughter of Brij but I am not your Radha).

We see that the contents of every *phag* describe the way of celebration of the festival the Holi by the Hindu gods and goddesses. People of Bihar celebrate the Holi in similar manner singing such songs.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Singing traditional songs of festival is one of the important devices of folklore available in non-literate societies to transmit society's dominant values over generations. Not only this, such songs also help creating the festive fervour and fill people with emotions and sentiments. The folk-songs of the Holi or the *phag* which describe how the gods and the goddesses are engaged in playing with colour develop religious feelings in the heart of the people. Though, they do not worship any god or goddess while celebrating this festival, they combine their folk culture with their religions imagining the Rama, the Krishna and the Shiva are playing Holi, and this enhance their joy. The Holi songs of Hindi movies perform the similar role. When people sing, dance and play with colour they forget about their caste and gender hierarchies and the spirit of this festival develops the feeling of brotherhood in the society.

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## **Folklore Film Based on Famous Folktale Suhani Mehar**

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### **Abstract**

Folklore films are films having folklore themes and other folkloric materials in it. The majority of folklore films emphasis on traditional behaviors and the recording of the most important components of human lives, such as rituals, ceremonies, folk arts, and material culture. Folkloric Film Sohni Mahiwal have been made four times in India 1933 AD, 1946 AD, 1958 AD and 1984 AD based on a famous romantic folktale of Suhani Mehar associated with Shahdapur town of Sindh, Pakistan. Earlier, the legend story of Suhani Mehar was transferred to one person to another with the help of local singers, poets and writers in their own version ultimately becoming famous in South Asia. The significance of folklore films can be imagined through the documentation of the non-staged event and culture of the society. This paper discusses the concept of folklore films in context of India by reviewing Sohni Mahiwal(1984) movie.

*Keywords:* Folklore film, traditional behaviors, legend story, Sohni Mahiwal

### **Introduction**

The folklore films have been ignored by the folklorists until the Sharon Sherman talked about the importance of it in folklore research and education. The folklore films combine the goal of the documentary to record non-staged event with the goal of the ethnographic documentary to provide information about the culture. Ethnographic documentary mostly provide information about the cultural events and emphasis less on the culture overviews. Most of the time researcher belonging to the folklore discipline has been discussing it through reviews of films about the

folklore events, folk procedures and folk artists just like the ethno-documentary. As per Julia Georges writings, "Many non-ethnographic fiction films appear to display components of folk tale, transferred into a visual rather than primarily an oral form of transmission". The framework of the film, as well as the topics that are presented, frequently resemble conventional storytelling techniques. She also mentioned that the horror film has "components of structure and function" that are similar to present-day legends. She adapted Alan Dundes' three-step legend narrative structure to horror films: interdiction-violation-and-consequences, and came to the conclusion that "horror stories work to shock and warn; the same appears to apply to horror films". Films based on Folkloric themes and narrative forms have been identified mostly in popular (fiction) films and television, and these studies have dominated the field. Some of folkloristics are sufficient in identifying folklore. Others study how the meanings of tales change as they are transported, altered, or translated from one medium to another (Koven, 2003). Same in case of the folk story of Suhani Mehar can be seen as this folk tale have been documented and transmitted through movies in India named Sohni Mahiwal. This movie has been made four times in Hindi Cinema or Bollywood in year 1933,1946, 1958 and 1984 and each time there have been seen some changes in the movies. The original theme of the folklore has not been left but the changing culture in modern days modifies the story accordingly. In folklore films, rural tradition always supersedes over urban culture, and the past is given more weight than the present. This paper discusses the concept of folklore films in context of India by reviewing Sohni Mahiwal (1984) movie.

### **Folklore Film: Concept and Definitions**

The term folklore film commonly applied to a film that have been edited to be shown to an audience from the folklore or folktales. The term "folklore film" has been came into use in 1934 when British Film Institute firstly used it for contribution into the non-commercial movie with folklore touch in it (Zhang, 2005).

Folklore films documents folklore for research and other purposes by the folklorists with the help of folk artists, poets, singers, festivals and other activities related to traditional cultures. Then the term folkloric films were used by the Sharon Sherman in context of representing film and folklore and sometimes it also refers to non-academic films that contains folklore as a major theme in 1977. Folkloric cinema resembles documentary and ethno documentary film in style. On a theoretical level, many film-based folklorists are connected to the paradigms used by their

documentary film predecessors, as well as the knowledgeable underpinnings of early folklore scholars. Some filmmakers are driven to romanticized conceptions of heroic preindustrial or primeval people. Filmmakers shifted their attention from romanticism to confront modern difficulties impacting numerous kinds of people, much as folklorists' bias gave way to more informed ideas of the folk as any people with a common tradition. Overall, both ideologies can be found coexisting in folkloric films. The filmmaker's theoretical assumptions regarding folklore are revealed, and the tactics he employs are determined by them. Films on folklore usually center on one of three subjects: the individual performer or artist; the community or culture; or the texts, technical processes, or artefacts. Films with a historical or topological focus are frequently produced when folklore is viewed as a space time continuum. Individual or community-based films are more likely to show creative interactional processes and occurrences. In most cases, such videos are narrated or presented in an observational way, with sync sound or sound over the performers' voices. Films that aim to show technical processes, investigate texts and artefacts, establish typologies, or recreate the historicity of folklore products, on the other hand, frequently include narration and a patchwork of visuals that are not tied to actual occurrences in cinematographic time (Green, 1997).

As per Sherman, Folklore films verify people's traditional activities and occurrences, and viewers look for themselves reflected or broken in the visuals. As a result, folklore films and videos provide an interpretative lens through which we might better understand ourselves. The primary goal of folklore films is to capture or reflect our own life. Some researchers find very difficult to explain the term folkloric film and folklore film as they get confused either its film about the folklore or is it a film which is itself a folklore? So, in support of this Michael Owen Jones used it as “folkloristic film”, which means not only having folklore as data but also is informed by the methods from the folkloristic discipline. In 1998, he concluded that the folkloristic, folkloric and folklore film have the same meaning. Sherman distinguishes the word folkloristics film from others by focusing on folklore, which is defined as expressive or symbolic behaviour that is learnt, taught, presented, or employed in settings of personal encounter that is regarded to be traditional. It delves into the histories of networks and individuals in industrialized civilizations, including the director's own ethnic, religious, vocational, or special interest group. Another term has also been used in folklore studies, Filmic folklore, defined as imagined folklore that only appears in cinema, is folklore or folk tales' activities that are

depicted, created, or hybridised in romantic series mostly fictional. It promotes preconceptions (ideologies), and it denotes particular meanings that are defined and digested as reality by a certain set of people. Filmic folklore can take the shape of a picture, an action, an event, or a plot thread, and it can be vocal or nonverbal. Despite the fact that it only exists in films, filmic folklore works and communicates in ways that are comparable to folklore in practice when it comes to establishing and displaying cultural identity (Zhang, 2005).

### **Sohni Mahiwal (1984): A folklore film and its review**

Legend stories leads to a best narrative in folklore studies. Suhani Mehar is very famous legend story of a magnificent and most beautiful girl named Suhani who falls in love with Mehar who use to graze the cows and buffaloes (Habib, n.d.). This story is believed to be true and is currently associated with the Shahdapur town of Sindh, Pakistan. Earlier, the legend story of Suhani Mehar was transferred to one person to another with the help of local singers, poets and writers in their own version ultimately becoming famous in South Asia. Later on, filmmakers feel it to document it through the more visualization and made it in form of film. There were many versions of this film, it has been made four times in Indian Hindi Cinema. The first version of the film was produced in 1933 AD, then the second came in 1946 AD, then in 1958 AD and the last is in 1984 AD. The film was named as Sohni Mahiwal. The film made in 1984 was produced by F.C. Mehra, directed by Umesh Mehra, Latif Faiziyev(Wikipedia, 2021).

The movies start from the scene where a famous pir baba resides and always chant “Allahu”. The famous king of Bukhara Uzbekistan came with her wife and begged to have son from blessings of pir baba. At the same time one Kumhar(potter) named Tulla with his wife came and begged for the baby and got blessings of Girl by the pir baba. On the day of blessing itself, the pir baba said to his messenger that both will fall in love with each other.

The baby boy who took birth in Bukhara Uzbekistan family was named as Shahzada Izzat Beg(role played by Sunny Deol) and the baby girl who took birth in Kumhar family named as Sohni (role played by Poonam Dhillon). One day, the messenger of pir baba gave the beautiful earthen pot made by the Sohni to him and said that she has been transformed into beautiful young lady now. Then pir baba returned that earthen pot to his messenger filled with water from the small water pool available in his shelter and said that gave this water to the first person who



you find thirsty. The messenger gave this water to the Izzat Beg. When Izzat Beg drank the water he got attracted towards the Sohni and fell in to love with her.

Now, Shahzada Izzat Beg decided to come to India from Bukhara Uzbekistan and settle down in a town in Punjab. He searched the village where Sohni was living. He along with his best friend named Salamat decided to live nearby the village.

Tulla Kumhar was about to marry his daughter Sohni to a land owner of nearby village named Rehman, but one day after the decision of marriage was fixed, Rehman was caught by Zareena, local don of the area. Therefore, Rehman's mother considered Sohni as bodeful having an evil sign of personality, which cancels the marriage. Later on, Izzat Beg during his travel from Uzbekistan to India has helped Rehman to be free from the Zareena.

One day he went to the Tulla house in search of Sohni and bought a pot from her with whatever money he had and they met with each other and fall in love together. Tulla was his best in Clay crafting, he was very much famous in his area. Sohni had learnt to make pottery from her father. Izzat Beg requested Tulla Kumhar to teach him about the skill. Tulla accepted the request and asked him to come daily in the morning which gave Izzat Beg more opportunity to meet Sohni.

When Rehman returned back to his village, he found that his marriage got canceled, but he said his mother that he will only marry to Sohni and no one else. His mother again requested Tulla to marry his daughter to Rehman, Tulla refused by repeating her word that Sohni is having an evil sight of personality, she will be unlucky for Rehman and returned back to his home.

Rehman's mother stopped giving soil and clay for making pots to all Kumhar of this village. Poor family started hating Tulla and requested him to marry his daughter to Rehman, but he refused all the time. In this period Sohni was completely in love with Izzat Beg. One day, due to spread of message of love going between Sohni and Izzat Beg spread into his village, due to which Tulla asked Izzat Beg to go out of this village.

Tulla decided to reside into another village on the bank of other side of the Sohni village and started living there as a water buffalo herder. From that day he was named as Mahiwal, or a man who herd buffaloes. The two lovers began to meet in secret. Sohni used to cross the river with the help of baked earthen made water pot. Their union was perfect. It was impossible for them to be apart. But they would meet whenever they could each day, content to steal minutes just to be

with each other. Love, on the other hand, never hides. Neither did the affection between Sohni and Mahiwal. This type of love was outlawed.

Till now, due to the villagers the marriage of Sohni was arranged with Rehman who lived nearby. On the day of marriage occasion, Rehman knew the truth about the love between the Sohni and Mahiwal, so, as Mahiwal had saved the Rehman's life earlier from Zareena so he decided that he will help Sohni to get married with Mahiwal. On this day, Tulla gave a unbaked water pot as gift to the Sohni. At night, Sohni decided to run for the search of Mahiwal and look across the river at her lover. She, as usual, just jumped into the river with the gifted uncooked water pot and tried to cross the river but in mid of the river, Mahiwal saw her coming so he also jumped into the river from the other side and swam, and both get drowned in mid of the river (Faiziyev, 1984).

### **Conclusion**

The authors here accept that folklore either in the form of virtual Legends, beliefs, songs, stories and other traditional form of communication adds the information to both film and traditional set of folklore studies. It gives a mindfulness not just of famous film's obligation to conventional types of human expressive way of behaving yet in addition of the manners in which folklore changes as a result of its mass-interceded variations and spread in different circumstances and social settings notwithstanding film. Popular films and other cinematic arts may both propagate and reflect oral traditional stories and themes in current circulation, as well as the concerns that give rise to them. If we want to understand the transmission of legendary stories and their functions in current cultural contexts, films like Sohni Mahiwal need our attention.

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## **Growth of Manipuri Literature after Nineteenth Century Indian Renaissance**

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### **Abstract**

The movement and growth of Manipuri Literature after Nineteenth Century Indian Renaissance and its impact on the post-modern period have got an immense academic value of research. During the period of Nineteenth century, the true Renaissance in Western countries swept into India and there were acceptable contributions of Western values in the Nineteenth century Indian renaissance. As a result, India had developed both immense intellectual and cultural stirrings. The increasing power of Western culture and their political expansion over the Indian soil gave birth to a new awakening India. This time, India got realised their internal weaknesses in terms of social structure and cultural value. However, the Renaissance of Manipuri literature became apparent during the last decade of Nineteenth century. The arrival of Renaissance in Manipuri literature gave birth to many writers in Manipuri society in different genres. These pioneer writers paved the future of Manipur. This paper will focus on the academic identity on the movement and growth of Manipuri literature on different genres after Nineteenth Century Renaissance in Manipuri society.

*Keywords:* Renaissance, literature, genres, culture, movement, Manipuri.

### **Introduction**

The modern Manipuri literature is considered to have started from 1819 in four sub categories based on the language used, style, and slightly variable themes. They are:

- a) Prose/ poetry written without using any foreign vocabulary
- b) Literary piece written using foreign, archaic and modern words.
- c) Poems written using a language mixed with Bangla and Brajaboli and
- d) Prose/ poetry written using completely modern language.

After this period, the so called modern Manipuri literature developed through the ages with the contribution of missionaries and the pioneer writers of the land. Haodeijamba Chaitanya (A Manipuri) and William Pettigrew, an American missionary were among the harbingers that brought about the Renaissance of Manipuri literature. Manipuri literature got its independent growth from the early part of Nineteenth century Indian Renaissance mainly with a socio-cultural revolution in theme. It may be assumed that Manipuri literature got its maturity after 1960s and 70s. This was the period when Postmodernism gradually crept into the soil of Manipuri literature. As with all stylistic eras, no definite dates exist for the rise and fall of postmodernism's popularity. Several themes and techniques are indicative of writing in the postmodern era. Postmodernism focuses on de-structured, de- centered humanity. It also accepts the possibility of ambiguity. Postmodernism is an attempt to question to the world that we see around us and especially not to take other peoples view as final truth. It is in fact, a period of intellectual stance.

During the last decade of Nineteenth century, the true sense of Renaissance of Manipuri literature became apparent. This very time, Rasikalal Kundu, a Bengali came from Bengal and serving as a clerk of the then Political Agents of Manipur Mr. Grimwood (Dec, 1887-Feb, 1889/Sept, 1889-March 1891), Mr. Maxwell (1891-1893/1899-1902/1904-1905), Mr. Cole (1896-1898) and Mr. A. Porteous (1898-1899) took an important role for the growth and movement of Manipuri literature with the insistent of political agents of British India Manipur Government. In 1888, Rasikalal Kundu wrote a book titled, *ManipurerItihas*(History of Manipur) in Bangla and published it by Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta. Haodeijamba Chaitanya Singh, a Manipuri writer translated the book into Manipuri with the title as *Manipuri Itihas* (Meiteigi Puran) and published it in 1890 by the then Political Agent, Mr. Grimwood at Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta. In my findings, this is the first ever Manipuri book published in Bangla script so far. Shri Mr.A. Porteous, ICS, the first Political Agent and Superintendent of

Manipur was also very much supportive to Haodeijamba Chaitanya Singh for the continuous growth of Manipuri literature through printing in Bangla script and publication. Fortunately or unfortunately, during this time, there were dearth of Meeteimayek (Meetei script) printing press, hence; writing and printing of books were done mainly in Bangla script. After this, series of publications started in Manipuri language and literature, such as *KhahiNgamba* (an account of the expedition of Maharajah Gambhir Singh of Manipur to abast Government in the Khasia Revolt of 1829) was printed by Abdul Rahaman at the Chaitanya Press, Sylhet and published as first edition in 1900 (originally written in Meitei script in 1830 by Chingakham Chaobaton). Rasikalal Kundu translated the book into Bangla as *Khasia- Jitin* 18 pages and Haodeijamba Chaitanya Singh as the editor, published it in 1902 after it was printed by C.C. Ghose at the Weekly Chronicle Press, Sylhet. The book *TakhelNgambain* 92 pages (History of war between Garibniwaz Maharaj of Manipur and Tripperahs and Burmese, originally written in Meitei manuscript by the Meitei scholars during the reign of Garibniwaz (1709-1748) was transcribed into Bengala script in between 1893 and 1895 and published in 1902.) The book was edited by Haodeijamba Chaitanya and published by Shri Charuchandra Ghose at The Chronicle Press, Sylhet.

The books *Bhagyachandra*(1900) and the stories of *Khamba and Thoibi* (1899)by Haodeijamba Chaitanya Singha were granted for print by the then Political Agent Mr. A. Porteous, ICS at the Weekly Chronicle Press, Sylhet. On 29/3/1980, the Vice president of Manipur State Darbar W.A. Gosgrave wrote- “ Under the Supervision of Mr. Porteous, the Political Agent translated the Story of Khamba and Thoibi the Manipuri legend into Bengali and modern Manipuri (Rajkumar Sanahal, 1982.)”

The Missionary writer who brought about the sense of renaissance in Manipuri society was considered as Reverend William Pettigrew (1869-1943). He was a British Christian Missionary and well versed in Manipuri. He published series of books in Manipuri language, such as *Krishnaga Jesus Christka* (1893), (printed at Calcutta and published by Aborigine Mission, Silchar), *Awai-akhumgiwareng* (1893),(published by Aborigine Mission, Silchar), *Johngiafabawapao* (1896) and *Lukekiafabawapao*(1896), (printed at Calcutta and published by Auxiliary to the British and Foreign Bible Society, Calcutta), *PakhonChatpaMeesingna Toubathabakkiwari* (1901) (printed at Calcutta and published by Auxiliary to the British and Foreign Bible Society, Calcutta).

Babu Maheshwar Das, B.A. from Bengal serving as Head Master at Johnstone Middle English School during 1896-97, after Rev. William Pettigrew also wrote *SHISHU SHIKSHAGI ARTHA LAIRIK* that was revised by Pettigrew and published at Calcutta. In the later years, this book became the text book for the students in Manipur.

In fact, among the pioneers who brought about the true sense of renaissance of Manipuri literature, some contributors were from outside the state, who sacrificed for the good cause of Manipur. That was the true beginning of western value of education in the land of Manipur. The decade of 1920–1930 was not only the growing period of modern Manipuri literature, but also the renaissance of Meetei culture, language and religion. In a nutshell, the Nineteenth century Indian renaissance paved the future of Manipuri literature. During this time, Manipuri writers began to sow the seeds of Manipuri literature in the genres - short stories, novels, dramas, poems, Travelogue, Biography, Autobiography, Light essays and Criticism. In a quick span of time, texts books, out books, journals and other periodicals began to appear. The Pioneer writers, to name few, of Manipuri literature of the time were KhwairakpamChaoba (1895-1950), Dr. Lamabam Kamal (1899-1935), HijamAnganghal Singh (1896-1939), HawaibamNabadwipchandra (1897-1946), ArambamDorendrajit Singh (1907-1944), they came up with their writings in the theme of history, mythology, social and legendary natures. After a short interim of World War II., literary works re-growth with new idea in diverge fields like – play, novel, poem, prose, history, translation, arts and crafts. These works began to emerge in Manipuri society. Modernism in Manipuri poetry emerged in the 1960s, novels came up with new challenges in the society almost at the same decade. Feminist literature merged from the 1970s till today. Some of the noble writers of this time were – GitchandraTongbra (1916-1996), AsangbamMinaketan (1906-1995), R.K.Shitaljit (1913-2008), Maibam Ramcharan (b.1932), ElangbamNilakanta (1927-2000), Arambam Samarendra Singh (1935-2000) etc.

### **The different literary genres in Manipuri society**

#### **Short Story:**

The political image, economic development, living standard, modernization and trend of the contemporary society germinated the root of short story in Manipur. However, the idea of short story had been conceived in and around 1932-1941. Short story began to appear from 1946-1960; it got matured in 1960-70 and reached its important milestone from 1970. The writings

were based on the theme of social reality, economic, modernisation and political life of the people which were seen in the 1960s. In the 60s the discontentment about administration, social reformation, and economic instability had impacted the society. Keeping the changing and downtrodden social structure at the central point, the writers marched towards social reformation. Some of the pioneer short story writers of the time were Shree Biren (Nongthombam Biren Singh) (1946-2011), NongthombamKunjamohon Singha (1935-2014), Khumanthem Prakash Singh (b.1931) and Hijam Guno Singh (1920 -2010). Kunjamohon depicted the loose moral value of women for money and power in the book *Wanomba*, Prakash depicted the illicit relationship between a mother-in-law and son-in-law in the book *Manorama*, for the hope of a son, a woman has illicit relationship with a stranger in the book *Icha*, a woman having relationship with her husband's doctor friend, etc.

### **Novel:**

In the post independent era, the views of the novelists were more objective, deeper, and approaching towards social realism and these elements became the social document. The sense of romanticism in Manipuri novel of post-independence era was blended of romance and grim reality of life. As a master piece, Hijam Guno presented his novels— *Poktabi Leima* (1944, 2014), *Khudol* (lit.Gift) (1964), *AroibaPaodam* (lit. The Last Report, 1965) and *Laman* (Indebt, 1958) were popular for the romantic theme. In his novel, *BirTikendrajit Road* (1983), *IpamMeihoure* (1992), *Eidi ChingdaSatpini* (2013) he depicted the predicament of modern life, the complex human relationship and degradation of moral values.

R.K. Shitaljit Singh (1913-2008) as an idealist presented his novels – *Ima*, (1947) (Mother), *Thadokpa* (Sacrifice), *Rohini* (1948), *NungshiWakheiba* (1951) show the value of chastity, noble-heartedness, sacrifice, etc. Then, Leitanthem Ram Singh (b, 1923) presented his *Jat Onba*(1954) (lit. Transformation of caste,), *Khangani Potlolda* (1958) in which he depicted the irregularities in the social practices.

### **Play:**

Many theatre houses were established after 1930 in Manipur, to name few - Manipur Dramatic Union (1931), The Aryan Theatre (1935), The Society Theatre (1937), etc. Simultaneously, playwrights, actors and other accompanists came up. Some of the playwrights of



the time were S.Lalit Singh *Sati Khongnang* (1930), *Areppa Marup* (1939), ArambamDorendrajit Singh's *MoirangThoibi* (1935), *Bhagyachandra* (1939), AsangbamMinaketan Singh's *Sita Banabas* (1936), HijamAnganghal Singh's *Poktabi* (1935), *Ibemma* (1936), etc.

The World War –II (1942) brought many changes in the economy and outlook of the people in Manipuri society. After the war, numbers of playhouses were mushroomed in nook and corner of Manipur and maximum plays were based on mythological, historical and social themes with contents of folk culture and legends.

### **Poetry:**

Early decades of twentieth century was the first platform of educational patriotic writers and heralded renaissance in the arts and literature of Manipuri society. After 1960, there was a new trend, which was different from the earlier views of the poets. Western literature enters in the minds of the younger poets and began to replace the religious themes by the reality of modern thought. The modernist poets of the time ElangbamNilakanta (1927-2000) and Arambam Samarendra Singh (1935-2000) wrote with the concept of modern sensibility of the changing society. The main theme focus of the time were serene mood, an embracing humanism, cosmic sympathy for all living objects, spirit of sacrifice and a distinctive trait of Vaishnava character. Manipuri society of world war-II (1942-45) witnessed the destructive potential of the science and technology, the impact of materialism eroded people's faith in the traditional value of life as a result anger, frustration and disillusionment were reflected in the poetry of that time.

### **Light Essay and Criticism:**

The early part of twentieth century witnessed the growth of essays with the publication of KhwairakpamChaoba Singh's (1895-1950) work on prose. Some of the collections of prose works of Chaoba include the followings, - *Chhatra Macha* (1923), *KannabaWa* (1924), *Phidam* (1925), *Wakhal* (1926), *Wakhalgi Ichel* (1930), *SahityaAhanba* (1935). His didactic, chiseled form and diction really bear the mark of excellence. His poetic vision and tender treatment naturally softens the generic harshness of critical renderings. Some of his serious essays include *Kavi*, *Kavi Amasung Kaviya*, *KhambaThoibi*, *Wari AmasungMahakavya*, etc. G.C. Tongbra, a dramatist and essayist of the post-independence

period published collection of essays with contents of humour, satire, light and crisp prose with devastating metaphors *WarengPareng*(1966), *SeirengWarengSingju* (1967 ) (a collection of essays,), *Leirammi Nok-waShannaba Nipa Ama* (a series of essays published in Sahitya), Prefaces, etc. Essays like - *Pareng*(1949), *Bharat Chanu* (1951), *Ramayangi Wari Khara*, (1955) by A. Minaketan had shown the beauty of Manipuri colloquial diction. E. Nilakanta Singh had brought out more than three collections of his essays — *Achaiba Lei* (1957), *MatamgiWakhal*(1973), *SanskritigiSaklon*(1998).

### **Criticism:**

The period after Nineteenth century renaissance, i.e. the beginning of twentieth century, also witnessed the growth of criticism with many publications. The first Criticism *Meitei Upanyas*(1950) written by A. Minaketan Singh was published. As a pioneer critic of Manipuri literature he discussed the novels of Dr. Lamabam Kamal, Khwairakpam Chaoba, R.K. Shitaljit, and a translation work of Bankimchandra by M. Koireng Singh. Elangbam Nilakanta Singh also analysed the contemporary Manipuri literature in a befitting way. Series of works on criticism came up after these works on criticism. E. Dinamani Singh published the following critical works, — *Manipuri Sahitya Amasung Sahityakar*(1969), *Khwairakpam Chaoba*(1971), *Dr. Kamal: Punshi Amasung Sahitya* (1982), *Anganghal: Sahitya, Samaj Amadi Sanskriti* (1992). Dr. Baasi (I.R. Babu Singh) wrote his critical writings *Krishnachuragi Angangba Mapal* (1977), made a reassessment of Dr. Kamal, and the modern concept of novel. In Modern Manipuri poetry, S. Brojeshwar's *Anouba Manipuri Kavitagis Shaklon* (1983) gives a critical survey on modern concept.

### **Autobiography:**

After the Nineteenth century renaissance, A. Minaketan Singh as a pioneer writer in the field of autobiography, published two volumes i.e., *Punsigi Saktam*- part I (1980,). The first part of the autobiography covers the period from 1906 (the birth of the writer) to the time when he was 60 years old. This volume has got 17 small chapters and 27 small poems. The first part (Volume I) describes his parentage, childhood, environment, etc.; the second part (Volume II) has eight chapters, 60 poems and covers his early education, later life etc. In the book *Jivan*

*Charit* (1975) L.Ibungohal Singh depicted the pre-war Manipuri society, the experiences of education outside the state, etc. in a different style from his creative works. *EigiPunshigi Wari Khara* (1980) a short autobiography by Dwijamani Dev Sharma accounted the educational backwardness in Manipur society and the hardships suffered by the people in the early decades of the twentieth century. Arambam Biren Singh, a well-known novelist brought out his autobiography entitled *Ningshing Wari* (1998) in which he recounted his experiences as a writer. In the autobiography *EigiPunshi* (2002) by Babudhon Singh, the writer himself narrated many interesting episodes in his life. An autobiography *EigiDiarydagi* (2002) by Nongmaithem Pahari Singh is an account of the writer's experiences in the Imphal and Tripura jail.

### **Biography:**

Biography writing also began to grow after the nineteenth century renaissance. The biography books- *Ramayangi Wari Khara* (1952), *Angangi Ramayana* (1952), *Ngangoi Pareng* (1980) etc. came up in which Asangbam Minaketan portrayed the lives from the puranas. As a pioneer female writer, Khaidem Pramodini Devi (1926-2006) wrote her remarkable works - *The Nuja Phidam* (1957), *Leimarol* (1958), which were penned with the contents of the life-sketches of few renowned Indian and Manipuri women. The biography *Bharatki Sadhaksi* (1966) by Ch. Pishak focused on some of the great men of India. From the writers, Chhatradhari Soyam and Langol Iboyaima came up the biography on Jananeta Hjam Irabot, the legendary leader of Manipur who fought against the imperialism of British India Government.

The biography books mainly based on the historical facts of Manipur - *Bir Tikendrajit* (1973) and *Thangal General* (1979) by Rajkumar Shri Sanahal Singh had been published. The biography, *Punshigi Shaktam Khara* (1996) by L. Iboyaima on the life of Irabot is a well-researched work. Other works on biography appeared in series, - Dr. N. Tombi's *Shaktam Macha Machasing* (2001) is a collection of important profiles of Manipuri writers, *Meitram Bira Singhgi Punshi War* (2000), a biography on the life of a well-known dramatist and director of Manipur, Shri B.S. Rajkumar's *Guru Govind Singh* (2000) and *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose* (2002), O. Shyamananda's *Eina Khangba Madhumangol Sharma* (2000), Laishram Tarini Kanta's *Yengkhom Kamal* (2003) etc.

### Travelogue Resources:

Hijam Irabot Singh's (1896-1951) article *Mandalegi Khongpham* (1937), a travel literature as a new genre, published in Manipuri Sahitya Parishad Patrika may be considered as one of the Travelogue resources in modern Manipuri literature of twentieth century. In the article, the writer penned a vivid and first time experience of his journey on ship from Chittagong to Mandalay, Burma in a strange land. In the latter years, series of travel literature came up. To name few, Ibotombi's *Baikal* (1977), N. Kunjamohon Singh's *Sovietki Leibakta* (1977), and G.D.R. *Diary* (1985), praised the achievements of Soviet Union and G.D.R., Kh. Pramodini Devi's *Isrisatki Cooli Nupi* (1991), *Torbunggi Tera Pambida Shatpa Meibul* (1993), *Huntre Hunpham Manipur* (2001), narrated her real life creations and experiences of different parts of India and Manipur to the readers in a lucid style.

In the course of time, travelogue became a popular genre; many new writers came up with their travel literature resources. Among many, some well known writers and their works may be mentioned here,- L. Ibomcha's *Chatsi Puri* (1995), Shoni's (Manihar) *Khongchat* (1999) and *Thawanmichak* (2003); Panthoiba's *Imphaldagi Kanyakumari* (1994), *Bangladesh Khongchat* (1994), *Gujarat Khongchat* (1994); Dr. Ch Jamini Devi's *Swargagi Leibaktuda* (1994), *Korouhanbana Ironnungdagi Khongdoirakpa Lamdamdud* (1998), *Americagi Khongchat* (2001), *Kohinoorgi Mashaigonda* (2000), J.K. Luwang's *Pullambagi Mahao* (1998), L. Somarendra Singh's *Swargada Awaba Amasung Nungaiba* (1999), E. Nilakanta Singh's *Americaga Unaba* (2001), Saratchand Thiyam's *Hajillaba Isinggi Manakta* (1994), *Nungshibi Greece* (2002), A. Memchoubi's *Eropagi Mapao* (2001), Bimol Chongtham's *Tripura Lamnungshi* (2001), Ch. Somarendra's *Numitna Thorakpa Japan Urubada* (2001), M.K. Binodini Devi's *Oh! Mexico* (2004) etc.

### The beginning of feminism in Manipuri society

In the early part of the twentieth century, freedom fighter of Manipur, Jannaneta Hijam Irabot (1896-1951) with a vision, stepped forward to emancipate women in Manipuri society. Among many writers, particularly two novelists after the world war-II,- Rajkumar Shitaljit Singh (1913-2008) and Hijam Guno Singh (1920-2010) portrayed women of ideal characters who could face the social challenges. From the time of myth, Manipuri women had occupied a distinct place in the male dominated society; for example, *Panthoibi* (the goddess

of power and knowledge), *Phouwoibi* (the goddess of food grain), *Leima NamunKhambi* (the one who took revenge to her husband's murderer), *Thoibi* (the beautiful princess who even challenged her father for the cause of her lover). All these characters have a trait of brevity, which is distinct.

It may be assumed that feminism started in Western countries from the 1960's and 70s then speeded very quickly in other parts of the world. After nineteenth century renaissance, particularly in the later part of twentieth century, women began to share formal education in Manipuri society. Sense of emancipation and equal opportunity felt to the women folk in the society. They began to think of their important roles in the social uplifting. Initially, very few educated women began to write on women related social issues in Manipuri society. Among the male writers - JannanetaHijamIrabot (1896-1951) and G.C.Tongbra (1913-1996). influenced many women writers to show their talents, as a result produced women prose writers, playwrights, poetesses of substance etc. The three pioneer women writers of the twentieth century were- TakhellambamThoibi Devi (1920-1996), M.K. Binodini Devi (1922-2011), and Kh.Pramodini Devi (1924-2006) respectively. Thoibi Devi wrote in simple diction, plot and characters based on the small and placid world of women. She penned five novels *Kaina Echou* (1957), *Radha* (1965), *NungshiEechel* (1967), *ChingdaSatpiEngellei* (1979) and *Lamja*(1979). M.K.Binodini Devi's *Nungairakta Chandramukhi* (1965), '*Maharaj ChurchandgiImung*(2008) and *Bor Saheb OngbiSanatombi* (1976) depicted the social issues of women, the splendour of the royal court, the cultural life of the people, the romantic life etc. KhaidemPramodini Devi's remarkable works among the thirty two books on different genres were *NujaPhidam*(1957), *Leimarol* (1958) and *EecheThoibiAmasungAteiWarising* (1997).

Particularly, after 1980, many women writers with different feelings emerged. It was the time of conflict between the two groups of women writers. One group followed the traditional system of the society where patriarchal society was taken for granted and another group opposed the view of male dominated society. In the later part of twentieth century, group of women writers began to describe the traditional phenomenon with a new vision and new consciousness of their life existing under patriarchal morality. It awakened the women writers of the younger generation.

## **Conclusion**

The nineteenth century renaissance is the greatest boon towards the growth and development Manipuri literature in different genres. During this time, writers from different corners of the land began to write in different themes and style though the models which had been taken from Sanskrit and Bangla literature. Apart from the Sanskrit and Bangla literature, with the introduction of Western education in Manipuri society, the branching of Manipuri language and literature began to expand in all the spheres of life. From nineteenth century renaissance in Manipur, the coming of twentieth century renaissance reaps the laurels of Manipuri language and literature and led to the awakening of the people in the land.

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## **Navigating Indian Identity in the United States**

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### **Abstract**

Indian Americans are a diverse minority group within the United States, which is high in educational and economic achievement. In the process of developing identity, Indians who immigrate to the United States must negotiate and renegotiate their identification with India and the United States. Diasporic Indians must also navigate interactions with people from other cultures and experiences of discrimination. In this study, I provide excerpts from semi-structured interviews with three of my family members to learn more about their definitions of Indian identity and experiences related to both Indian and American cultures. I analyzed the data by applying the lenses of *primordial*, *pluralist*, and *predator* (Considine, 2022). I found that my interviewees, who all immigrated from India and settled in the United States, connect Indian identity with extended family and Indian art forms. They also recounted connecting with other cultures, shared experiences of discrimination, and expressed a sense of belonging.

*Key words:* Ancestry, Asian Indian America, culture, diaspora, identity

### **Introduction**

Indian Americans are one among many minority cultural and ethnic groups within the United States. Over 2.5 million Indian immigrants lived in the United States according to a 2019 report, and Indians are the second largest group of immigrants (Hanna and Batalova, 2020). The Indian community within the United States is generally highly educated with a large number of members holding top positions with high earnings (migration policy). Like Jewish Americans, Indian Americans strive to maintain a separate identity but still integrate and succeed in



mainstream American society (Considine, 2022). In this paper, I will explore how three of my family members have navigated this dynamic in their own lives.

I am a first-generation immigrant to America, and both of my parents were born and raised in the South Indian state of Karnataka. They moved along with my father's brothers to the United States in their early adulthood in order to build their families and careers in the United States. Though my brother and I have always lived in the United States, our parents as well as our extended family see it as very important that we maintain our cultural ties to their homeland through religious and spiritual practices, performing and fine arts, and by building relationships with other first-generation immigrants.

For each individual who makes the journey from another country to settle in the United States, there are challenges in adjusting to the new surroundings and in maintaining a connection to one's roots. This process of assimilation and developing feelings of belonging is likely a source of various stories and personal insights for those who have undergone the process. I interviewed three of my family members about their experiences of immigrating and building lives here. My first interviewee was Kaushik, my mother's cousin, who currently lives in Pittsburgh with his wife and children. My second interviewee is my aunt on my dad's side, who lives in Pennsylvania with her husband. My third interviewee is my mom, who is actually a professor and researcher of identity construction and who has published on the subject of the connection between Bharatanatyam and mathematics.

I have spent over a decade studying both classical South Indian dance and music under the guidance of immigrants who mastered such art forms in their time in India. There have been multiple classical musicians and dancers in my family, but this tradition of artistic expression is especially significant as a method through which my family members and I maintain our cultural connection having built lives in the United States. I hypothesize that these arts forms serve as a conduit for Indians in the diaspora to connect to their heritage and to those around them.

In this study, I will explore how my three interviewees negotiate their identity as Indian Americans within the diaspora, and how they navigate their connections with their homeland now that they have made lives and raised families in the United States. I will touch upon classical art forms, traditional, religious, and spiritual practices in their lives, their memories of time spent in India, and their experiences of living in the United States. I will also ask them about their experiences of the transition to living here, exposure to other cultures, experiences of

discrimination, and feelings of belonging. I will begin with a literature review followed by theory, methods, data analysis, and finally a conclusion.

### **Literature Review**

Researchers in the field of identity development and formation have documented the fluidity of identity, the historical process of Indian American identity, and the effects of discrimination on individual identity formation. In their article, Sunil Bhatia and Anjali Ram explore the increasingly complex process immigrants from outside of the West undergo upon immigrating to countries like the United States (2001:1). The process of ‘acculturation’ entails not a simple shift from one culture to another as was previously thought, but rather a continuous movement and dialogue between cultures (Bhatia and Ram 2001: 2). Having grown up in one country and moving to another with a drastically different culture understandably involves continuous adjustment and rethinking of one’s identity. The same expectations and rules no longer apply, and immigrants are given a certain freedom to decide on their own levels of identification with their home and new culture. In this process, diasporic communities strive to create a sense of togetherness and fellowship as well as a connection to the homeland (Bhatia and Ram 2001:2). Connecting with others who experience the same process of shifting cultural identification is important for situating one’s experience.

In her article, Vibha Bhalla explores the formation of Indian identity by Indian immigrants to the United States in the 1970s (2006:132). Immigrants debated the meaning of Indian identity and how Indian Americans should be viewed in the context of other groups (Bhalla 2006:132). Diasporic Indians further negotiated adopting the label of a minority group in the United States in relation to the experience of discrimination (Bhalla 2006:132). The religious and cultural diversity of the Indian subcontinent complicates the formation of a shared Indian identity among Indian immigrants, though Indian immigrants are often grouped together by cultural outsiders. In an attempt to develop a pan-Indian identity, Hinduism became a uniting force for the immigrant community though this development excluded Indian religious minorities (Bhalla 2006:132). Cultural centers were formed as a method through which Indian heritage was passed onto future generations, so a distinction could be maintained between prevalent American culture and Indian culture (Bhalla 2006:132). Communities made up of

immigrants and their children provide an important way for diasporic Indians to relate their experiences to each other and to navigate the interactions between two very different cultures.

In another study, researchers explore how discrimination as well as parental and community influences shape identity formation for second-generation Indian Americans (Iwamoto et al. 2013:224). Exposure to racism either through stereotyping in media or overt discrimination has a negative impact on the self-esteem and general mental health of Indian Americans (Iwamoto et al. 2013:224). Racism is a common experience of a many immigrant groups and is especially difficult for those who are first or second generation immigrants. As their connection with their ancestral homeland is not so ingrained in them as it is for direct immigrants, racism makes the process of developing identity more difficult. The experience of racism has, however, been found to catalyze the exploration of identity (Iwamoto et al. 2013:225). This exploration is again more applicable to first and second generation immigrants.

Immigrants face the trying task of helping their children develop their own identities. For second-generation Indian Americans, parents play a strong role in transmission of cultural practices and values such as making only certain kinds of social connections and maintaining educational and financial security (Iwamoto et al. 2013:226). In navigating between two cultures, parents serve as guides and examples, though others of the same generation are also important in finding belonging.

## **Theory**

In studying different cultural identities, three lenses serve as useful perspectives through which to view these identifications. The first, the primordial, involves the maintenance of the authenticity of culture and a connection to tradition. Given that America is made up entirely of immigrants, it takes some effort to maintain one's cultural ties after moving to this country. For my interviewees, this aspect is covered in their memories of living in India and in their definitions of Indian identity. As I referenced previously, classical South Indian art forms such as Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam are common ways for first-generation Indian Americans to connect to their heritage, but interviewees can also discuss other spiritual, religious and cultural practices which are unique to the Indian community. Basudhara Sen and J. David Knottnerus found that the use of “ritualized symbolic practices” (2016:38) played an instrumental role in the maintenance of connection to Indian culture for first-generation immigrants (Sen and Knottnerus 2016: 37). Such rituals included dietary practices, the use of ancestral languages at home,

celebration of pan-Indian festivals like Diwali, and maintenance of transnational bonds with people in India (Sen and Knottnerus 2016: 52-53). These rituals vary for different groups within the Indian diaspora given the diversity of regional cultures in India.

The second lens is the pluralist lens, which highlights the connections and interactions between different cultures. This lens focuses on the interaction between Indian cultural natives and individuals of other backgrounds, which is relevant given the diversity of the American population. Pluralism is further involved in widely held perceptions of Indians and Indian culture in a country where this is a minority culture. In Kavita Mittapalli's article, she explores the identity formation of an Asian Indian Student at a University in Washington DC (2009:466). Suman, the aforementioned student, explained feeling like "she was living in two worlds; 'belonging nowhere and belonging everywhere!'" (Mittapalli 2009:474). Suman remarked on the intermixing of Indian movies and music with popular forms of American music as an important way in which she connected with African American youth on campus (Mittapalli 2009:474). As in Suman's example, artistry can play an important role in facilitating cultural exchanges.

The concept of a civic space involves a secular space in which groups of different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds can exist as equals. In such a space, all groups can benefit from interactions. Classical art forms can help create this third space as the realm of artistic expression is not an exclusive one (Considine 2022). In addition, civic orientation and using agency to represent ourselves as a minority group helps in the creation of a wider third space. This space can provide benefits not just for minorities but also for the larger culture.

The third lens is that of the predator, a perspective which looks into the more difficult aspects of living in the United States as a part of a minority group. There are of course stereotypes and negative attitudes towards minority groups within the United States. Outside of this country, the colonization of India involved many negative experiences for Indians and Indian culture, which are still being dealt with and rectified in modern India. For example, Bharatanatyam has only recently gained prominence and popularity as the dance form was associated with temple dancers or devadasis in colonial times (Meduri 2004:173). This lens also encompasses experiences of racism and ignorance, which my interviewees shared.

In Pratyusha Tummala-Narra, Arpana G. Inma, and Sarini P. Ettigi's article, the researchers found that individuals with a stronger sense of racial identity were more likely to manage racism-related stress through communication with members of their racial and family communities (2011:215). Additionally, those who were more aware of racism were less likely to

see their self-esteem negatively affected by the experience of racism (Tummala-Narra et al. 2011:215). This finding points to the importance of educating people about racism in society rather than ignoring the problem.

## **Methodology**

The methodology of this study involved first researching the subject of Indian identity to build a literature review followed by the creation of a concept map including the ideas around which the theory section is centered. I then created a 20-question interview guide and identified three family members to interview. After scheduling, I carried out and recorded three semi-structured interviews. I asked each interviewee twenty questions about their individual and family experience of living in India, moving to the United States, making a home here, and staying connected with their homeland and original culture. The questions I asked allowed my interviewees to elaborate on their own thoughts and experiences and provide anecdotes and reflections relevant to their own unique perspectives. Finally, I selected relevant passages from my interview recordings, analyzed them, and integrated quotations into the document by tying my interviewee's experiences to my theory section.

As my interviewees are older relatives of mine, they might not have given me as raw or realistic an interpretation of their life experiences as they could because I am close to them and will interact with them after this interview. In other words, objectivity might have been difficult for my interviewees to maintain given my close relationship with them, but I did my best to maintain a non-judgemental and open attitude towards each of them so that they felt comfortable in being honest.

## **Data Analysis**

Each of my interviewees provided me with their perspectives on maintaining connection with Indian culture, their experience of transitioning to living in America, their levels of identification with India and America, and positive and negative impressions of their lives here.

In terms of primordial identity, family connections, the experience of living within a joint family, and artistic and cultural practices were important for all of my interviewees. Kaushik's perspective is as follows: "I feel that upbringing is extremely important in terms of how I define my identity as an Indian... a clear example would be growing up in a very joint family with the

extended family being a part and parcel of everyday life... Living with grandparents made a whole lot of difference because they always gave examples from their lives that constantly put my life in a different perspective.... My inclusive nature is because of my childhood.” Kaushik’s answer touches upon the importance of extended families in defining primordial Indian identity. As referenced by Sen and Knottnerus, these family connections remain important for maintaining connection to India after immigration (2016: 48). As expected, childhood experiences in India play an important role in later conceptions of identity.

Family connections are also related to his experience with classical art forms. He recounts: “There were multiple people involved [in teaching him music]. It was first my grandmother who used to sing and who taught some simple songs at home, and those simple songs that were taught actually had some very deep rooted underlying meanings. Learning it as a youngster had a very deep rooted impact.” As hypothesized, Kaushik’s exposure to Indian art forms play an important role in maintaining connection with Indian identity.

For Poornima, family connections again played an important role in her connection with India. She explained: “It was actually easy to hold on to my Indian identity [when she first moved here]... because my in-laws came to live with me for like three years after I came here... We had older people who were still holding on to the stuff they did in India. They did nothing but that. Chitti [,my grandmother,] would still go sweep the front porch, pour some water, and draw rangoli... Chitti’s husband... recited his shlokas and did his pooja and all those religious and cultural things that were associated with it.” Beyond this, she expressed that “life was nothing but dance for almost thirteen years in the family” as her daughter learned Bharatanatyam from a local teacher and became very well-versed in the art form. Kaushik’s experience with learning music and Poornima’s experience with traditional cultural practices relate to pan-Indian *ritualized symbolic practices*, which allow immigrants to maintain connection with their homeland (Sen and Knottnerus 2016:43). Dance and music serve as key practices for members of the Indian diaspora given the long history of these art forms and their connection to Hinduism and Indian mythology.

For my mother, Indian identity is a flexible attribute which changes depending on the environment she is in. Like Kaushik and Poornima, she also brought up her connections with extended family members when asked about Indian identity: “I spent most of my younger life with my mother’s cousins because I come from a dysfunctional single-parent family... I needed some kind of affirmation or reassurance or praise that I found in Neela Amami’s family... I have

a lot of memories with them... I became part of their family.” In terms of her connection with culture, my mom says: “ I celebrate my culture. I am very proud that I’m a part of Indian culture... Dance, music, foods, festivals, and artwork...[have] given me something to look forward to... I really enjoy deep cultural aspects.” Since dance and music are performing arts, they also provide a way for diasporic Indians to connect with other Americans and share Indian culture.

All three of my interviewees expressed their hopes that young Indians maintain Indian heritage and cultural practices.

In terms of pluralism, or interaction with other cultures, each of my interviewees had a different experience. Kaushik explained: “After having come to this country... I have had a lot of friends who are middle eastern... I see some similarities between how they operate and how we do... For me, music is the medium, and the way they sing and the way they play is very interesting.” He further explained: “I studied at a roman catholic school from first grade till twelfth. It was always nice to compare and contrast and see what they do and they don’t.” In his answer, the third space could be seen in his appreciation of middle eastern music as arts are an inclusive form of cultural expression. Like the student in Mittapalli’s study, Kaushik finds ways to belong in other groups using artistic expression (2009:471). Arts are a wonderful unifying force for individuals of different backgrounds.

Poornima similarly connected to another culture through artistry. She narrated: “I love any kind of performance art. I love classical music performances. [I love] theater, music, and dance which is not Indian.” Beyond artistic connection, she stated: “I found out over the years that these people... are just like people from India... They work very hard... They run around trying to expose their kids to a lot of different things and trying to get them opportunities... they are very similar in that way to what we in India think of as good family life.” Here, Poornima relates Indian identity to “maintenance of traditional values and family ties” (Iwamoto et al. 2013:226). Despite the value of individualism in the United States, Poornima has found a community which shares Indian cultural values.

My mom's experience with other cultures has happened mostly through her job. She explained: “my chair is Jewish and my friend and colleague Dr. Pressman is Jewish... Hanukkah is like Deepavali... Mexican people’s culture is very colorful like ours. We live in a city where people celebrate a lot of Mexican holidays like fiesta.” My mom’s experience relates to “moving and mixing” of cultures and identity (Bhatia and Ram 2001: 2). Because her exposure

to alternate cultures happens largely through professional connections, it is likely more frequent and varied than that of Kaushik or Poornima.

In terms of predatory experiences, all three individuals have experienced some form of discrimination or stereotyping in their time living in this country. Kaushik said: "I've been asked... How do you integrate so well? Why did you come to this country? Is it because you didn't have food? Were you so poor? I just attributed that to ignorance. I don't blame [such people]... People [often] make an assumption that because I came from another country and speak another language that I am less civilized." Kaushik seems to be like those in the Tummala-Nara et al. study, who did not find their self esteem lowered after experiencing discrimination due to their previous awareness of racism (2011:215). Growing up in India might make the experience of discrimination less difficult to manage given a strong connection with one's heritage.

Poornima's experience of discrimination occurred closer to home. She recounted how a man in the same apartment complex "treated [her] like somebody who wasn't worthy of respect" due to her skin color. The main obstacle for Indian Americans in integrating according to her is "the way we look... it's visual." In her perspective, "Trump kind of exacerbated [racism] by openly talking about it and putting people down." My mom expressed: "I have been treated differently... People ask me... if I speak English... There have been people who have looked at me in a very insulting way." Finally, she echoed Poornima's claim that racism is "getting worse after the previous election." Poornima and my mom show an awareness and acceptance of the problem of racism. The development of this awareness is an important step in the evolution of identity (Iwamoto et. al 2006: 227). Finally, the political lens to discrimination touched upon by Poornima and my mom is one that deserves further research regarding not just Indians but also other minority groups.

Despite their negative experiences, Kaushik, Poornima, and my mom all feel they belong in America. Kaushik clearly stated: "I have a great sense of belonging here." and elaborated that "my way of adjusting is by not thrusting my faith, culture, beliefs and practices on others... I don't have to flaunt my Indian identity." Poornima explained: "I belong here. I do... The reason that I feel like I belong here is because of my connection to my kids." My mom's perspective is that "because of my education level, I know I belong here. I can work my way through... It took a while, but... time helped me." She associates America with being "individualistic, confident, independent," and materialistic. Though each of them differ in their reasons for belonging, they



have all been successful in the difficult task of navigating two very different identities after immigrating.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, my family members each define their connection to primordial Indian identity mostly through their experiences of living with extended family members in different stages of their lives. Art forms such as music and dance are an important way through which they have made connections with other cultures since moving to the United States. All three of my interviewees have experienced some form of discrimination or stereotyping, but they have developed a sense of belonging here as they have built relationships, families, and careers.

In terms of future research, it would be informative to further study Indian American identity development and experiences of adapting to living in this country. There is not much scholarly research addressing the experiences of immigrants like my interviewees, who grew up in India or another country as opposed to first- and second-generation immigrants, who have grown up in the United States. Further research could explore how Indian American immigrants cope with the experience of racism and how Indian American immigrants relate to other minority cultural groups within the United States.

I found that all three of my interviewees perceived Indian art forms and cultural practices as important in maintaining their connection with Indian heritage after moving to the United States. For me, this is an important finding given my personal connection to the classical Indian art forms of Bharatanatyam and Carnatic music. I am glad to learn that my relatives feel they belong in the United States after growing up in another country. I am happy to learn that each of them has made efforts to ensure that Indian culture is passed onto future generations of Indian Americans like my own.

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**Female Claustrophobic Experience in  
Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column***

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**Abstract**

Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) provides a comprehensive overview of pre-partition and post-partition India. Since it is a historical tale, it is based on the homeland and identity conflicts that have always boiled underneath the surface, even before the British occupation. The title has drawn its inspiration "The Hollow Men" (1925) by T.S. Eliot as it speaks volumes about the confusion and mental antagonism that lead to fear which is the main theme of Hosain's story. Through this semi-autobiographical novel, Hosain thoroughly discusses the protagonist Laila's life being raised in an ancient Luknow Taluqdari (feudal) Muslim family. Laila must face the changes taking place both in her own home and the wider world. Various descriptions of this particular book include "a tale of nostalgia", "a leisurely chronicle of societal transition", and "the account of a little girl's growing up". Even while it might be analyzed from any of these perspectives or a mixture of them, the novel's primary focus is on the disintegration of a family, that much like taluqdar families in the pre-partition era had to deal with the harassment of the upheavals the nation was going through. Laila's estate in Hasanpur and her ancestral home in Ashiana are similar to the courtyard in Khadija Mastur's 1962 novel *Aangan*. This is significant because traditionalism, cultural infallibility, and hierarchy are major themes in both books and are reflected in both settings. It wouldn't be inaccurate to argue that the writer is more concerned with

her family's wealth than Laila. Without a single doubt, Laila is the main character throughout the book, yet if she develops at all; it is closely related to how her family slowly disintegrates.

### **Introduction**

The novel describes Laila's struggle for freedom in the 1930s as the orphaned daughter of a famous Muslim family. She lives with her traditional grandma and her deeply devout, purdah-observant patrilineal aunts during the first few years of her youth. However, after her grandfather passed away, her care was given to her liberal but despotic paternal uncle Hamid. The fifteen years old Laila relocates to her uncle's home to be hers which tends to be a problematic idea. She tells her own life story and fearlessly makes her own decisions. She battles with her own family's conservative faith and society throughout the entire book. Her friends and family that are involved in politics surround her. Further, she struggles with the confinement of conventional life, which she overcomes when she finds love with and marries a man who is not the family's favoured option, but she is unable to devote herself to any cause.

The autobiographical style of the book aims to show Laila's development from being a fifteen year old to an independent self through marriage and motherhood. Along the way, we see glimpses of Laila's Muslim upbringing as well as the political evolution that had taken place not from the perspective of political figures, rather from that of the common people—both Muslims' and Hindus' fight for independence, and witnessing the nation's partition. Because of the generational divide and their opposition to her contemporary viewpoints, Laila's social issues and ideals clash with her family's customs and earn their fury. Hosain recounts the tale of how Laila and her companions engaged in a symbolic act of rebellion that outraged women like her aunt Saira and Begum Sahiba. Laila along with her friends had begun wearing coarse, hand-spun cotton saris. Laila's capacity to observe people objectively and without being influenced by jingoism or rhetoric counterbalances her idealistic outlook. She suffers the terrible years of separation, when the household is torn apart in a manner similar to that of the nation, leading Hosain to later voice a wish for rationality that is particularly germane to the current ties between India and Pakistan.

Societal challenges cause family division and disputes among the members. Nita and Nadira, Laila's college pals, frequently debate about their opposing philosophies and political beliefs, but these disagreements have always involved people of various faiths and families. Such differences turn out to be bitter because even family members find themselves attached to it since Partition appears to be an impending fact. Ameer, a junior lecturer in History, working in a

regional university has no notable ancestry, receives a declaration of love from Laila. Being a person below her rank proved to be a great challenge for Laila. She knew very well that her family would never agree to her decision and that it would be extremely difficult on her part to tackle the whole situation. It is noteworthy how elaborately Hosain describes Laila's romance with Ameer. In fact, a significant chunk of the book is dominated by Laila's obsession with marriage, sexuality, and romantic connections of all kinds. Within their family, they are better safeguarded than their male counterpart. Laila keeps her meetings with Ameer a secret. She gives a sentimental flair to her explanation of everything. She presents a sublime moment that the lovers practice every time they conquer a challenge to be together. She is entirely dry-eyed when the time comes for her to depart, thus her figurative emotions are never the result of ordinary circumstances. Laila also states, in reference to an early marriage, "I would not be paired off like an animal" (29). The diminished position of women in an arranged marriage is illustrated by Laila's claim. I assume you are going to find a husband for yourself," Zahra mocks in return. Maybe you'll get married for love as English women do, who switch husbands as frequently as their slippers. (30) One might see a hint of Laila's feminist mentality throughout her journey. Zahra's perception is influenced by a variety of factors, with reference to her socioeconomic class and level of education, unlike Laila. In fact, Aunt Abida lives a life of sacrifice, devoting the first half of it to her father and her husband. She is the epitome of duty. Throughout the text, Aunt Abida maintains her insistence on the wisdom of the elderly. Uncle Mohsin asks Aunt Abida if she would let Zahra choose her life partner, and Aunt Abida replies that it would be silly because a girl hasn't got the opportunity or upbringing to do so:

With the exception of a few educated women, women had very little control over decisions that would affect their own lives inside the family, including whether to marry or not to marry. Traditions and rituals should not be questioned. At no cost should a woman disagree with a man's choice. She has to accept without question: "My child, there are certain rules and conduct that must be observed in this world without question. You have a great responsibility. You must never forget the traditions of your family no matter to what outside influences you may be exposed." (38)

In a mocking manner, the author highlights the rules of behaviour that married couples should adhere to in front of elders, to which there is a significant backlash: "A thing can't be shameful at one time and not another, for one person and not another. Besides, if it is such a shameful business being married and having children, why talk of nothing but marriage from the

moment a girl is born?" (105) Laila is perplexed following a furious conversation with Begum Wahood. Her ideologies are out of step with the time she lives in. Her opinions are viewed as disobedient and offensive to their traditions:

"What were the forces within her that gave the strength her frail figure and frightened eyes belied? How had she crossed the walls of stones and fences of barbed wire, and even the stronger barriers of tradition and fear? Why in seventeen years had I not learned the answer?" (135) Marriages had to be planned since free will suggested a predisposition for love which is coupled with evil over one's household and obligations. Unforgivable was Laila's wish to wed Ameer: "You have let down your family's name bandied about by scandal-mongers and gossips. You have soiled its honour on the vulgar tongues." (313) Abida, Laila's aunt, is very hurt by Laila's inquisitive intellect. She once requests that Laila not let her down and instead remain strong, to which Laila responds: Dutiful to whom? To what? To what I believe is true? Or those I am asked to obey?" With reference to marriage and education, Laila's free will to depart from the conventional norms is presented in the narrative in an equivocal manner which in turn, is parallel to how it comprehends division and independence.

In India, the importance of family and community has never changed. Even if life patterns are shifting in urban India, old ideas of social roles continue to shape how people live. The Indian way of life has not yet been permeated by individualism. Individual decisions are frequently influenced by familial devotion and honour, or "izzat," as Anita Desai so wonderfully expresses in the novel's introduction. These limitations are supplemented by those based on caste, religion, region, and class mainly seen in issues including marriage, community identity, shame, and independence. The failed romance between Sita Agarwal and Kemel is one of the novel's best examples of this type of cultural irritation. Such a backdrop makes the novel very comprehensive, culturally.

The author goes on to explain the sheer disregard that Partition had for women's education. Laila manages to complete her studies in spite of criticisms for her excessive learning and continual reading. Hakiman Bua speaks for the conventional wisdom and family values: "Your books will eat you. They will dim the light of your lovely eyes... and then who will marry you, owl-eyed, peering through glasses?" (14) Her insatiable desire for unsupervised reading is radical in terms of the conventional Muslim women's education makes this novel an important text for discussion. Early writers of the twentieth century began to emphasize the importance of

female education, and popular opinion began to change. Although one might assume from nineteenth-century periodicals like "Ahmadi" (1886), "Mahir" (1892), and "Sudhakar" (1889) that female education was not a significant topic in popular press, it later emerged as a crucial topic of discussion that acknowledged the appalling condition of women with regard to education. *Sunlight on a Broken Column* shares similarities with Mastur's *Aangan's* women's education, albeit with slightly distinct inflections.

Every aspect of Indian life has been impacted by colonial rulers' cultural practices and worldview in addition to their administrative decisions. The East-West encounter, which is a major theme in Hosain's writings, is depicted in the novel published at a later period of British imperialism. After the division, a variety of perspectives on the creation of nations and national identities emerged. The novel presents a Muslim woman's perspective on nation-building. In general, nationalism oppresses women while elevating men. Family space is valued more in the social sphere due to colonialism's cultural assault. Women are relegated to the inner sanctum of society by nationalism which places the burden of cultural preservation on them. The model of mother explicates the colonized country. So far as the nationalist movement is concerned, the stereotype of the subservient woman who the conquerors abandoned has inspired the nationalist males to exact revenge. Women were given the position of mother in nationalist rhetoric in order to impart cultural and nationalistic values into their offspring. Muslim authors like Hosain believed that the division was a better theme to explore women's issues as this particular narrative countered British colonization, which exacerbated women's already precarious status. Laila is becoming more aware of her ability to combat patriarchal tyranny at the same time that the Indian people being motivated to drive out the colonial masters.

Other female characters are given voice, much like Laila, in terms of the partition's gendered perspective. Despite being used as a tool of male oppression, Nandi, the washerman's daughter living in Laila's grandfather's home "Ashiana" triumphs while maintaining a strong sense of identity and self-worth. Despite being called a slut by her uncle Mohsin, Nandi is not ashamed of her bright sexuality; instead, she flaunts it while criticizing males— "completely natural and fearlessly feminine" (227). The novelist demonstrates the kind of feminine consciousness that is important in the colonial Indian environment, where women's voices are silenced as a result of a combination of class and gender oppression. Thus, silence is employed



as a potent tool. This echoes Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence* (1998), which delves deeply into the core of the matter and unearths women's predicament.

In the story, women characters like Laila, Nandi, Zahra, and Abida are forced to deal with these inherent problems while remaining confined to Muslim cultural areas, and the split only makes their suffering worse by failing to provide an escape route. The main goal of Hosain's book is to depict a woman's path toward liberation from what are supposed to be the predetermined roles of womanhood. Laila loses her spouse during Partition, and we find her all by herself at the end. Yet, the journey is not over for her. She thereafter feels a strong sense of nationalism and wants to support it. Such kind of an idea reverberates Partha Chatterjees "Women and The Nation" (1999) in a sense that "All one can assert here is that women also an active part in nationalist struggle, but one cannot identify any autonomous subjectivity of women and from that standpoint question the manner in which the hegemonic claims of nationalist culture were themselves fashioned" (*Omnibus*, 137). The novel is left open-ended by Hosain. Last but not least, it is a compelling chronicle of a moment in its entire tarnished and rotting splendor with female claustrophobia as its central theme.

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## **Yajnaseni and the Palace of Illusion a Comparative Study**

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### **Abstract**

When it comes to discussion of Mahabharata we always remember about the *kurukshetra* war which was fought between the two collateral branches of a family, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. How this war help to eradicate iniquity and establish religion or the truth. How the great warriors didn't even repent to sacrifice their life and Mahabharata which is written by Mahamuni Vyasadev dynamic about this type of incident. This is all about the sacrifice of the great warriors or the great heroes. But was there no female warriors or the heroines in Mahabharata? In Mahabharata the great role of many female characters has been described, but if we analyze deeply the female characters were not given so much importance. Infact if we compare, a central female character has not got as much importance as a side male character has got. Beside these, in this epic the Mahamuni very beautifully analysis the male psychology instead of female. That's why after the establishment of feminism so many Indian writer try to analysis the psychology of many female character of Mahabharata and between them Draupadi is one of the most influenced character. The writer's also reflects Draupadis mindset, which was suppressed by the great heroes of Mahabharata. In general every female character in the Mahabharata whether she is Satyavati or Gandhari or whether she is Kunti or Draupadi each one is an astonishment. These women have endured a lot of sorrow and hardship in their lives. However, to put it bluntly Draupadi is one of them. This woman has suffered so much in her life that no one can even imagine in a dream. The pain of having multiple husbands, beside this in front of all the people of the royal court she is dragged by Dushasana. He then held the pleading Draupadi by her hair and dragged her into the

royal court. It is also said that Draupadi was menstruating at that time. To further the humiliation, he started disrobing her in front of the royal court. Although, the inaction of the Pandavas and others in the family. Draupadi looked at her five husbands and the elders of the family, the great warriors, who were reduced to mere spectators. She bagged, requested and reprimanded them for not standing up for justice. This type of inhumanity with a woman is rare even in this century. Therefore, two classic novels have been written in both Odia and English literature about the mental and emotional pain of such a female character. In 1985 the notable writer of Odia fiction Pratibha Ray wrote 'Yajnaseni' and in 2008 the famous writer of English fiction Chitra BanarjeeDibakaruni wrote 'The Palace of Illusion' and these two are the notable achievements in this regards. In fact it would not be wrong to say these two novel's as 'The Mahabharata of Draupadi' , because these two novels are written from Draupadis point of view. If Draupadi had ever written the Mahabharata in place of Vyasdev, the Mahabharata would probably have taken the form of these two novels. Both novels are based entirely on Draupadis psychology. However these two novels are written in different language and also different time period even the gap is more than 23 years. Still it has so many similarities as well as dissimilarities.

*KeyWords:* Women Psychology, Old content new thoughts, new creation of puranas

## **Introduction**

First of all both novels depict Draupadi as main character. In addition, even if both of these novels are based on Vyasdev's *Mahabharata*, as they are based on the background of Draupdi's psychology.[1] Because of this, some extraneous topics have also been seen which introduces the imagination power of the writers. The protagonist of both novels seems to be sitting in a state of unconscious holding a bunch of questions. Sometimes that questions for the fabricated policy rule of the creator and sometimes for the rules and regulations of the society. In which at every level a women has to be a victim of exploitation and harassment. Both novels are written in self- narrative style. Although there are similarities between the events of Draupadi's birth and death, there are differences in narrative style and technique.

The Draupadi of Prativa Ray is very beautiful. For example hear we can quote some line where the writer describe the beauty of Draupadi "I am Krishna, my complexion like the petals of the blue lotus, Thick hair like the waves of the ocean, and large, entrancing blue lotus- like eyes

radiant with intelligence! Like an image sculpted by the world's greatest sculptor, with unblemished beauty of face and matching lovely-ness of figure. Tall, well- formed breasts, narrow waist, plantain- stalk-like rounded firm thighs, fingers and toes like champak petals, palms and soles like red lotus, pearl- like teeth, a smile that shamed even lightning, moon- like nails the lotus- fragrance of the body deluded even bees. The serpentine loveliness of my hair would imprison even breeze into stillness. Poets described my beauty as depriving even sages of their senses.”(Jagaseeni-p-7) and on the other hand the Draupadi of ChitraBanarjee is not so beautiful that's why she is forced by the waitresses to wear a variety of accessories to make colors brighter “ perhaps the reason Krishna and I got along so well was that we were both severely dark- skinned. In a society that looked down its patrician nose on anything except milk- and- almond hues. This was considered most unfortunate, especially for a girl. I paid for it by spending hour upon excruciating hour being slathered in skin- whitening agents and scrubbed with numerous exfoliates by my industrious nurse.” (The palace of illusion-p-8) This is the great example that how a girl is treated in our society for her complexion.

Beside this the Draupadi of Chitra Banarjee has a great interest foreducation but she deprived of this. She lives like a prisoner in her father's palace until the wedding. In addition, the love of the father may not be as great as that of her brother, Dhrishtadyumna. Which is usually seen in the field of a women. But the Draupadi of Yajnaseni fascinated by the charming environment and natural beauty of the city Panchal, as well as her companions like Nitambine, her deep devotion to Krishna and unconditional love for Arjun and Kunti also. But in The Palace of Illusion the environment in the state Panchal is very hoarse and unattractive. So Draupadi always has a dream of a beautiful house and garden of her own. Which later fulfilled by the monster of *Khandavaprasta* named 'Maya'. Although the Draupadi had love and faith for Lord Krishna but not like the Draupadi of Yajnaseni. Beside this in The Palace of Illusion in the early stages of this novel Draupadi had love and attraction for Arjun which is latter sifted as a love for Karna. But in Yajnaseni Draupadi has been anxious for Arjunas companionship and love in entire life. Similarly in The Palace of Illusion Draupadi is in love with Karna. In fact, after death, she has been reunited with Karna in haven. In the viewpoint of Mahabharata of course, this is an absurd issue. But the attraction to another man in the mind of a women despite having five husbands but didn't get love from anyone. In this matter if we analysis this in the psychological viewpoint of a women this is actually not a absurd issue. In it, Draupadi is again harassed by her mother-in-law. Which of course eventually turn into love at the end of the novel. Arjunas deep

love for Draupadi of Yajnaseni turns in to grief. Because she accepts the decision of her mother-in-law for the sake of truth and religion. Which even though was very difficult but in the sake of truth and religion she accept all the difficulties. Yet for the rest of her life, she was deprived of love from Arjun. Like this the Draupadi of Chitra Banarjee against her will bound to accept five husbands and face the anger of her love Arjun. As a result, she dreamed of seeing the love she had in her husband's eyes. That actually got to see in the eyes of karna. For which she fell in love with him. Yagyaseni Draupadi was born from fire it was then she realized that her birth and life were not normal and in future she is going to do some important work, what she learned from the quiet, simple Vyasdev. If the future remains as a fantasy in human eye then they imagine and waiting for every moment. But if the future becomes clear to man. Then the whole life becomes disaster. The prospect of the future in every moment distracts him. Of course, for Draupadi of Yagyaseni the future had in imagination. But it was not for the Draupadi of The Palace of Illusion. Because she heard her painful future directly from Vyasdev. For example, hear we can quote some line- "You will marry the five greatest heroes of your time. You will be queen of queens, envied even by goddesses. You will be a servant maid. You will be mistress of the most magical of palaces and then lose it. You will be remembered for causing the greatest war of your time. You will bring about the death of evil kings- and your children's and brothers. A million women will become widows because of you. Yes indeed you will leave a mark on history. You will be loved, though you will not always husbands. You will die alone, abandoned at the end and yet not so. " (The Palace of Illusion-p-39) in addition, Pratibha Rays Draupadi at the time of Kurukshetra war spends most of her time in fear and uncertainty about the death of her loved one. But the Draupadi of Chitra Banarjee like Sanjay another character of Mahabharata got the divine sight [2] which made her condition critical.

In both novels the environment after the ending of war and the horrible condition are same. Beside this the pain of crying women in grief over the loss of their loved one has been devastating. No matter how the king Yudhistera is kind, but he will not be able to understand the actual pain of the women loosed their loved one in the war. That's why in The Palace of Illusion Draupadi had taken charge of women's justice. Lord Krishna had an important role to play in both novels. But in this case, the taste of Yajnaseni is different. Throughout the novel, the friendship between Lord Krishna and Draupadi , and also the divine love between them is very beautifully described. Beside this, in this novel Draupadi felt the divinity of Lord Krishna. So she surrendered herself completely to Lord Krishna. At the time of her death, her five husbands left

her, but she could feel the touch of Lord Krishna's soft hand. Similarly in the novel *The Palace of Illusion*, there was a sense of love and devotion between Draupadi and Lord Krishna, but it was not so intense. But the love between Draupadi and Dhruv was very deeply described in this novel. Apart from this in this novel Draupadi could not easily accept the divinity of Lord Krishna. But the end of her life, however, she fell to the foothills of the Himalayas. Standing at the feet of death as her husband's left her, that time she felt the presence of Lord Krishna. Also, she realized in every aspect of life Sri Krishna is the one who always stood with her. From this we can realize the divine love between Sri Krishna and Draupadi.

### **Conclusion**

In real Draupadi is a wonderful character. This character got jealous by other ordinary women for her beautiful, fortunate, independency and also loving partners. There is a strong desire in the mind to play this role. But in the next moment the humiliation, insult, pain of which she faced in her life melts the heart. A prayer comes from the heart itself that this should not happen in anyone's life. Both the novel *Yajnaseni* and *The Palace of Illusion*, centered on such an extraordinary female character, are attempts to capture Draupadi's heart from the authors' point of view. From the point of view of raising voice against the injustice done to women. These two novels are considered as a feminist novel [3] and the thoughts mainly adopted by the second and third wave of feminism [4,5]. However, these two novels centered on Draupadi's unconscious mind, that's why it can also be considered as a stream of consciousness [6]. So these two novels, written in both Odia and English literature, focusing on one character and one subject, had the same background but the thought and imagination were different.

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**Autobiographical Testimony of Marginalized Transgender Identity in A. Revathi's *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story and A Life in Trans Activism***

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**Abstract**

The paper aims at the discussion of autobiographical narrative which traces the exclusion of transgender identity. This exclusion is highlighted through Revathi's narrative. *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story and A Life in Trans Activism*. The work addressed the state of transgender individual in India. Revathi's autobiographical narrative directs the society towards the identity crisis, exclusion, trauma and struggle of transgender community in India. The narrative tried to review the societal definition of gender. It also portrays the process of identity development which corners the transgender individuals at the hands of heteronormative structure. It chronicled the experiences of Revathi which introduces her journey from marginalized transgender individual to empowered activist. Revathi's narrative made the society to rethink about the social and legal status of transgender community.

**Keywords:** Autobiographical narrative, Transgender Identity, marginalization

## Introduction

A. Revathi is a well-known activist in the field of sexual minorities. She perceived her Male to Female gender identity which made her to articulate the journey through autobiographical narrative. *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* is considered the testimony of third gender in India. The narrative discusses the stages of transgender identity development. The transgender identity is a prime factor which singles out them from mainstream. The marginalization of transgender identity prevailed in every sector of society. Revathi determined to uplift transgender community. She worked for the right of transgender identity through the organization Sangama. Her zest of activism reflected in her work *A Life in Trans Activism*. This work highlighted the double marginalized state of transgender men.

The transgender autobiographical narrative paved a way of transgender identity in literature. Literature is inextricably linked with human society. It expressed the panorama of the age in which it is written. The modern literature tends to express the loopholes of the society. Transgender autobiographical narratives express encased magma that stigmatized transgender community. Literary field recorded the gender-based discrimination through women writing. It disclosed malignant facets of patriarchy. The field of Gender Studies was overpowered by feminist ideology. But the progressive and inquisitive nature of learning extends the limit of this field. Gender Studies prolonged to transgender studies. *The Transgender Studies Reader* (2008) shares different points of discussion on the term transgender which is not limited to cross dressing.

In Feinberg's redefinition, the term came to refer to a "pangender" movement of oppressed minorities—transsexuals, butch lesbians, drag queens, cross-dressers, and others—who all were called to make common revolutionary cause with one another in the name of social justice (p. 205).

The societal view of gender is limited to binary and closely linked to anatomical organs. The term transgender transgresses the societal boundaries of gender. Autobiographical narrative gives an opportunity to reconstruct the phases of life in order to explain the present identity. The narration of life events contemplates the personality of an individual.

In this sense, autobiographical narrative can provide rich resources of data on how identity is discursively displayed and simultaneously evaluated on its multiple levels: individual (a developmental sense of who I am) relational (through the positive/negative interaction with significant others) and collective (a re-evaluation of the social and

cultural constructs in the socio-political context in which narrators live (Nadeem, 2015, p.225).

### **Autobiographical view of Marginalized Transgender Identity**

Transgender autobiographical narratives revolve around the identity quest of an individual. It also indicates how an individual outbreaks the social gender identity and adopts the self-perceived identity. These narratives portrayed the social mind set regarding the transgender community. Autobiographical narratives made to rethink the complexity of term gender and gender identity. The societal explanation of gender recounts it as a category which is defined on biological organ of an individual. The mismatched state of anatomy and gender identity is considered abnormal and arouse the need of rectification. Transgender community is victim of the gender pattern based on anatomy. The modern gender theorists like Judith Butler challenged this social marking of gender. Butler's *Gender Trouble*(2002) considers the concept of gender as:

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontology, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender (p. 43-44).

Transgender narratives also express the gender identity opposite to their biological sex. The concept of gender and gender identity is fluid. It has nothing to do with social codes and anatomy. It differs from person to person. Susan Stryker marked the notion of gender identity. Susan referred to the Joan Roughgarden's work for gender identity in *Transgender History*(2008),

When does gender identity form during development? Gender identity, like other aspects of temperament, presumably awaits the third trimester, when the brain as a whole is growing. . . The time around birth may be when the brain's gender identity is being organized. . . I envision gender identity as a cognitive lens (p. 4).

It suggests that gender identity is constructed through individual with a gradual development of life course. The term transgender is renamed as third gender in India. The ancient Indian culture adored the transgender identity with high prestige. Whereas, the western culture considered dysphoria or mental disorder. Transgender identities symbolized demigods in India. Revathi's narrative suggest the perished state of transgender identity in contemporary

India. This demotion of transgender identity from demigod to marginalized being has its root in colonization. Revathi described the transgender identity development through narration of life events.

Mousim Mondal (2014) discussed the ‘lingual’, ‘sartorial’ and ‘economical’, marginalization of transgender community. Revathi's narrative is an attempt to vanish abstract boundary between heteronormative culture and transgender identity.

And it is A. Revathi who through his/her (?) autobiography, for the first time, bravely attempts to challenge and break this cyclic process of gender colonization and heteronormative discourse. To narrate the everyday life of a hijra was not so easy, it was not so easy to re-live all those moments of agony and brutal torture, but Revathi took the trouble to do so only with a hope that after the publication of this autobiography, a hijra is no longer “stared at” and “laughed” but rather considered as a human being (p.131).

Revathi initiated the narrative by geographical description of the native place named Namakkal which is situated in Tamilnadu. The narrative introduced her male identity as Doraisamy. Revathi enjoyed the affectionate behaviour of family as Doraisamy. The feminine instinct in Doraisamy emerged around the age of ten.

I think I must have been around ten, studying in Class 5. I would go to the village school along with the girls from the neighbourhood and return with them. I played only girls’ games. I loved to sweep the front yard clean and draw the kolam every morning. I even helped my mother in the kitchen, sweeping and swabbing, washing vessels. My work was certainly not tidy, not like that of grown-up women. But all the same, I would do it with confidence (Revathi, 2010, p.3).

Doraisamy's feminine expressions were now visible to everyone and it became the matter of mockery. Revathi narrated that femininity was as natural to her as breathing. The femininity is the core of her life. The role plays in school and festival reconciled her with femininity. She understood the actual state of being. She narrated one of her performances;

To the world, it appeared that I was dressing up and playing a woman, but inside, I felt I was a woman. I had to make my chest big, and wore a blouse stuffed with cloth balls.

With the skirt, anklets, long false braid decorated with paper flowers, kohl-lined eyes and

painted lips, I knew I looked beautiful. I looked at myself in the mirror several times, astonished at what I had become (Revathi, 2010, p.12).

Revathi recognized her identity which is different from the gender assigned by society. She felt no belongingness to society and family who initiated a battle to correct her behaviour. Revathi was distracted from her formal education as she was the epitome of mockery in the school. She was stormed by the attraction towards men. Revathi's inexorable femininity made her investigate the actual identity. "Why did I love men? Was I mad? Was I the only one who felt this way? Or were there others like me, elsewhere in the world? Would I find them, if indeed they were there?" (Revathi, 2010, p. 14).

Revathi felt that femininity thrown her out of the societal setting. She started spending her time alone with suicidal instincts. One day, she met a group of men with feminine expressions. This meeting comforted her guilt of being atypical individual. Revathi introduced to the queer world. Her trip to Dindigul astonished her with the possibility of becoming complete woman through surgery. Revathi sensed the instinct of family there. She decided to abolish vague state of identity. The yearning of feminine identity made her to run away from the family. Revathi made countless efforts to jell up with society, but unable to maintain congruity with the personal identity and societal identity.

Revathi adopted the mannerism of transgender community through replacing her name from Doraisamy to Revathi. She imbibed and followed the norms of community in order to get operated. Revathi believed that the removal of male physical markers will completely define her womanhood. The outer appearance like feminine clothing is not enough.

When I was wearing men's clothes, I wanted to wear what women did. But after wearing women's clothes, and trying to live like a woman, I still felt that I was a man. So, when nani sent me off for my operation, I felt that finally the female in me would be freed from her male body (Revathi, 2010, p.67).

However, Revathi managed to remove those physical markers which obstructed her feminine identity. Revathi experienced the brutal aspects of being transgender. Revathi tried to fit herself in the familial set up. The patriarchal mind set of brothers and father made her helpless. They performed ruthless torture on her. The lack of family support made her to reconcile with transgender community. She felt her existence aimless. She needed the monetary stability that can strengthen her state in family. "I was young, and I should be able to fend for myself. Once I had money, all other things would fall into place—respect,

consideration... I could not expect to achieve this later, after sitting out my youth in laziness” (Revathi, 2010, p.128). She tried her best to find a respectable job in society and returned with the great despair.

The gender identity was a great barrier to get a job. She unwillingly adopted sex work and begging. The stable economic state helped her to achieve respect in family. Her financial support to family proved to be a tool of wild card entry to family. She supposed to perform duties towards family but she was unable to claim any right to the name and fame of family. She felt cheated when she was not considered the shareholder of the family property because of her transgender identity. There was a lack of legal support which snatched the basic rights of Revathi away. The Regional Transport Office also denied to issue the driving license because of incongruity in identity. They considered her different case and said, “We’ve never had such a case before. I can’t grant a license to this person, and flung the papers at me” (Revathi, 2010, p.225).

Revathi experienced the turning point of her life through daughter like Famila. She was one of her *chela* (daughter in transgender community) that introduced her mainstream through Sangama- an organization for sexual minorities. Revathi dreamt of doing job as a woman. Sangama provided her an opportunity to communicate the world. She met her own personality as an activist;

I worked in tandem with those involved in struggles for the rights of male and female homosexuals, dalit women, child workers; and those working against dowry-related violence and communal violence. Sangama enabled me continue my struggle, even as it gave me the opportunity to realize my vocation as a social worker. It literally lent its shoulders to my efforts (Revathi, 2010, p.244-45).

Sangama transformed her self-identity. She used to feel that there is some oddity in her which is despised by the society. She succumbed to the false identity. She attended seminars, conferences and project works that helped her to interpret the self. She experienced that transgender is treated as a human being in many countries.

I am not diseased. I consider myself a woman. But I possessed the form of a man. I wanted to rid myself of that form and live as a complete woman. How can that be wrong? In some countries, government-run hospitals counsel people like me, put us on a course of hormones, carry out sex reassignment surgery and acknowledge our right to change

our sex. Such women go to work, get married, do as other women do (Revathi, 2010, p. 262).

Sangama proved to be a blessing for her as she got a life partner there. Revathi always perceived herself as a woman and yearned for a conjugal bond. There is a platonic kind of love between Revathi and her colleague at Sangama which turned out into marriage. Revathi put best efforts to nurture this relationship. Revathi's husband was burdened by her identity within a year and left her alone. This incident shattered her identity. Revathi empowered herself through activism. Sangama offered her the opportunity of field work which recorded the actual experience of transgender individuals. Revathi's work *A Life in Trans Activism* unfolded the world of trans men. As an activist, she challenged the binary system. Her success of getting passport, license and other identity documents marked her existence. *A Life in Trans Activism* discusses the tale of exclusion which is faced by transgender community. It records her efforts for inclusion. Revathi directly inquires the society about this state. "Why do we experience stigma and discrimination? Why do our birth families disown us? Why are we thrown out of our homes and schools?" (Revathi, 2016, p. 72) Society extricated them because of their identity and trans gender practices. Society criticizes them as they are involved in the sex work and begging. Revathi shared the dreadful experience of life as a trans woman. She was involved in the field of activism but was not spared from the torture from the society.

Despite being an activist, as a trans woman, I still experience multiple forms of discrimination in my family, and in public places. Our moralistic and judgmental society wonders why we are like this ... Instead of judging us, give us the opportunity to lead a life of dignity and respect just like any other person (Revathi, 2016, p.73).

Transgender community is suffering as they are unable to follow the normative structure. The heteronormative structure is unaware of gender spectrum. The intransigent gender categorization of society left the transgender community in miserable state. Gender theorists opinionated about the fluidity of gender. Revathi also rejected the static concept of gender which hurdled the visibility of transgender identity. "Had they known that gender variation is a spectrum rather than just the given binary of man/woman, perhaps they would have been more accepting of me" (Revathi, 2016, p. 73).

The confined societal definition of gender is the root of suffering. Another facet of discrimination is the act of criminalized tribe. Revathi discussed the chapter named "Criminalized by Law" Which traces the seed of marginalization. It talked about IPC Section

377 that was scribbled during colonization. This act disregards individual choice of sexual orientation. The individual is forced to opt the opposite sex for relationship. This act seen same sex relationship as obscene. “Historically, laws have always been used to criminalize the more marginalized and visible amongst us. In this case, it's always trans people who are at the receiving end of a disproportionately large amount of violence from the state” (Revathi, 2016, p.99).

This act was questioned after the independence. The Indian culture glorified the visibility of transgender community through myths. IPC Section 377 overpowered this culture through Occidental lens. The NALSA Judgement liberated the essence of Indian culture through placing transgender as third gender. It provided them a shield against discrimination. The Transgender Persons Bill fuelled their existence in 2019. Revathi viewed Section 377 as a discriminatory law practice performed against transgender.

Just being a hijra is criminal under law, it seems! No employment opportunities are given us and when we do the two jobs that are available to us—sex work and begging—we are punished for it! Laws that are meant to protect us instead criminalize us ... Gender expression or gender identity is also a matter of. Person’s choice. Laws that criminalize gender identities and sexual orientation have no place in a democracy and must be struck down (Revathi, 2016, p.106).

The NALSA Judgement can be seen as fundamental step for the betterment of transgender community. It gives freedom to an individual to opt the gender identity. Transgender individual is able to enjoy the basic rights of country. *A Life in Trans Activism* reviewed certain loopholes of this judgement. The term transgender is limited or highlighted trans women. Still, there is a community which is invisible and marginalized. As transgender activist, I am disappointed by this obvious ‘invisibilization’ of trans men. I would also make it clear that I am not opposing the judgement. At some point, the judgement indirectly refers to the experiences of trans men. But my concern is that when trans women are in the centre stage of the judgement, why have trans men been cast away in the background, unseen and unheard? (Revathi, 2016, p. 231).

Trans women marked their visibility through the support of transgender community. Trans men are devoid of the specific social structure. *A Life in Trans Activism* is a saga of unheard voices of trans men. Revathi tried her best to explore the world of trans men. It can be considered an authentic document to visit the stigma and pain of trans men. It demands the



revision of the term transgender. Law is a tool to provide legal security to transgender community. The prime concern of transgender community is to seek social acceptance. Legal protection does not provide the assurance to enjoy the social status. “Personally, I do not believe that a court judgement can change the world ... Even if laws are favourable, if mindsets and attitudes that are crucial for social acceptance, do not change, we are struck in the same groove” (Revathi, 2016, p.233).

The NALSA Judgement can be seen as an initiative of inclusive society. It will bring reformation to the state of transgender community. Revathi's autobiographical narrative also introduces the poetic self of Revathi. The pathetic state of transgender community is versed in the work *A Life in Trans Activism*(2016).

Rejected by parents  
Rejected by society  
Rejected by the world  
I sing today.  
...  
Ours is an excluded  
and exiled community  
we are the aravanis  
the transgender people.  
Violated by goondas and the police  
criminalized by the law  
that fails to understand  
our desperation  
to live, to exist .(p. 68)

The poem penned out Revathi's stigmatized self that she presented at Asia Pacific Court of Women on HIV, Inheritance of Property Rights, Sri Lanka. This poem gives a holistic view of the state of transgender community.

### **Conclusion**

The narrative traces the odyssey of transgender individual in India. It discussed the transgender identity development that occurred during the life course, bodily transition from male to female, aftermaths of this transition, declined state of identity, empowerment through the activism. Autobiographical narrative has a prime theme of identity crisis and ostracization that was rooted in social disapproval of transgender identity. The transgender autobiographical narratives are vital medium to bridge the communication gap between society and transgender

community. It helps to access the unfathomed psyche of transgender individual. Generally, the term transgender is charged with the characteristics like abnormal, nuisance, and pollutant to the society. Revathi's autobiographical narrative portrays the abusive attitude of society which veto the gender beyond binary.

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## **A Socio-cultural Reflection: The Touch of Indian Belongingness in**

**R. K. Narayan**

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### **Abstract**

The harmonious intermingling of Indian sentiments with the progressive civilization bringing forth innovations reflects *Narayan's* art as an elegant presentation of age-old myths, Indian values and shared tradition coagulated with modernism, advancement and intervening interval for India when Indians rise from a slumber to pick and choose their own ways after independence. An emancipation from the dead past of subjugation and slavery reincarnates in the Indians a rebuilding of faith and attachment in their own society, culture and tradition laden with myths, *puranas* and exuberance of the attractive life as is full of colours, mysteries and fascination in *Narayan's Malgudi*. *Narayan's* boosting Indian way of life beautified with its own origin and belongingness reflects the liberated Indian spirit not vitiated by oppressive British strictures. Indian life seems charming and an experience of the reality of life makes *Narayan's* protagonists the emancipated beings relieved from the worldly entanglements of life. They come up as the matured individuals purged of fear and trauma in their lives. Raju turns to a spiritual being in the end in *The Guide*; *Sriram* and *Bharati* hope to liberate themselves believing in *M. K. Gandhi's* veracity in non-violent rebellion in *Waiting for the Mahatma*; Krishna believes in occultism to get solace in *The English Teacher*. *Margayya*, the monetary wizard learns finally that wealth is not the end of life to forego social togetherness and fellow-feeling in *The Financial Expert*. *Chandran* in *The Bachelor of Arts* fails in his first-encounter in love to enjoy the same in his marriage after remaining obedient to his parents. Thus the protagonists of *Narayan* chop and change to emerge refined, learned and experienced in the end discovering new arenas of social life and finding new identities to enjoy

their halcyon days. Often the troublesome intervals precede their good days as the darkest hour is nearest the dawn. They finally seem to cross the Rubicon through the cross-roads of life arranged in an aesthetic frame.

**Keywords:** Indigenous, Sentiments, Belongingness, Culture and Tradition.

## Introduction

The oneness with Indian ethos, the proximity with native ways of life, depiction of reality hidden under an aesthetic portrayal, exactness of Indian sentiments reflected in the imagined locale of *Malgudi* and a transitional order of society being synchronous in the post-independent scenario make *Narayan*'s presentation in the novels a unique one. He emerges as the admirable Crichton to carry the readers with the Indian-go-of life.

His novels are of an apple pie order not to deviate from the indigenous feelings and sentiments. His *Waiting for the Mahatma* paints *Gandhian* ideology of *satyagraha*, soul-force, Passive resistance, non-violence, non-cooperation against the suppressive British laws and the supra- mundane influence of *Geeta* and *Upanishads* in human action with an artistic involvement of *Sriram* and *Bharati*, the protagonists as a couple. *The Guide* is a combat of *Raju* with *Rosie*, an emotional, artistic and erotic entanglement against the scholarly and pedantic endeavour of *Marco*. *The Financial Expert* represents the fiasco of money-making tendency of *Margayya* meeting his doom in Indian situation where all covetous attitudes fail to rise in the comprehensive, complex and affable Indian society celebrating sentiments, social egos and togetherness of living. *Margayya* despite being successful financially turns turtle in social situation and loses happiness of living. Everyone deserts the wealthy man to leave in the lurch.

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanswami pervades into the different corners of belongingness and the intricate myths underlying Indian ways of living connected to age-old traditions characterized by myths, *puranas*, histories and the then pre-independent national movements. The aesthetic colouring to his presentation makes his novels added with verisimilitude and his narratives are mainly fed by enthusiasm of *Malgudi* being resplendent, joyful and elating in the novels. The relationship between man and man and man and woman is psychologically treated by *Narayan* in the abode of social arena where permanence of tradition is

affected by the socio-cultural transition creeping into Indian society in the fashion of urbanization, modernization and oncoming orientation of newness, reconstruction and globalization. Thus, *Narayan* interplays myths with society making his novels larger in scope, all comprehensive and panoramic.

The presentation of social life in *The English Teacher* is overcoming of ups and downs where Krishna is equated with a cow; he builds up his temperament remaining with his wife, *Sushila* and his daughter, *Leela*. Unfortunately, he loses his wife and seeks the help of a *sanyasi*, a monk who creates faith in him to make him able to communicate with the spirit of his dead wife. Krishna could stay with equanimity and settle his being developing faith in the *sanyasi*. Thus *R. K. Narayan's* loyalty to accuracy of Indian way of faith, worship and belongingness supersedes over the transition that invites a change towards urbane modernity in the outer environment; the immediate world around him is dominated by the strength of inner attachment and psychologically occupied minds of the protagonists. Further, the Symbiotic relationship between man and woman scores over the growing urbanization. The Guide affiliated by personal involvement in dance, songs and stage representation is more prominent in *Narayan* than the creeping modernization surreptitiously encroaching the natural environment of *Malgudi*. *Marco's* scholarly engagement in his research work in ancient relics and archaeology is undermined by *Narayan* before the emotional infatuation of *Raju*, the tourist guide with Rosie. Human relationship is celebrated and worshipped boosting man's emotions and sentiments, thereby, downgrading cash nexus, scholarly attempts and sophistication of oncoming urban civilization. The raucous progression in towns and sub-urban locales is paid no heed giving emphasis on arts, aesthetics and dexterity of artistic talents. Rosie is able to win the heart of *Raju* by her marvelous dance but she is frustrated by the forgery of *Raju* concerning Rosie's signature and hoarding money by claiming her jewel-box. The crafty and covetous tendencies of man turn down the healthy and hygienic social affiliations and emotional bondage. *Raju* is made to transcend his avaricious tendencies by his suffering as a jail-bird and undergoing penance as a *sage* or *swami* to invite rain after narrating to *Velan* his past story and praying without food in knee-deep water in *Mangala* village. In course of building up the story from *Raju*, the tourist guide to swami or a saint, *Narayan's* Indian leaning is reflected in presenting Indians as hospitable, affable and mythical having been born of traditions. *Narayan* gives a clear and conspicuous picture of Indian countryside without idealizing it. Professor *Shrinivas Iyengar*

rightly comments,” He is of India, even of south India: he uses the English language much as we used to wear *dhotis* manufactured in *Lanchanshire*. But the thoughts and feelings, the stirrings of the soul, the wayward movements of the consciousness are all of the soil of India, recognizably autochthonous. (1962, p-359)

The issues of love, marriage and social affiliations are the crux of *Narayan's* novels. He involves both tragic and humorous aspects of life affecting man's existence at different junctures and intricacies. *Savitri* and *Ramani* in *The Dark Room* do not encourage the readers with the enthusiasm and gusto of their family; *Savitri* rather retires into the dark room feeling dissipated, dejected and frustrated in her life by the failure of conjugal life in the couple. *Narayan* here portrays the pessimistic vision and loss of loyalty between the partners of the couple. *The Dark Room* makes *Savitri* sustain her difficult hours inside it.

*Narayan* touches the depth of psychology in *The Financial Expert Margayya* despite his pecuniary talent expressed under the banyan tree, his zeal for prosperity is not made a winner in worldly pursuits by *Narayan*. Despite his crafty tendencies, *Narayan* compromises with his attitudes and remains complacent with *Margayya*, the protagonist. The psychological proximity that was being developed between *Raju* and *Rosie* in *The Guide* ultimately met its doom when *Raju* forged *Rosie's* signature. Krishna in *The English Teacher* felt himself shipwrecked when he lost his wife, *Sushila*. He could not maintain his status-quo. Rather he turned tail from the usual-go-of life to get solace from the necromancy of the *sanyasi* making Krishna believe in otherworldliness and the spirit of the dead able to converse with him.

*Narayan* is philosophic, cultural and a painter of Indian sentiments under the cover of an aesthetic portrayal. *Sriram* and *Bharati* are partners in love in *Waiting for the Mahatma* where *Bharati* is a symbol of *Bharatmata* sacrificing for her sons all her treasure. Gandhi is believed to win war against the armed Britishers by believing in the ideals of the scriptures or the *sastras* exemplified as non-violence, *satyagraha* or soul-force, non-cooperation and passive resistance. *Sriram*, the protagonist is an ardent supporter of Gandhi and carried in his sway of non-violent rebellion. The high ideals were possible in India. Though he was super-human by his virtues, yet it was real that each man could be his devotee as the ideals seemed simple and easy to be picked up by the mass of people when they were streamlined towards its worthiness. Thus each one

believed in the means, not in the ends. The implication of the scriptures is that the end is justified by the means. If the means are judicious, the ends are successful in the virtuous ways. *Gandhi's* call for soul-force and moral ability could be effective means for the emancipation of the Indian people in the great cause of Indian liberation. *Sriram*, the devotee of Gandhi is convinced in all conscience that *Gandhi* is an *avatar* as believed in *Raja Rao's* Kanthapura. *Narayan* raises the novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* to an epical stature where Gandhi, the saint-politician seemed to be divine and *Narayan* could reflect the mesmerizing tendencies in Gandhi, a divine dictator. India seems fantastic, mythical and supra-mundane in the presence of worldly hurdles. Indian society is more than the social and worldly needs and necessities. The enlightenment of *Vedas* and the religion of *Hinduism* make Indian people become judicious in their deeds and actions. Human life despite its worldly hotchpotch is made to shine with values of morality, rightness of Karma-yoga where each one is made to believe in the ways of *Karma* irrespective of the results. Man redeems himself from the desperate desire of success. He is successful when his means conform to human values. Non-violence is the right means to reach at the right end which would be embraced in the world by each lay man. *Sriram* is overwhelmed to meet such man as *Gandhi*, an apostle of success and peace. None seemed as courageous as *Gandhi* by dint of his moral force which proved to be infallible and indestructible. In *The Vendor of Sweets*, *Jagan* is a staunch Gandhian despite being the seller of sugar confections. He attaches himself from his within with the non-violent revolution. He also adapts to the life of an ascetic to become a better devotee of *Gandhi*. Despite selling the sweets to earn his livelihood, he bears heart and mind for *Gandhi's* non-violent rebellion.

The auto biographical elements in *Narayan* feature in *The Bachelor of Arts* where he seems to image his own life in the character of *Chandran*. *Chandran* despite having love for *Malati* fails to win her as the stars are crossed in their horoscopes. *Malati* marries another lad and *Chandran* turns to a monk, an ascetic. He can stay as an ascetic for eight months but longs for his own family members. He returns to his family and his father makes him marry another girl, *Sushila*. *Chandran* experiences love in marriage and enjoy healthy relationship with *Sushila*. The interlacing of old and modern life-styles goes hand in hand along with the love-triangle among *Chandran*, *Sushila* and *Malati*.

## **Conclusion**

*Narayan's* narratives reflect the panoramic Indian society shaped by his artistic touch and portrayal. The Indian tradition, the mythical reference to river *sarayu* and the eager involvement of his characters in the colorful world of *Malgudi*, that is picturesque presenting the lovely sight of the snake-charmers disposing the awful dance of the king-cobra, and the oncoming of tourists into the charming world of *Malgudi*. The fun and frolic creates elation in the visitors. *Malgudi* seems protected from the urban hotchpotch though township gains ground to replace the rustic joy and natural outburst of recreation daily in the fictional world. The myths, *puranas* receive a firsthand touch in *The World of Nagaraj*. Love, kinship and marriage receive a genuine portrayal in *Narayan's* novels as the infrastructure of social bondage. The Indian consciousness is elaborated in expressionist technique where the speech and manners of the characters reflect and reverberate the symphony of Indian belongingness and his creative works resonate the euphony of Indian conscience taking the readers towards a purity of Indian thoughts and feelings that seem quite refined though they are mixed with the natural and exciting hullabaloo of *Malgudi*.

*R. K. Narayan's* society is not mechanical but enervating. He says "it is stimulating to live in a society that is not standardized or mechanized and is free from monotony." Indian society is beautified by its both organic wholesomeness and its existing complexity, exuberance and varieties of languages, culture and belongingness.



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## **Jhumur Songs of Purulia during the Corona Pandemic: Historical Memoirs of Migrant Crisis in India**

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### **Abstract**

Presently, the whole world has been undergoing a global pandemic in the form of Covid-19. Most of the countries are under lockdown which has caused a global economic crisis (Samaddar 4). In India, the sudden and steady lockdown since 24th March for a long time has had serious effects on the working class of society, particularly on the lives of poor migrant workers. Jhumur, an indigenous art form consisting of song and dance performed in Purulia, Chhota-nagpur plateau and across other parts of the country, deals with the lives as well as livelihoods of the indigenous people of the region expressing their feelings, emotions, and experiences (Sen 278; Roy 27). It also expresses the social consciousness of the hard-working people of the region (Sen 266). During this pandemic, many migrant workers of Purulia have been trapped in extremely upsetting situations devoid of the certainty and security of food, shelter, and healthcare services. The Jhumur poets of Purulia like Rabindranath Mahato, Rakhahari Mahato, Shashadhar Karmakar, Sushanta Kumar Mahato and others have composed many Jhumur songs concerning the vulnerable conditions of the migrants.

### **Introduction**

The Jhumur songs of Purulia which are oral and performative in nature are what Prof. Venkat Rao has configured as 'Cultures of Memory' or 'Mnemo-cultures' because these songs prefer the enacted and embodied modes of articulation of cultural memories in contrast to the

dominant modes of writing and documentation that constitute European cultures. These song cultures from the Indian societal formations “have become the more devastated and displaced phenomena of epistemic violence in the colonial and postcolonial periods” and “are impelled to serve as objects of disciplinary calculations of ethnography or folklore” (Rao 5). They “find no place in the institutionalized forms of philosophy and literature” (12). The present study is an attempt to reconfigure these Jhumur songs and to find out how these songs reflect the pain and suffering of migrant workers. It also attempts to explore the problems faced by the migrants as highlighted in these songs. The study is significant because it provides us with the immediate reaction of the common people of Purulia to the migrant crisis. It also makes us conscious of the miserable conditions of the migrants and helps us understand their challenges.

## Research Methodology

The study primarily focuses on the five Jhumur songs of Purulia composed by Rabindranath Mahato, Rakhahari Mahato, Shashadhar Karmakar and Sushanta Kumar Mahato. More than thirty Jhumur songs in Purulia deal with the Corona pandemic. The five songs of the Jhumur poets mentioned above have been selected for two reasons. Firstly, they particularly touch upon the issues of the migrant crisis and secondly, it has been possible to contact only these poets during this lockdown situation. The songs have been collected using the telephone interview method and analysed with the help of qualitative, observational, and interpretative methods. The performance of the songs, uploaded on YouTube with the consent of the poet, has been watched several times to observe the songs aesthetically, musically, and artistically. The inquiry offers parallel signification to many secondary sources like newspaper articles, books, websites, blogs, and YouTube videos reporting and discussing the problems of migrants during the pandemic. These Jhumur songs have been written in the Manbhum dialect, having many aboriginal words from the Kudmali language. In this endeavour, they have been translated into English for a better understanding of the reader. Finally, the study takes the help of many research tools to conduct the research. These are the mobile phone, voice recording applications, Google, YouTube and other social media like Facebook and WhatsApp to contact the Jhumur poets.

## Discussion and Analysis

“We’re doomed,” Mohan said bitterly. “If we don’t die of disease, we will die of hunger” (Slater). This report of ‘The Washington Post’ shows the inexorable circumstances of the poor migrant workers during the lockdown. Who are these migrants? Why do they migrate? The detailed description of the migrants reveals the inevitable dilemma of poverty the migrants must confront in their lives. The Jhumur poet Rakhahari Mahato perfectly depicts the wretched lives of the migrants in his songs:

*Gan gharenaikam jute*

*Gotabharatbulichhhute*

*Bhokha dukkha ganyercheilyaparijayeeshramik dal.*

(We do not have work in our villages. We are forced to migrate everywhere in the country. We are poverty-sickened, broken-hearted villagers, known as migrant workers.)

The lines show that the migrants are destined to face the crisis of poverty and migration. They are indigenous people, poor peasants, landless labourers, and people from other marginalized communities who are generally compelled to migrate seasonally to other states in search of daily wages in the construction sites. The sudden closure of the country has suddenly made them unemployed and homeless. It has caused chaos, confusion, uncertainty, and insecurity among the migrants. Sushanta Kumar Mahato’s Jhumur song expresses their feeling of insecurity:

*Ghar sansar sokailchhharye*

*Bangalore achhiPorye*

*Arkotodinkataboemon?*

*O mai go akaleikiharabojeeban?*

(We have been lodging in Bangalore separated from our family. How many days do we have to spend like this? O mothers! Will we die prematurely?)

The Jhumur, thereafter, exposes the inhuman treatment the migrants received from the company:

*Company dilojabab*

*Kaoyadaoyarhoiloabhab*

*Traneralrahekatakhan?*

*O mai go akalei ki harabojeeban?*

(The company has refused to feed us. We are deprived of food. The rice distributed from relief is not left anymore. O mothers! Will we die prematurely?)

During lockdown, the rich people of the country who have been abroad or to the different states, have easily managed to return by bus, train and aircraft allowed by the government. The poor migrants have repeatedly appealed to the government for help to reach home. But they have been overlooked and suppressed by the authorities. Mark Hannant opines “In India, lockdown protects the rich and exposes the poor to a humanitarian and economic disaster” (Hannant). Rakhahari Mahato displays how the migrants have been neglected by the government:

*Deshbidesh le anlighare*

*Kakeoagekakeopare*

*Karo lage bus train karo lageurakal*

*Didi balbal, dada balbal*

*Anderbelaimanekenekhal*

*Lockdowneatkyeachhigharkeniyechal.*

(Some of the rich people have been brought earlier, others later. Bus and train have been provided to some of them and aircraft to others. ‘Didi’ tell us and ‘Dada’ tell us. Why are you indifferent to us? We are trapped due to the lockdown. Help us to reach home.)

‘Didi’ and ‘Dada’ are two native words meaning elder sisters and brothers. The poet deliberately uses these words to address the ministers of the country, specifically Mamata Banerjee, the chief minister of West Bengal and Narendra Modi, the prime minister of India.

Rabindranath Mahato’s Jhumur song unearths the deep anguish of the migrants exposing the deceitful nature of the leaders and ministers:

*Pare jakhan voter ton*

*Bare barekare phone*

*Bale gharephiroaschhye election he.*

*Jodi boli taka nai*

*Bale toderkonochintanai*

*Ajseinetadermu ta kenebanka he.*

*Ki ghumeghumachhemantirineta?*

*Ekhon pare nai ki mane hamder kotha he?*

(Exactly before the election, the leaders and ministers call us and ask us to come back home. If we do not agree to come back home due to lack of money, the politicians help us with money. Why are these leaders indifferent to our problems now? Do they not remember us?)

The lines show the duplicity of the leaders and ministers who tend to make lofty promises and hide whenever problems arise. Therefore, Yogendra Yadav forbids us to “blame Covid or financial package” for the problem of the migrants. According to him, “Politics is holding India’s migrant workers hostage” (Yadav).

The poor migrants have been compelled to walk thousands of miles to reach home. They are forced to walk along the railway lines. However, they have failed to reach home. Some of them have brutally been beaten by the police and abused by the authority. Some have died in the accidents either by truck or train. A study by ‘Save Life Foundation’ reported by *The Times of India* shows that “overall, 750 road crash deaths in 1461 accidents have been recorded in the country over a Covid lockdown period of over two months”. Another report in *The Logical Indian* has a similar opinion. It says, “Instead of Coronavirus infection, migrants are dying from exhaustion, hunger and accidents at a distance just short of reaching their destination” (Agrawal). The crisis is reflected in Rakhahari Mahato’s song:

*Nai bus train urakal*

*Hanteihanteichalnachal*

*Paketenai taka tai ghar bate hanta.*

*Trake porch echapa to keutraineporchhe kata.*

(We don’t have buses, trains, or aircraft. We don’t have money to hire these. So, let us make our journey by walking. Alas! Some of them are crashed by trucks and some by train.)

Shashadhar Karmakar’s Jhumur exhumes the sorrows of the parents after hearing the death news of their sons by an accident on a railway platform:

*Aistechhilochali*

*Relehoilobali*

*Ek mutha vaterjalai go baburmaicheilya ta harali.*

(He was coming back home on walking. He had been beheaded by the train. We had lost our son for a handful of rice.)

Without helping the migrants, the centre and the state government are blaming each other. These blame-game politics has reinforced the helplessness of the poor. Rabindranath Mahato and Rakhahari Mahato highlight the problem in their songs:

*Netainetaibajardei*

*Amra haraibacharkhel*

*Keu bajhalekeu mare chabalhe.* (Mahato, Rabindranath)

(The leaders quarrel with each other. We lose the means to survive. We are generally either trapped by some of the politicians or abused by them.)

*Phuldidiarphul dada*

*Kane tula, chokhe bandha*

*Phuldidiarphul dada*

*E uyakechhurchhekanda.* (Mahato, Rakhahari)

(‘Phuldidi’ and ‘phul dada’ are indifferent to our problems. They are blaming each other.)

In the land of Jhumur, there is a ritual called ‘Phulpata’ in which a boy, along with his family become friend and relative to another boy of similar age and appearance, along with his family. The boys address each other as ‘Phul’. In his song, Rakhahari Mahato ironically addresses the Chief Minister of the state and the prime minister of the country as ‘Phuldidi’ and ‘Phul dada’. It expresses his anger on both who are now busy in the dirty politics of the blame game.

Thus, the feelings of sorrow, anger and hatred are the immediate reaction of the people of Purulia and probably of the common citizens of the country. They have realised that they have been exploited by selfish politicians. Rabindranath Mahato concludes his Jhumur song with a revolutionary voice:

*Rabindranath tulchhedabi*

*Hamderhateisobarchabi*

*Tabu keneamdermarandasha he*

*Jago Jagoshramik dal*

*Netarkanedhukukjal*

*Ebar voter samaihobekdekha he.*

(Rabindranath is raising his voice. We are the nation builders. Why do we have to live in such poor conditions? Wake up, migrants! Wake up! We will see the politicians at the time of the election.)

### **Findings and Conclusion**

The study shows that the Jhumur songs are significant as they articulate mnemoculturally the feelings, emotions, and experiences of the common indigenous people. The songs reveal how the migrants have been suffering from poverty, insecurity, and inhuman treatment from the company as well as the government. They have been neglected in society and forced to walk thousands of miles and face mortal consequences. They have been betrayed by the political leaders who have remained silent observers throughout the crisis. The songs delineate the angst as well as the profound acrimony of the common people who have now realised the duplicity of the politicians. The songs have been turned into historical memoirs of the migrant crisis in the country. It will be intriguing to analyse all the Jhumur songs composed during the pandemic to discover how these songs radiate the detrimental impact of the pandemic on society.



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## Analyzing Musicality and Rhythm in Narrative Techniques in Dogri Folktales

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### Abstract

Folklore is a creation of humanity's artistic endeavours. It denotes all olden myths, legends, folktales, ballads, proverbs, fables, fairy tales, riddles, and superstitions. Folktales allow children to learn a wide variety of rich literary and cultural heritage and develop a sense of moral behaviour to stand truthful, fair, and honest in society. These have captivated listeners for centuries. Dogri has a rich oral literature and folk tales form an extensive part of it. A plurality of themes can be found in this language ranging from mystery, adventure to humour, satire, social and domestic problems. Despite these myriad variety of themes, Dogri has an element of musicality and rhythm in narrative techniques within its folktales. The present paper discusses how the story tellers use the element of musicality in their story telling techniques to ease the children and other listeners and weave a zone of comfort and entertainment in front of them. It focuses on the elements of musicality and rhythm which play key roles in setting the tone and determining the storytelling techniques within Dogri folktales, as they can be used to generate emotional reactions or improve ideas. Folktales are narrated using a sing-song variety of Dogri with special emphasis on the use of reduplicates and musical onomatopoeias to lend a sense of musicality and rhythm in the oral

language. Thus, the present work is an attempt to archive Dogra oral history through the folktales which are meditative in nature and more soothed when narrated with musicality and rhythm. Besides, the work also attempts to present stories from all genres from Dogri literature shedding light on the aforesaid elements within the narrative technique. In sum, the age-old traditions have been preserved in the form of folktales in the regions of Jammu and Himachal Pradesh and still use distinctive linguistic feature such as novel words, repeated phonological or grammatical patterns that create interesting rhythm mingled with musicality.

Keywords: musicality, rhythm, grammatical, community, folklore

Folklore is a product of humanity's artistic endeavours. It denotes all ancient myths, legends, folk tales, ballads, proverbs, fables, fairy tales, riddles, and superstitions. Inspired by the Grimm Brothers, whose first collection of fairy tales was published in 1812, scholars all over Europe began recording and publishing the oral literature of many genres. The term 'folklore' was coined by William J. Thoms in 1846. When defining this term, Thoms drew a clear distinction between the concept of the 'lore,' defined as the content of the folklore, and the concept of the 'folk,' who are the people who produce the lore. Folklore remains a part of every society, in that it has played a role in childhoods, families, and communities for centuries. It remains an indispensable part of human culture and is marked by many myths and countless stories. It is people and communities who create and grow folklore.

Folklore is an account of culture that is informally passed from one individual to another, either through verbal instruction or demonstration. Folklore is such an important part of humanity that there is even an academic discipline dedicated to this topic: Folklore Studies. Traditionally, the aim of folklorists was to document archaic customs and beliefs, and trace them to their remote origins. However, late 20<sup>th</sup> century folklorists, influenced by the wave of post-modernism sweeping through the Humanities, largely abandoned this comparative work to place more focus on contextual analysis.

Oral traditions, nonverbal modes, and composite performing arts are an indispensable form of verbal folklore, and are prominent in most communities, from large cities to remote corners of small villages and towns. While written folk tales are popular, oral traditions, of which folklore is an important part, have more sentimental value to people and communities. Therefore, the non-literate citizens of a region are important recipients of folklore traditions.

India exhibits a richness of oral tradition, marked by folklore comprising folktales, fables, lullabies, songs, and rhymes. The fables found in *Panchatantra* and *Hitopadesha* contribute an important dimension to the rich Indian narrative tradition (Singh 8). Folktales generally end with a moral lesson for the readers and, while not all folk tales have this feature, these moral lessons are generally considered to be an important element of folklore. Folktales are poetic texts that carry cultural meaning and have also been referred to as ‘traveling metaphors’ (Ramanujan, Preface) due to the fact that people can find novel meanings with each retelling.

Folktales have always possessed the ability to bring communities together, because they allow for the transmission of cultural knowledge from the past to the future, thereby linking the old and new, and strengthening ties. Most importantly, because of the captivating effect of these folktales, these stories are continuously passed on to younger generations, ensuring that the cycle keeps repeating and the tales stay alive. The Indian subcontinent is full of oral tales, many of which have been translated into many languages throughout the majority of the regions. Other than unique languages, all cultures are marked by their distinctive oral traditions, tales, jokes, riddles, and beliefs. Folktales can be found in all interactive pan-Indian belief systems, such as Brahminism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and other extant belief systems.

It is a fact that the languages and cultural spaces of India share a large collection of folk materials. This is due to the fact that these folktales move from one place to another, carrying their messages from region to region. In addition to this, folktales are told in different contexts and function in a variety of ways. These tales can be relayed by designated storytellers, who specialise in this art, or by general storytellers.

Folktales play an important role in the transmission of knowledge, as well as developing personalities and moral codes. Folktales allow people to comprehend the general conditions of humanity since they are sources of constructed insights, beliefs, fears, societal archetypes, and formal procedures. The popularity enjoyed by folktales springs from the ingenious characters, the paranormal elements, the emphasis on action, the sense of justice, the happy endings, and the essential lessons they contain.

The current relevance of folktales in everyday life cannot be overlooked. These folktales entertain, educate, and preserve culture. So, while some of today’s children may consider folktales archaic or even irrelevant, the fact of the matter is that they continue to have influence and importance in

modern times, as the homegrown knowledge and insight found in folktales keep communities connected to their traditions and help shape cultures around the globe. Folktales continuously evolve according to the conditions and needs of the times.

Folktales present a world of imagination, consisting of talking animals, giants and fairies, princes and princesses, and the peasants and ordinary folk that provide life to these stories. These folktales allow people to visualise a world that is a mixture of fantasy and reality. The themes associated with folktales are obvious and recurrent: Goodness and kindness are rewarded, heroes and heroines live happily after, villains are punished, and justice is provided to the innocent. The adventures that cannot be accomplished in real life are experienced through folktales. These tales can engender fear, excitement, and comfort, all at the same time.

Last but not the least, the language of folktales is an important part of children's literary heritage. Because of oral tradition, the language used in folktales is usually musical in its rhythm and melody. In other words, folktales facilitate the interaction between linguistics and musicology due to the musicality of spoken language contained in folktales. This musical element lends an artistic and aesthetic sense to the narrative techniques of folktales. Additionally, the powerful intonation, musicality, and rhythm employed in folktales indicate a kind of ancient musical past for folktales.

Storytelling is a central and intrinsic element of humanity that is used to keep us entertained. Storytelling serves to transfer information, excite the imagination, and spur creative thoughts. It is for these reasons and many others that storytelling is one of the most important elements that makes up the human experience and differentiates humans from other species. Storytelling makes people imagine and feel, it allows them to transcend beyond the here and now, and immerse themselves in a fictional world, albeit only temporarily; It is the essence of life.

There are no boundaries to storytelling: Stories are not limited to just oral expression or visual depictions, but sound is a very significant part of the storytelling experience. Sound frequencies, when ordered in a certain way, can trigger an array of emotions in human beings. In music theory, terminology like *scales*, *intervals*, *modes* and *harmonies* help us understand these different combinations of sound frequencies and the related emotional experiences they can trigger. Music is one of the most popular avenues of human expression: It is present in the everyday lives of people from a range of different age groups and beliefs, as well as in most, if not all, cultures across the globe. Its influence goes beyond simple amusement and its impact on human life can be found

in different processes. For example, it has a very positive impact on human development and well-being. Therefore incorporating this element into the study of literature leads to a positive impact on its listeners by allowing them to understand their reactions. Music is remedial, a fact which has been proven countless times, as it can be used to regulate emotions and express oneself.

Music can aid in and enhance the storytelling process by reinforcing themes and motifs, introducing new concepts, especially subconsciously, and by enhancing characteristics, resulting in a heightened experience for audience members. It is one of the most powerful ways in which to tell a story, as it has the power to change a person by altering their thought processes. Music is an indelible part of every culture, and almost everybody the world over enjoys music and the joys associated with it.

The way in which folktales are told is different from the conversational patterns encountered on a daily basis; Folktales are crafted to catch the attention of the listeners and pull them in. Once the listener has been reeled in, the musicality in folklore helps to maintain this interest. In summary, folktales are primarily a form of spoken language that possess certain musical elements.

Each region of India has developed its own style and tradition of storytelling in the local languages. The storytellers are able to engagingly narrate anecdotes and are versatile in their performances.

Before discussing the topic presented in the title, a digression needs to be made in order to briefly provide a historical account of Dogri literature. Dogri has a very old tradition of oral literature and there exists a rich treasure trove of folk songs, folktales, riddles, proverbs, idioms, and more, which epitomise the various characteristics of Dogra life. This oral tradition is so inculcated in this culture that written literature is a rather current phenomenon. Dogri is spoken chiefly in the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir, between the Chenab and Ravi rivers; the western-adjointing area of Himachal Pradesh; the districts of Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur in northern Punjab; and Sialkot, Zaffarwal, and Shakargarh in Pakistan.

In *Masnavi Nuh-Sipihir*, Amir Khusro, the famous Hindi and Persian poet (1253-1325 A.D.), mentions Dogri in the list of prominent Indian languages. Numerous references to copper plates in ancient scripts, a plentiful amount of chronicles on royalty's agreements, and a multitude of letters and title deeds written in Dogri in the Takri script establish the use of this language for many centuries. The language has a rich and varied oral culture, and folktales form a substantial part of

it. The rich legacy of Dogri language and literature received wide acclaim in literary circles due to Padma Sachdeva's collection of creative works. For years, grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters, and other Dogri storytellers have entertained and informally educated children by means of folktales. These form an important part of Dogri folklore and they are an essential genre of Dogri's traditional literature for children.

Dogri folktales deal with a multiplicity of themes that range from mythologies and mysteries, to parables and humorous tales. There are folktales dealing with social and domestic issues, as well as problems related to local deities, saints, and places of pilgrimage. Nearly two thousand folktales have been collected and published by governmental and non-governmental institutions. For example, the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages has published fifteen collections of Dogri folktales, and some folktales have also been individually published. Despite this, there are many folktales that remain untouched by electronic and print media.

To date, about seven hundred Dogri folktales have been collected and published in approximately twenty collections. The *Bibliography of Folklore of India* lists only one book of Dogri folklore, called *Shadow and Sunlight*, which is a selection of Dogri-Pahari folk songs. *Folk Tales from India* contains 122 folktales from twenty-two Indian languages, with six tales from Punjabi and five from Kashmiri: the two languages bordering Dogri. However, this collection has no folktales from Dogri. Lastly, *Dogri Folk Tales* is a collection that propelled Dogri folktales into written literature.

Most of the tales in Dogri have a prince or a princess as the main character, known as a *Raja* or *Rajkumar*. *Duggar* was a region or a country of rajas, petty zamindars, and feudal chiefs who stood out from the ordinary citizens, as trees stand out from grass. In these stories, Rajas were not infallible; they were like toys in the hands of destiny. Some of the tales are female-centred, highlighting women's intelligence in their out-witting of men, while other tales are male-centred and are full of quests and adventure. There are also tales of birds, thieves, barbers, and kings. These tales are both thought-provoking and instructive. Folktales not only generate interest among the listeners, but they also conclude with a moral lesson. These tales suit listeners of all age groups: from children and teenagers, to young adults and the elderly. The various themes incorporated into folktales, ranging from love and war, to the supernatural and more, are pervasive in Dogri literature. It is a fact that most of these tales teach the readers lessons about how to behave in the real world. A few examples of Dogri folk tales are: *Creation of Man and Woman*; *Destiny of a*



*Land; The Lucky One-Punnu; The Clever Cripple; The Barber and the Rakshasa; An Honest Thief; Ghungaroo Poayi Ayi Lak Tunun Tunun; Raja Ichanu Michanu; Ingnu Mingnu pitṇu khol; and Sonpari.*

The narrative techniques of these folktales are marked by musicality and rhythm. Dogri storytellers narrate the folktales, which are mostly about kings and queens, brave hunters, or clever animals, and they include moral warnings about lying, theft, greed, and more. It has been the tradition in the Dogra people to narrate or sing these stories to children and grandchildren.

A popular folktale, entitled *Ghungaroo Poayi Ayi Lak Tunun Tunun* reads as follows:

One fine day, a *jat* sees that a bird has eaten the leaves of a plant from his land. He was infuriated and decided to punish the bird by taking it to the king for retribution, even though the bird was lame and unable to fly properly. On the way to the king, they encountered a man on horse-driven carriage. The carriage driver felt pity for the bird and told the *jat* that the bird was poor and helpless. The bird then said to the horse:

*koṛe ale o tak tuṇu tuṇu subbe ciṛiyā ayjā tak tuṇu tuṇu*

*lambi ciṛi pākṛoyi tak tuṇu tuṇu bacce mere ale tāk tuṇu tuṇu*

*tūp lage suk<sup>h</sup> man jaage tak tuṇu tuṇu thand lage mar ja mange tak tuṇu tuṇu*

The bird uttered these words in a sing-song way, but was telling a sad story. Nonetheless, the *jat* was intent on getting the king to punish the bird so, he carried on with his journey, finally approaching the king to tell him the story of the bird. The king listened to the story intently but was sympathetic to the bird and its plights. Contrary to what the *jat* was expecting, the judge punished the man and the poor bird was allowed to go free.

The combination of the story and song serves to draw the listener in. The song is sung in between the story but eventually becomes an integral part of it. Combining music with Dogri folktales serves to excite the listeners, especially children, who soon become intimately involved with the tale: The storyteller sings the song in the middle of the folktale and children listening soon join in. The combination of the story with the song elicits empathy, thereby making the listeners use their

hearts and not just their minds. The songs help to bring the stories to life, whether it with joy or sorrow.

This simple technique used by Dogri storytellers, to tell a part of a story, sing a song, tell more of the story, and then sing another song, aids in weaving the song and story together. This is not unique to Dogri, as any storyteller can insert songs into their stories: They would first need to find an appropriate story and then determine the best place in the story to insert the singing. Through simple repetition, the songs included in stories are often picked up by the audience without explicit instruction. These musical elements create experiences that are more powerful and meaningful than regular storytelling.

Another story, entitled *Pigga Te Piggeri*, reads as follows:

There are two birds that live in a forest. The male bird used to visit a *jat*'s backyard for grain, which made the *jat* angry. So, the *jat* caught the bird and put it in a cage, which the female bird saw and recited the following song:

*Main akhdisi thakdisi jata de bere na jayeinmere pigiya,*

*Main jeevna main jagna tu utha karegi janiye meri pigiyee.*

The female bird left and soon came back. The *jat* then killed the male bird and put in on a plate.

The female bird came back and sang:

*Main akhdisi thakdisi jata de bere na jayeinmere pigiya.*

Now dead, the flesh of the male bird sang:

*Main jeevna main jagna tu utha karegi janiye meri pigiyee.*

The *jat* put the bird in a container.

The female bird then repeated:

*Main akhdisi thakdisi jata de bere na jayeinmere pigiya.*

The male bird then repeated:

*Main jeevna main jagna tu utha karegi janiye meri pigiyee.*

The *jat* put the flesh on the plate and the birds kept repeating what they had said previously. The *jat* ate the flesh, after which the male bird spoke from the *jat*'s stomach, inspiring fear in him and causing him to burp, expelling the male bird from his mouth. The male bird fled to the female bird's side. Therefore, due to the love between the female and male bird, they were happily reunited in the end. The *jat* continued to watch their interactions and was consumed with jealousy and bitterness. Therefore, the *jat* lost and the male bird emerged as the winner in the end.

A lot of repetition, rhythm, and musicality can be heard in the following lines in particular:

*Main akhdisi thakdisi jata de bere na jayeinmere pigiya*

*Main jeevna main jagna tu utha karegi janiye meri pigiyee*

Another story, entitled *Ingnu Mingnu* is about a cat who had kittens named Ingnu and Mingnu.

A mother cat decides to go out to buy some items for the house, leaving her kittens at home. She warns her children not to open the door if anyone knocks the door, to which the children agree. After seeing the mother cat leaving, a wolf decides to visit the cats' house in order to satiate his hunger. He knocks on the door and asks the kittens to open it. In an attempt to lull them into a false sense of security, the wolf actually mimics the voice of the kittens' mother and says, 'Ingnu, Mingnu, pitru khol.'

The children, thinking that their mother has returned, decide to open the door. The bravest of them undertakes this task and sees the ferocious wolf. The children are terrified and try to run away from the wolf, but the wolf attacks and eats the children. The mother comes back and sees that the house is empty; her children are nowhere to be found. She suspects that the wolf might have eaten her children, so she hatches a plan. The mother goes in search of the wolf and finds him lying down on the road, after which she puts her desperate scheme into action. She prepares some food for the wolf and invites him to dinner at her house. Once there, the mother manages to make the wolf sit on the hot stove, causing her children to come out of his mouth. The mother cat hugs her kittens with a sigh of relief.

This story also incorporates elements of musicality into it. The whole phrase ‘Ingnu, Mingnu, pitru, khol’ is uttered in manner that is musical, which not only makes it interesting, but also retains the attention of children.

Another story, entitled *Raja De Che Kann*, is a very popular Dogri folktale. It reads as follows:

There once lived a king with six ears. The barber who used to cut the king’s hair was the only one aware of the fact that he had six ears. However, this barber died and the king had to use the services of another barber named Tannu. The king told Tannu that he has six ears and asked him not to tell anyone this information.

Tannu could not believe this news but did not tell anyone that the king had six ears. Eventually, the barber’s stomach started swelling and he started experiencing a lot of pain. He tried many treatments but no one could solve his problem. Somebody then asked him if he was keeping a secret, to which Tannu said that he had hidden the fact that the king has six ears, and asked if there was any treatment for this hoarding of secrets. The barber was advised to share this information with a tree, which he did, curing him of his ailments. After some time, people came with *dhol* and he made *dhol* from the tree. They then went to the king and started playing the *dhol*:

*raja de che kann, raja de che kann, raja de che kann, kunne sunaya, kunne sunaya, kunne sunaya?*

The *dhol* replied:

*ġannu nai*

The king was surprised and everybody was amazed. The king called the barber who said that he was extremely sorry for disclosing the secret about the king’s six ears, but said he did it because the secret was making him unwell. The king’s advisors informed him that it was not the barber’s fault, which the king considered over a long period of time. During this time of reflection, the king realised that everybody now knew that he had six ears but nothing had changed. The king was, therefore, content again and the story ends. The moral of this story is that everyone is made equal and it does not matter if someone has different features.

Thus, musicality and rhythm play key roles in setting the tone and determining the storytelling techniques within Dogri folktales, as they can be used to generate emotional reactions or improve ideas. One cannot overlook the significance of rhythm in literature. Rhythm is the essential ingredient in all categories of music, in that sounds can be mixed in a myriad of patterns but, if these sound patterns lack rhythm, it is not considered music. Therefore, rhythm is the most important of all musical concepts. Effective storytelling is rhythmic storytelling. Even if there are static images to be included in a story, rhythmic storytelling techniques can be applied to make these images engaging. Rhythm indeed has enormous power and, when applied to storytelling, can have a major impact on the story and its receivers.

Thus, Dogri folktale storytellers incorporate the elements of musicality and rhythm into their narrative techniques. Dogri folk tales exhibit heightened speech patterns in the oral storytelling techniques, in that speech patterns are more rhythmic and the words are more clearly enunciated, especially during repeated phrases within a story.

Repetition is a feature of traditional folktales, given that repeating words and phrases is a common practice for storytellers. When the same word or phrase is repeated three or more times during the telling of a story, the listeners are strongly impacted. Repetition not only allows children to memorise familiar words and phrases, but it also increases language skills and improves vocabulary, which is an important step in the process of learning how to read and developing a positive attitude towards books and literature.

The element of musicality engages most of the senses. The more senses stimulated by a story, the more people will not only relate to the story, but also be moved by it. However, the ultimate achievement of incorporating musicality is people recalling the message as one of their own, as compared to them simply repeating something that they heard. In other words, by incorporating musicality, the story's message can be internalised by listeners. Music is universally known for its mood-altering qualities and its ability to effect behaviours. As music triggers humans' senses and has a significant impact on humans' sensibilities, music provides the opportunity for storytellers to tell the stories in different ways.

Storytelling is an art. The art and power of storytelling is all about immersing the audience in the story, touching them emotionally, and involving them as part of the adventure. The narrative techniques used, particularly when combined with musicality, have emotive appeal to the audience

or listeners. Music also aids and enhances the storytelling process by reinforcing the themes and vital points of the folktales. Traditional Dogri folktale narration techniques are still used in Dogra culture today.

Thus, Dogri literature comprises folktales with an assortment of different tones and genres, ranging from emotionally fraught to light-hearted and whimsical, thereby creating a significant impact upon the audience. Most importantly, the success of Dogri storytellers hinges on the fact that stories have been combined with musicality for many years, ensuring the full message is being internalised by the listeners.

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## EDUCATION, LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

**Influence of Teachers Attitude on Reading Readiness and Reading Performance  
among Tribal Students of Mayurbhanj: A Critical Reflection from the Filed**

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the impact of teachers' attitudes on classroom processes and learning outcomes of students in tribal area schools. Over the time, these teachers often develop unfounded beliefs, biases, and stereotypes not only towards tribal children but also towards their culture and language. These attitudes manifest in demeaning remarks, baseless arguments, and unjustified judgments without any evidence, often making unfavourable comparisons between tribal society, language, and culture and the dominant counterpart. Such attitudes hinder the students' learning experiences and outcomes. The objective of this study is to examine the influence of teachers' attitudes on the reading readiness and reading performance of tribal students in the early grades. The sample teachers were divided into four categories based on their pedagogical approaches: high positive attitude, moderate attitude, less positive attitude, and negative attitude. The effectiveness of their teaching on students' readiness and performance was analysed. The results of this study indicate a significant and positive correlation between teachers' attitudes and reading readiness as well as reading performance. Classrooms led by teachers with a high positive attitude were found to be more effective and vibrant compared to classrooms led by teachers in the other categories. In conclusion, this research highlights the importance of addressing and rectifying the negative attitudes of non-tribal teachers towards tribal students, culture, and language. By fostering a

positive and unbiased environment, teachers can enhance students' readiness and performance in reading, thereby promoting inclusive and equitable education in tribal area schools.

*Keywords:* positive impact, learning outcomes, attitude, learning experience, reading performance

## **Introduction**

Reading readiness refers to the developmental stage at which a child possesses the necessary skills and abilities to engage in the process of reading and comprehend written language effectively. According to various experts, reading readiness encompasses different aspects of a child's preparedness for reading. Jeanne S. Chall (1983) defines reading readiness as a child's preparedness to acquire reading skills, including phonological awareness, letter recognition, and basic vocabulary. It involves cognitive, physical, and emotional factors that contribute to a child's ability to learn to read effectively. Marie M. Clay (1967) describes reading readiness as the point at which a child has developed an understanding of the alphabetic principle, recognizing that letters represent sounds. It entails the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words and associate letters with their corresponding sounds. Elizabeth Sulzby (1986) states that reading readiness is the stage at which a child has developed the necessary oral language skills, such as vocabulary and comprehension, to embark on the formal process of reading. It involves the ability to understand and use language in meaningful ways, laying the foundation for successful reading. McGrath (1995) emphasizes that reading readiness involves actively thinking and understanding an author's ideas, connecting them to existing knowledge, and organizing all the ideas for retention and application. Mastery of the alphabet and reading skills signifies a child's reading readiness. According to UNICEF (2012), reading readiness is a process of preparing a child for reading, encouraging them to read, and engaging them in reading activities. It encompasses the maturation of mental, physical, and socio-emotional factors involved in the reading process. Reading readiness is a state of development that mentally, physically, and socially prepares the child for reading experiences, regardless of chronological age.

Schiffeder (2007) explains that reading readiness marks the transition from being a non-reader to becoming a reader. This transition can be challenging but ultimately rewarding, as children take pride in their reading achievements and become better learners throughout their school years.

Reading performance, on the other hand, refers to a child's ability to read and comprehend written text accurately, fluently, and with understanding. It indicates that the child has already acquired pre-reading skills such as letter and word recognition, vocabulary knowledge, and phonological awareness, which facilitate fluent reading.

Various factors influence reading performance, including prior knowledge, cognitive abilities, language skills, and exposure to reading materials. Reading performance can be enhanced through practice, exposure to a wide range of texts, vocabulary development, and the use of effective reading strategies.

### **Significance of Literacy Development at Early Grade and Role of Teachers**

Literacy development in early grade tribal children is of paramount importance as it lays the foundation for their overall educational journey and future success. Literacy skills enable children to communicate effectively, understand and interpret information, and engage with the world around them. Early literacy development provides a strong basis for future learning across various subjects.

Teachers play a significant role in promoting literacy development in early grade tribal children. They serve as facilitators, mentors, and guides, creating a nurturing and inclusive learning environment. Teachers must possess the knowledge and skills to identify and address the specific needs and challenges faced by tribal children, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and limited exposure to educational resources.

Teachers should utilize culturally sensitive teaching methods and incorporate indigenous knowledge and traditions into the curriculum to make education relevant and meaningful to their lives. By recognizing and valuing the unique cultural backgrounds of tribal children, teachers can create a supportive learning atmosphere that fosters a sense of belonging and motivation. Moreover, teachers can play a crucial role in bridging the gap between tribal communities and mainstream education systems.

One hand teacher plays a significant role in literacy development of tribal children but in other hand there are teachers with many make beliefs and bias towards tribal children as well as towards their culture and language working in tribal areas schools. They do not understand the language of the students, their culture and the ecosystem. They become very much judgemental in comparing their culture with tribal culture. They sometimes look demean tribal culture and language. They doubt over the strength of tribal children. Thus, the attitude of teachers significantly influences on the achievement of students at early grade stage.

### **Methodology**

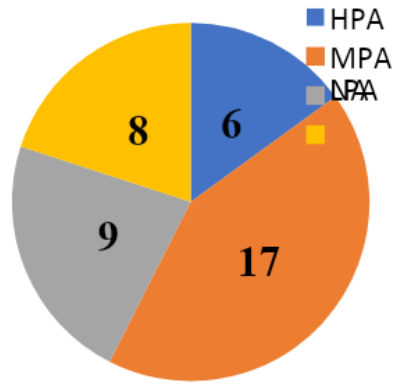
The impacts of the attitudes of 40 teachers who are responsible for grade-II language class have been observed with a standardised Class Observation Tool and correlated with the assessed test and level of performance of grade -II tribal students of 40 selected sample schools. The assessment was conducted in which 98 boys and 107 girls participated.

Relating to the teacher's attitude towards tribal language and culture, Teachers were classified as having (i) High Positive Attitude (HPA) (ii) Moderate Positive Attitude (MPA) (iii) Low Positive Attitude (LPA) and (iv) Negative Attitude (NA). Table 1 shows number of teachers classified under different categories and have taught number of students respectively.

#### **Number of teachers in each attitude category and number of students they have taught in language subject**

Category	HPA	MPA	LPA	NA
Teachers	6	17	9	8
Students taught	68	191	86	55

Note: (i) High Positive Attitude (HPA) (ii) Moderate Positively Attitude (MPA) (iii) Low Positive Attitude (LPA) and (iv) Negative Attitude (NA)



**Fig. 1 Numbers relating to attitude of teachers towards tribal language and culture**

The teaching processes of the teachers have been observed based on which the teachers have been classified as Teachers possessing

- (i). High Positive Attitude (HPA) (ii) Moderate Positively Attitude (MPA) (iii) Low Positive Attitude (LPA) and (iv) Negative Attitude (NA).

Further the finding of assessments of students on different domain of literacy have been correlated and impacts of attitudes have been discussed on each domain of literacy. Further analysis has been interpreted in two stages that influence of attitudes teachers on Reading Readiness as well as Reading Performance.

### **Hypothesis**

Teachers' attitudes encompass their beliefs, values, and emotions towards their students. A positive attitude can foster a conducive learning environment, whereas a negative attitude may impede students' progress. This holds true particularly for tribal children, whose socio-economic and cultural backgrounds differ from the mainstream and whose mother tongue differs from the language of the state. Attitudes that are judgmental towards tribal culture, language, and teachers can significantly impact the learning of these children and their educational outcomes.

### **Problems**

The tribal children attending the school come from a vastly different context. They belong to their own distinct language and culture, with their own unique worldviews and values. Their experiences differ greatly from those of the teachers, who predominantly represent the dominant language and culture. Unfortunately, when a teacher becomes judgmental and starts making

comparisons, they perceive themselves as superior. This is where a clash of cultures emerges. The teacher forms numerous misconceptions and false beliefs without delving deep into the matter, ultimately failing to mentally accept the tribal child. The teachers hold strong opinions that tribal children are incapable of learning and cannot grasp languages other than their own. They dismiss the importance of the tribal language, which is not recognized as a scheduled language, and insist that the students should continue their studies solely in Odia, disregarding the significance of learning in one's mother tongue.

Furthermore, due to a lack of expertise in employing appropriate pedagogical methods to facilitate early or foundational literacy in a context where the mother tongue differs from the state language, many teachers are unsure of how to transition tribal students to Odia while utilizing their mother tongue. Consequently, when illiteracy and negative attitudes prevail simultaneously, the prospects of learning become nothing more than a distant dream for tribal children.

### **Impact of attitudes of Teachers on Reading Readiness**

#### **Listening Comprehension**

The information presented in Figure 2 highlights that teachers with a strong positive attitude or a moderate positive attitude are embracing a culturally responsive approach to teaching. They do so by incorporating culturally relevant content, stories, and examples into their lessons, effectively engaging tribal students in listening activities and developing their listening skills. Additionally, these teachers provide language support by acknowledging and valuing the students' mother tongue, which has a positive impact on their listening comprehension. They use bilingual materials to facilitate learning, leading to a significant improvement in listening comprehension skills among students. Conversely, teachers with low positive attitudes or negative attitudes have a comparatively lesser impact on students' listening comprehension skills.

#### **Vocabulary development**

Teachers by using rich and diverse vocabulary in second language (state language), are providing opportunity to tribal children to learn new words through different forms of conversations and activities using culturally relevant and contextually appropriate learning materials for vocabulary development among tribal children. The data in Fig.3 reveals that teachers possess high positive

attitude and moderate positive attitude have significant impact on vocabulary development among the students by using rich and diverse vocabulary of second language and rich vocabularies of mother tongue through recognizing the importance of incorporating tribal culture, traditions, and experiences.

### **Letter recognition**

The information indicated in Figure 4 unveils that the teachers display both a considerable positive disposition and a high positive attitude, which profoundly influences the expansion of students' vocabulary through the utilization of an extensive and diverse assortment of words from the second language, as well as incorporating mother tongue of the children. This approach acknowledges the significance of integrating tribal culture, traditions, and lived experiences into the educational process.

Most of the tribal children face the challenges of language barriers due to difference of home language and school language. Due to absence of corresponding written form, children have less orthographic awareness. Thus, tribal students usually struggle for letter recognition in state language. The information presented in Fig.4. indicates that teachers with a high positive attitude and those with a moderate positive attitude have a noteworthy influence on the development of students' letter recognition skills. However, it is evident that teachers with low positive attitudes or negative attitudes do not exert any significant impact on the positive development of students' letter recognition abilities.

### **Word Recognition**

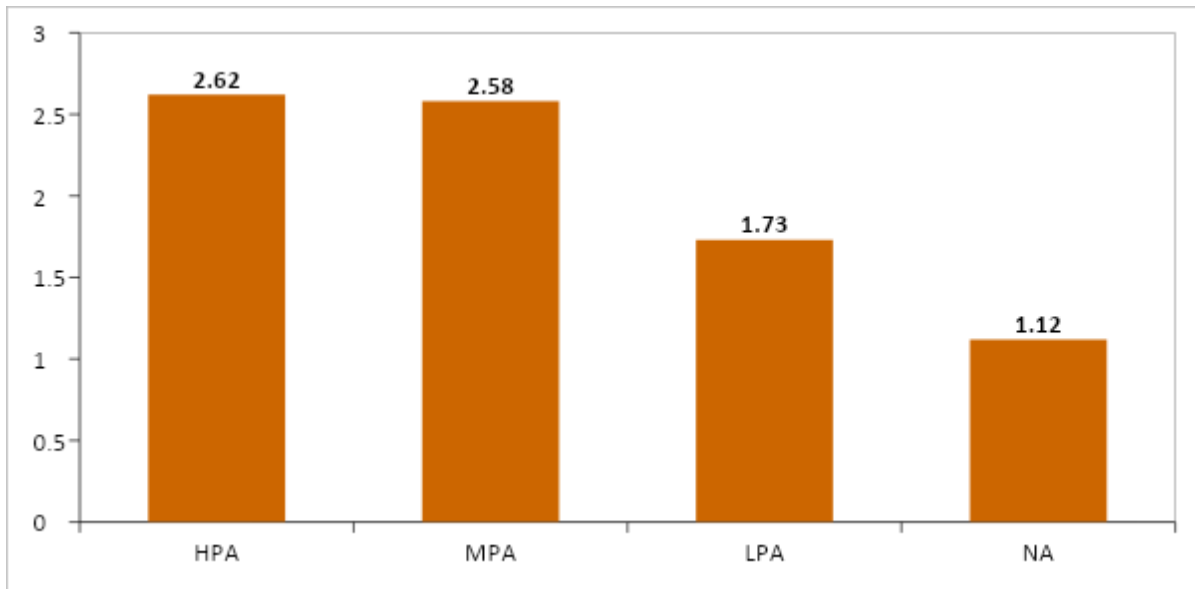
Teachers who hold high expectations for tribal students' academic achievements can positively impact their word recognition skills by facilitating appropriate teaching learning materials. By setting attainable goals, teachers motivate children to work towards improving their word power. Thus the data in fig. 5 reveals that teachers possess high positive attitude and moderate positive attitude have significant impact on word recognition skills among the students.

Teachers having high positive attitudes and high expectation on tribal children use appropriate teaching and learning materials to ensure activities to recognise words. As evidenced by the data presented in figure 5, teachers with both a strong positive attitude and a moderately positive attitude demonstrate a significant impact on the word recognition skills of their students.

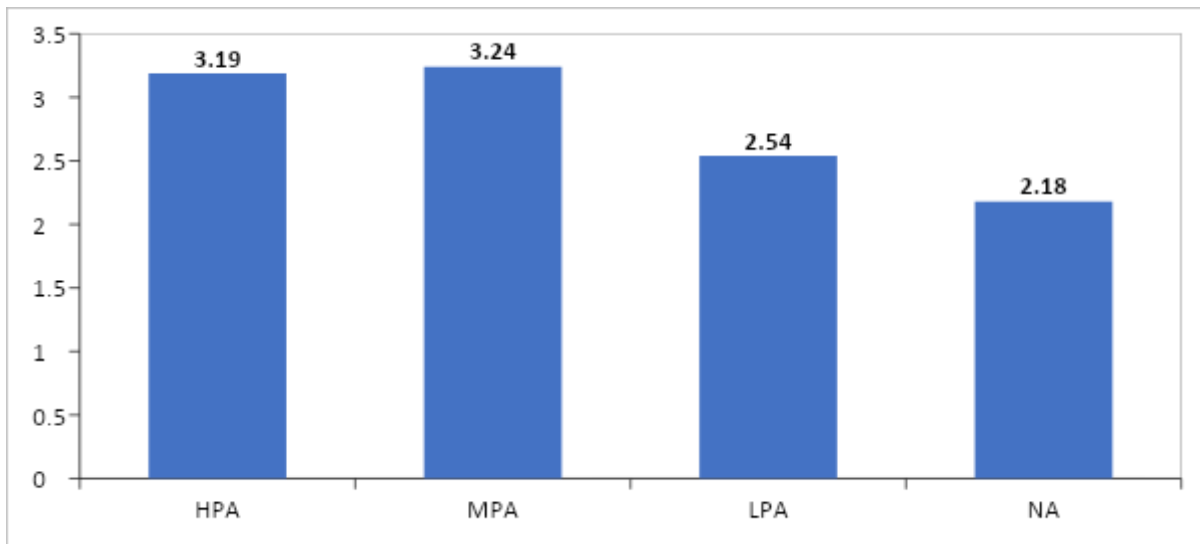


### Phonological awareness

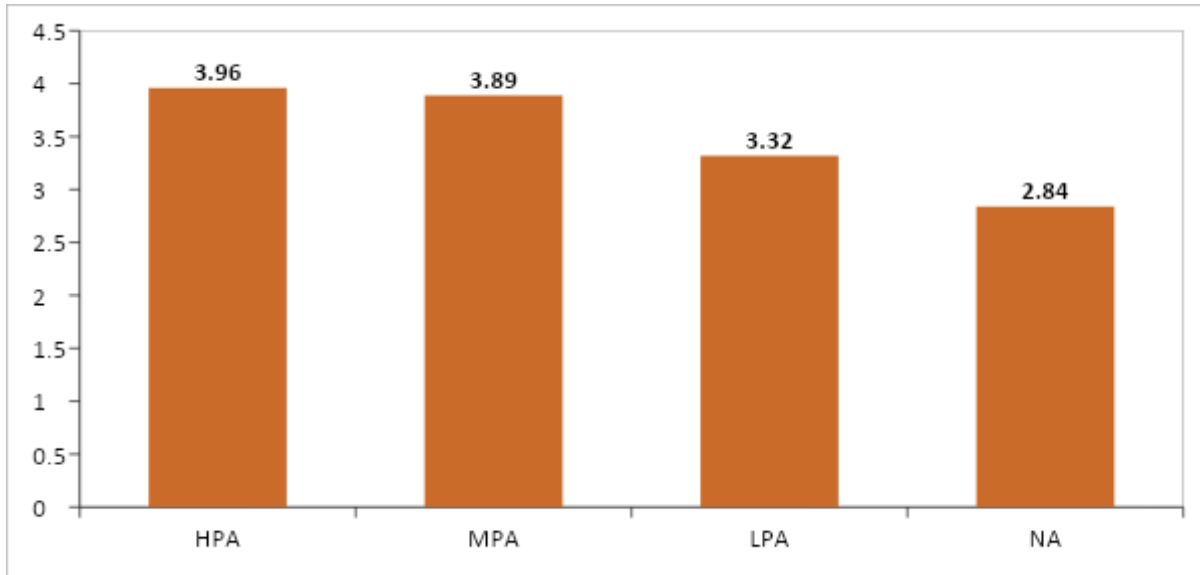
the data in fig. 6 reveals that impacts were significantly less on developing phonological understanding among the students. Perhaps all category of teachers were using similar method for development of phonological awareness in which further orientation is required for the teachers.



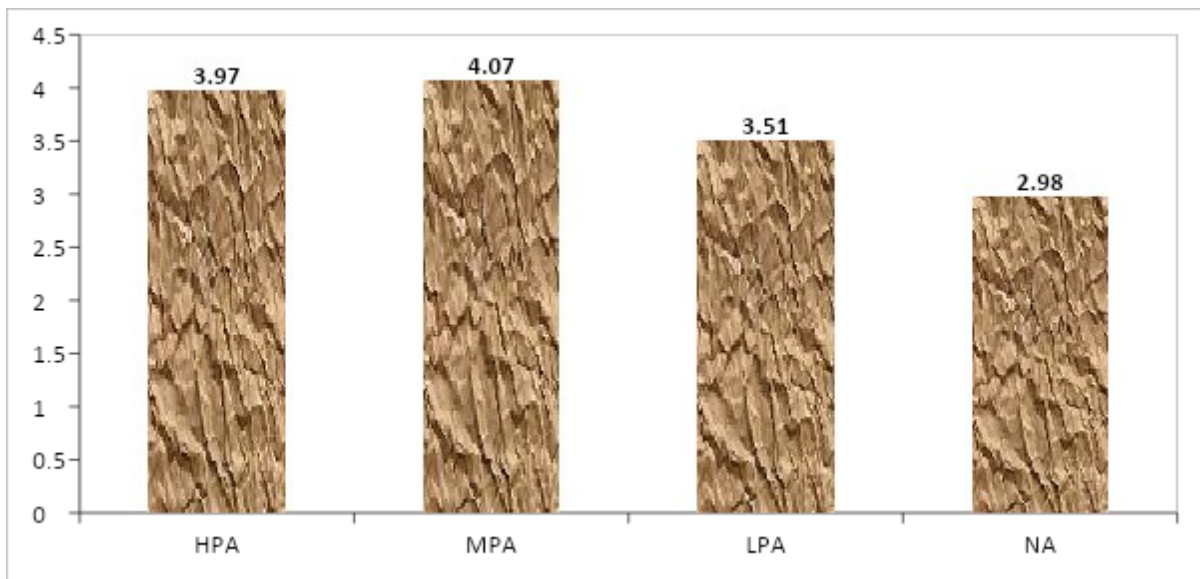
**Fig. 2 Effect of teacher's attitude on listening comprehension of students**



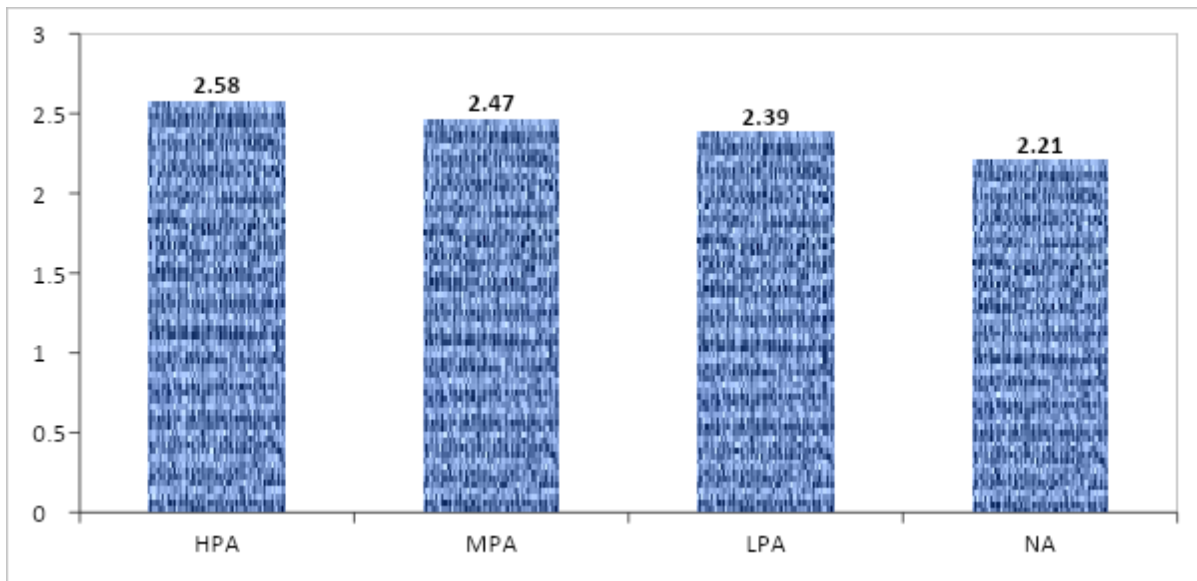
**Fig. 3 Effect of teacher's attitude on vocabulary development of students**



**Fig. 4 Effect of teacher's attitude on letter recognition of students**



**Fig. 5 Effect of teacher's attitude on word recognition of students**



**Fig. 6 Effect of teacher's attitude on phonological awareness of students**

#### **4.3.3.3 Influence of Teachers Attitudes on Reading Performance**

##### **Dictation**

Dictation exercises, which involve listening to spoken words and writing them down, are a common pedagogical tool used in classrooms. The data in fig.7 shows that the teacher who has high positive attitude significantly impact on the performance of the students in dictation exercise better than the students are taught by teachers having moderately positive attitude ,low positive attitude and negative attitude and Similarly positive impact decreases as shown in the figure on the ability of dictation among the students.

##### **Reading fluency**

Teachers' attitudes have a profound impact on the reading fluency of tribal students. By adopting culturally responsive teaching approaches, setting high expectations, building strong relationships, challenging biases, and more reading activities, teachers can create an inclusive and supportive environment that enhances the reading fluency of tribal students. The data in fig. 8 shows that high positive attitude teachers have significantly impact on the performance of the students in fluent reading whereas impact of negative attitude teachers are found insignificant in promoting the skills of reading fluently.

### **Reading Comprehensive Skills**

The data in fig.9 shows that high positive attitude teachers have significantly impact on the performance of the students in reading comprehension whereas other three category of teachers have no impact on promoting the skills of reading comprehension among tribal students.

### **Reading with Modulation**

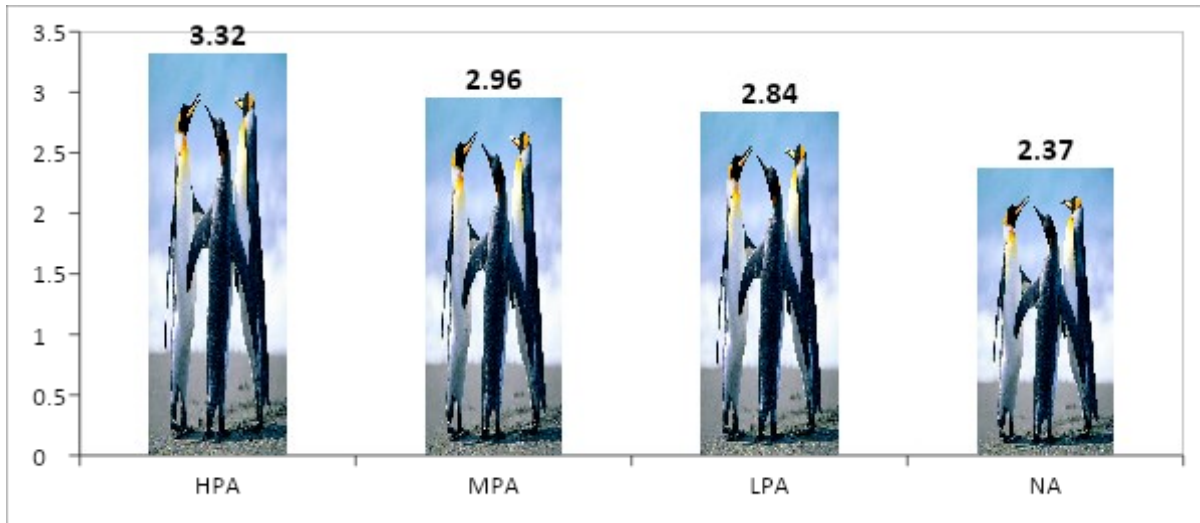
However, the data in fig.10 shows that teachers of high positive attitude to negative attitude have no impact on the skills of reading with voice modulation among the tribal students. Perhaps the pedagogical process required for developing reading with voice modulation in classroom is missing.

### **Grammatical Knowledge**

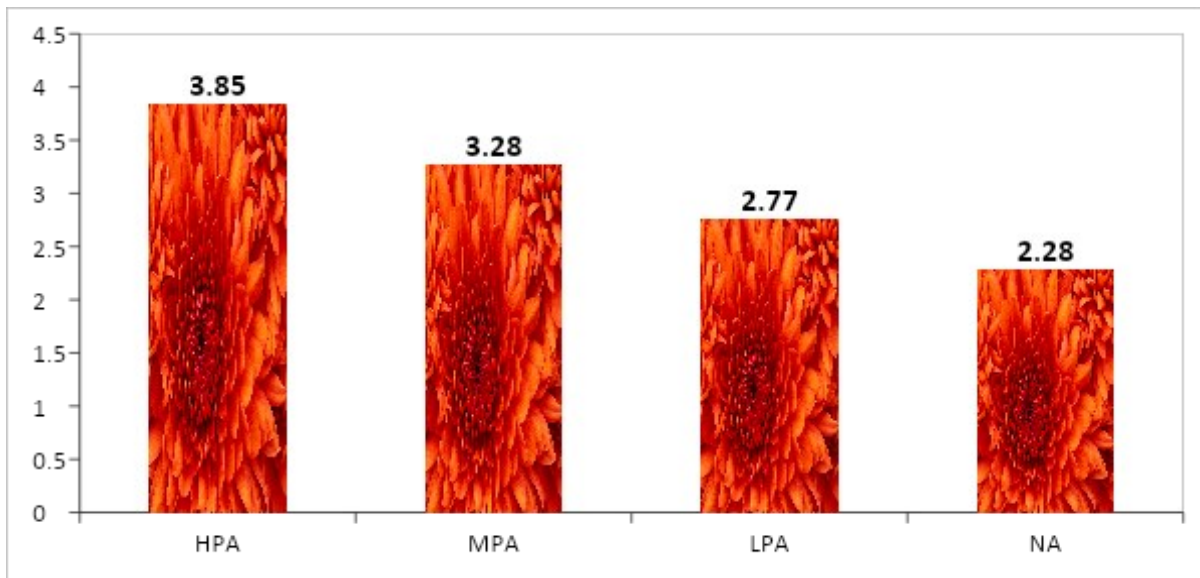
The data in fig. 11 show that high positive attitude teachers have significantly impact on the performance of the students to develop grammatical knowledge whereas impact of moderate positive teachers to negative attitude teachers are found insignificant in promoting grammatical knowledge.

### **Independent Writing**

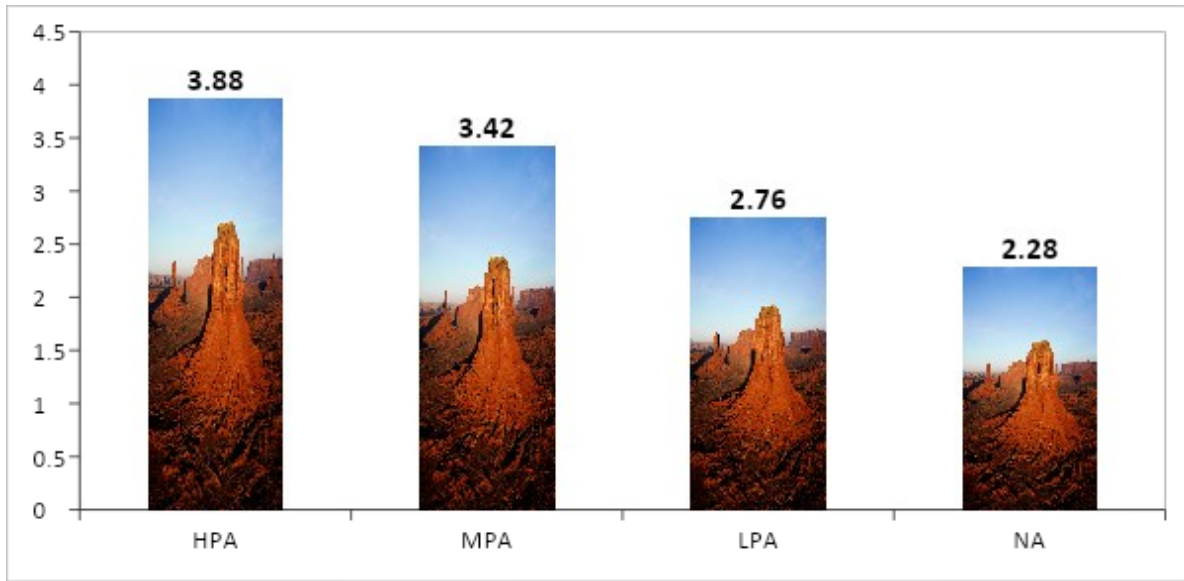
Tribal children very often face orthographic challenges. Odia script has been accepted since there is no corresponding written form of their language. In this context, teachers having positive attitudes provide varieties of writing opportunities and exercise for improvement of writing skills. It is found that by maintaining high expectations, treating all students equally, and refraining from discriminatory behaviours, teachers having high positive attitudes have better impact than other teachers possessing create an environment that nurtures the independent writing skills of tribal students. The data in fig.12 show that high positive attitude teachers have significantly impact on the ability of writing of the children.



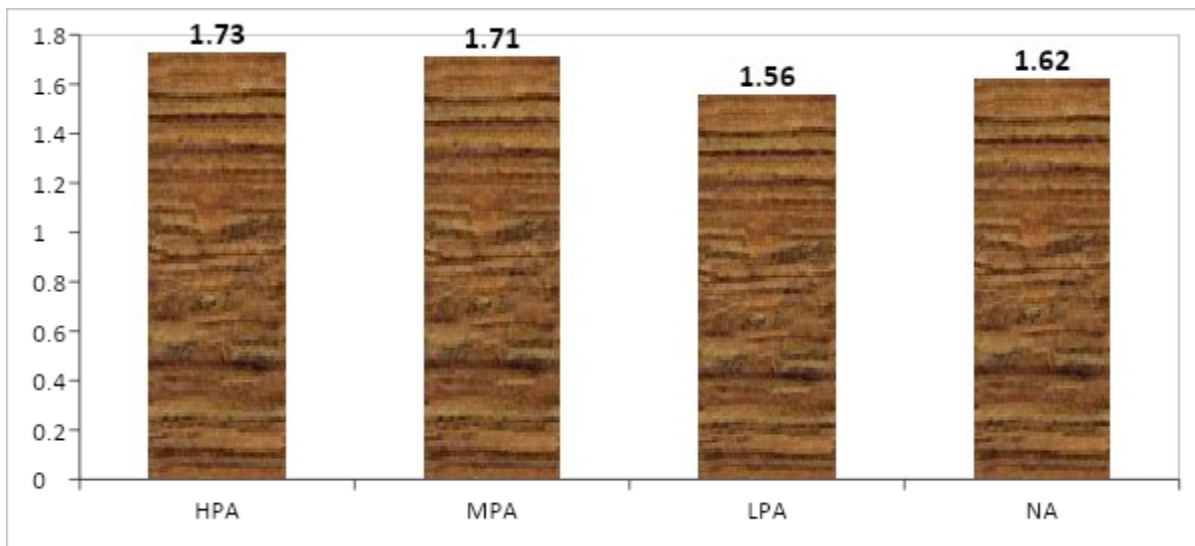
**Fig. 7 Effect of teacher's attitude on dictation of students**



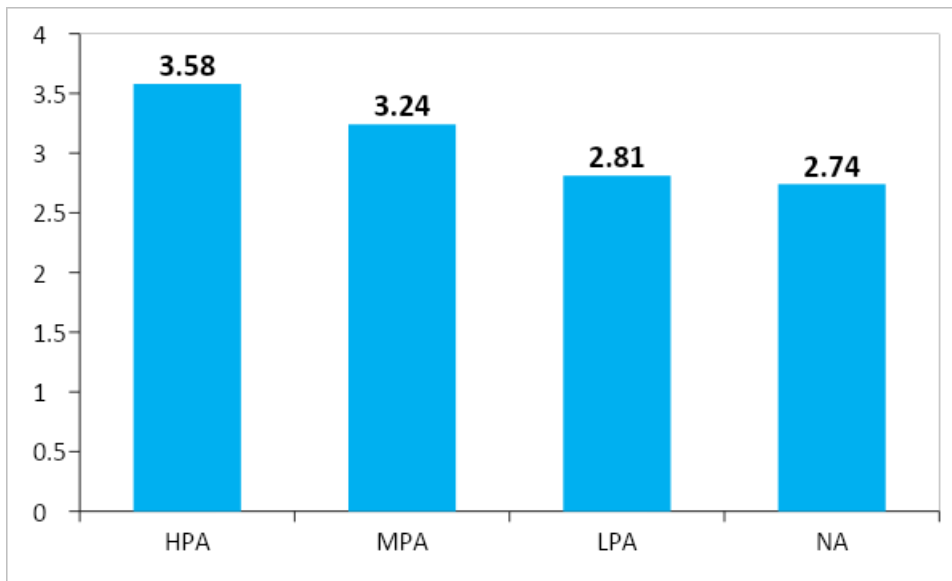
**Fig. 8 Effect of teacher's attitude on reading fluency of students**



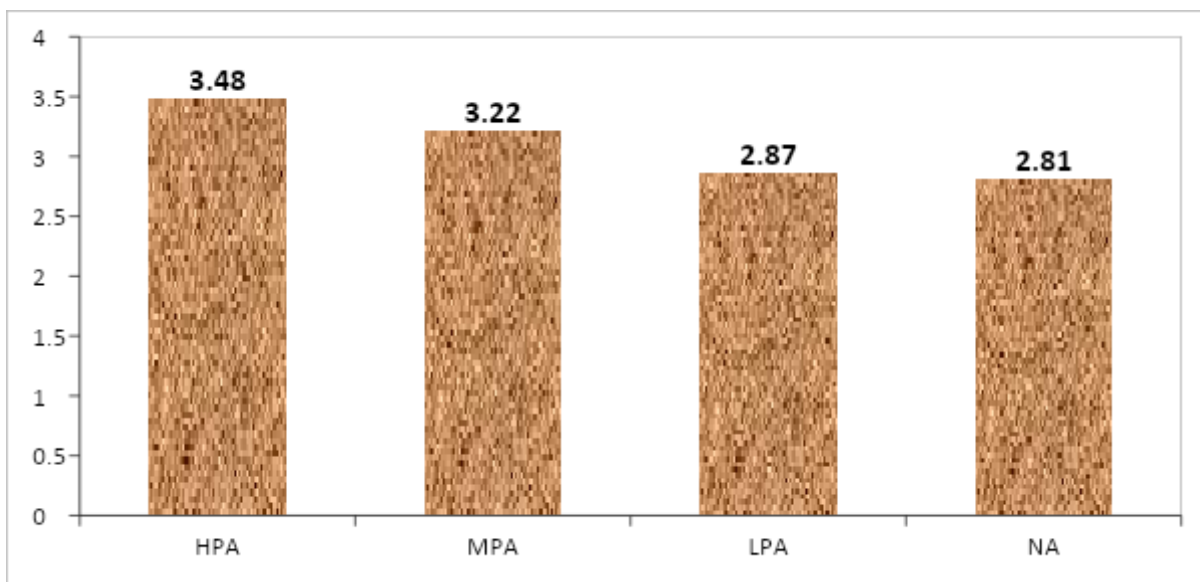
**Fig. 9** Effect of teacher's attitude on comprehensive skill of students



**Fig. 10** Effect of teacher's attitude on reading with voice modulation of students



**Fig. 11 Effect of teacher's attitude on grammatical knowledge of students**



**Fig. 12 Effect of teacher's attitude on independent writing of students**

### Summary Discussion

The data presented in the figures highlights the significant impact of teachers' attitudes on various language skills among tribal students. Teachers with a strong positive attitude or a moderate positive attitude have a positive influence on listening comprehension, vocabulary development, letter recognition, word recognition, dictation, reading fluency, reading

comprehension, grammatical knowledge, and independent writing skills. These teachers incorporate culturally relevant content, acknowledge the importance of the students' mother tongue, use diverse vocabulary, set high expectations, and provide appropriate teaching and learning materials. However, there is a need for further orientation and support for teachers to improve the development of phonological awareness and reading with voice modulation skills. Overall, teachers with a high positive attitude play a crucial role in promoting the language skills of tribal students and creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

## **Recommendation**

### **Training**

Education Departments and Educational Authorities realising impacts of teachers having positive attitude on the development of foundational literacy among tribal students in particular, should initiate professional development programs for teachers that focus on enhancing positive attitudes towards teaching tribal students as well as towards tribal language and culture so that a sense of culture appreciation will develop.

Further, training sessions including understanding of multicultural society and multilingual schools, culturally relevant curriculum and content that will foster a positive learning environment and facilitate language skill development.

### **Teaching learning materials**

Educational Departments/Local Authorities should ensure that teachers have access to a wide range of appropriate and graded teaching and learning materials for tribal students.

### **Emphasis on Mother Tongue**

Teachers should understand the importance of mother tongue from all perspectives and should be encouraged to incorporate the use of the mother tongue in the classroom, especially during the initial stages of language acquisition. This approach facilitates a smooth transition to the target language and helps students establish a strong foundation in language skills.

### **High Expectations and Positive Reinforcement**



Teachers should be encouraged to set high expectations for tribal students and provide them with positive reinforcement. When students feel valued, respected, and supported, they are more likely to develop confidence in their language abilities. Teachers can foster a growth mindset by praising efforts, providing constructive feedback, and celebrating successes, thus motivating students to strive for continuous improvement.

### **Phonological Awareness and Reading with Voice Modulation**

There is a need to improve the understanding of teachers on phonological awareness and reading with modulation skills among tribal students and the teachers should know the specific instructional strategies that focus on phonics, phonemic awareness, and reading with voice modulation.

### **Conclusion**

Recognizing the importance of the students' mother tongue, and providing appropriate support and resources, teachers can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Through their high positive attitudes and effective instructional practices, teachers will play a crucial role in promoting language skill development and ensuring the academic success of tribal students.

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## **Globalization and Minority Languages: A Prospect of Language Revival**

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### **Abstract**

Survival of ethnic and minority languages in the age of globalisation is a big question. ETHNOLOGUE's *Languages of the World* estimates 143 languages of India under its *in trouble* and *dying* categories. Mostly these languages are those of minority speakers and are on the verge of immediate extinction. People *usually* view globalisation as a threat to such endangered languages since its advancement leads to language shift, attrition, loss or even death of some minority languages along with their literature and culture. The increasing mobility of international integration has driven a powerful trend among the younger generations towards linguistic and cultural uniformity. *Intergenerational transmission* is, therefore, interrupted. As a result, minority languages and cultures are hardly passed to the next generation, and people rather prefer "global" languages and cultures. The agents like educational policies, schools also intensify this process despite the fact that they have much potential to hold back the minority languages and bridge the gap between this *pseudo-globalisation* and minority languages. However, we honestly need to acknowledge that globalisation bears the fruits of the future, and in many respects this is undeniable. Globalisation if taken out of its usual derogatory sense, it can be instrumental for the revival of minority languages. Globalisation in its boarder sense is not to eliminate the languages of minority as they have immense to contribute to its scope. And very ironically, a single language or the myth of being monolingual is potentially a factor that rather limits the scope of globalisation. In fact, saving the minority languages and making use of them for the growth of civilization should be the motto of globalisation. In this paper, an attempt has been made to find out a set of feasible

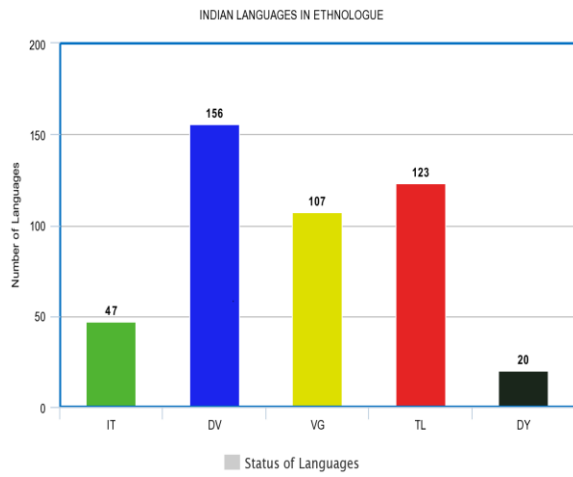
ways for such agents that can save the minority languages and thus help the process of globalisation to occur smoothly.

**Keywords:** Globalisation, intergenerational transmission, ecology of language, indigenous literature, language revival.

## Introduction

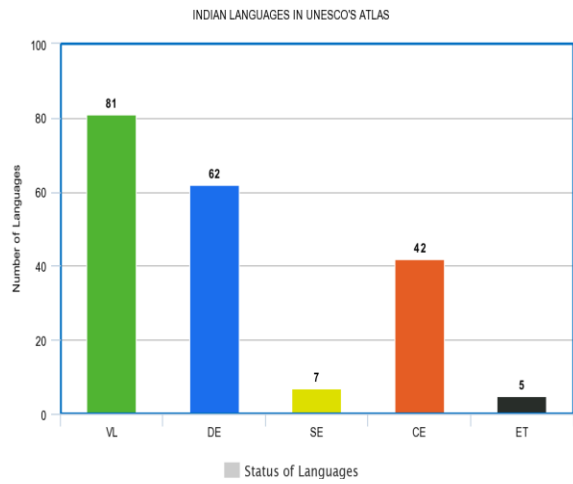
Language is inherent to the unique culture of its speakers and is reflective of their distinct identity. It not only carries identity and culture for its speakers *but also identifies their social group membership* (Gumperz, 1982, p. 239). Like all mainstream languages, languages of minority groups are too essential to their identity and to maintain the originality of linguistic diversity in a country like India where the languages of minorities are more in number than those of majorities. It is a country where multilingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural aspects characterized its society from the scratch of history. *Whether one looks at the Upanishads or classical Sanskrit literature, the chronicles of Chinese or western travelers, Prakrit literature or the contemporary grassroots reality, one cannot but be struck by multilingualism operating at both the individual and the societal level* (Pattanayak, 1984, p. 125).

The latest (26th) edition of *Ethnologue*(2023), the world's most complete catalogue of languages, confirms the claim of Pattanayak as it lists 453 living Indian languages (of which 424 are indigenous and 29 are non-indigenous) on its website <http://www.ethnologue.com/>. Most of these indigenous languages have very limited numbers of speakers and are in danger of immediate extinction. UNESCO's website (<http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php>) earlier estimated 197 languages of India under its *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*. The following two diagrams show the status of Indian languages as researched by Ethnologue and UNESCO.



IT-Institutional DV-Developing, VG-Vigorous, TL-In Trouble, DY-Dying

Figure 1: Languages of India in Ethnologue



VL-Vulnerable, DE- Definitely Engendered SE-Severely Engendered, CE-Critically Engendered, ET-Extinct

Figure 2: Languages of India in UNESCO's Atlas of World's Languages in Danger

If a comparative study is made between two charts, it is commonly found that many Indian languages are on the verge of their extinction. Standing here, the prospect for the maintenance and further development of the minority languages seems to be very vague. The attempts which have been made so far are primarily confined to listing and documenting such languages but what is more important is to control the political and economic situations which lead to language shift, attrition, loss or even linguistic genocide.

Globalisation is often viewed as a threat to engendered languages. Globalisation is a vital process of international integration and interaction whose direct influences (such as habitat destruction, the spread of agriculture, deforestation, and desertification) drive the linguistic minorities into forced assimilation in every sphere of life. Linguistic minorities thus appear in a distinct stage where they gradually become more interested in global languages and cultures as compared to their own. Globalisation thus puts the minority languages behind reducing their functional need and importance. And it ultimately leads to nowhere but language death of minorities along with their literature and culture. The causes for such phenomena put forward a framework which places language in the historical, economic, and political context of globalisation.

The rapid advancement of globalisation encounters hardly any hurdle to reach to the life of many indigenous people living in the distant eco-regions in recent time. The increasing mobility of global language and culture allure their day to day life. As a result, we initially observe the interaction and coexistence of mainstream and indigenous languages. Gradually this balance of linguistic ecology is lost. When society becomes increasingly more mobile, dominant languages begin to replace minority languages. Instead of being empowered as the consequence of increased interactions with a global language, languages of minorities are seen to cement their places in the museum.

The political realities of globalized economy and culture also bring the linguistic minorities closer to mainstream languages and compel them to learn so, else to suffer the repercussions in the form of greater difficulty in business, less access to information and so on. This results in language shift, attrition, or die-off of minority languages around the world. It is

expected that around 3,000 of the world's languages will meet their doomsday by the end of this century unless the indigenous languages are taken seriously with equal linguistic rights as part of globalisation. United Nations Environment Program estimates 70 to 80% of the spoken languages in the world as indigenous, used by native tribes. Approximately 50% languages are in danger of disappearance, and many more are losing their link with the natural world (Garland, 2006).

The disappearance of these languages will surely be a great loss not only to the concerned linguistic community but also to the whole mankind at large. A language is not merely a means of communication, but a storehouse of culturally specific information and knowledge. With the extinction of minority languages, the existing oral literature and indigenous culture will have no sign in future history. Because of this break down, the indigenous knowledge system will hardly be transferred to the next generation. Intergeneration transmission will be interrupted. Valuable information such as indigenous medical treatment used by the aboriginals will also be lost someday if the medium used to carry and pass that information is threatened to be devoured by the global culture and language.

The increasing mobility of international integration has driven a powerful trend among the younger generations for linguistic and cultural uniformity. As the present generations do not see any utility of their mother tongues, their wish also tends to emulate a global language and world's pop culture. The agents of education and mass-media further intensify the process of disempowering minority languages though they have the potential to hold back these languages. Schools and educational policies are some of the major factors behind the *macroeconomic, techno - military, social and political causes of linguistic genocide* (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 2010, p. 78).

Globalisation, on the surface, seems to be a threat to minority languages. But the reality is that globalisation bears the fruit of future; hence its flow cannot be stopped at any cost. It is a facilitator, not a slayer. We rather fail to understand its actual course and tend to let it flow in a wrong path, which we can name as pseudo-globalisation. What is important, therefore, is to understand the true sense of globalisation and accordingly efforts should be made to broaden its



scope. If globalisation is taken out of its derogatory sense, it has ample to felicitate the growth of indigenous language and culture. It is potential enough to reverse the phenomenon of language loss. Globalisation may facilitate the juxtaposition of global as well as endangered languages allowing healthy exchange of information and linguistic resources. This will surely safeguard the identity of minority speakers and preserve their own language and culture for the future generations. In fact, saving the minority languages and making use of them for the growth of civilization should be the motto of globalisation.

On contrary, a single language or the myth of being monolingual is potentially a factor that rather limits the scope of globalisation. Globalisation in its boarder sense is not to eliminate the languages of minority as they have immense to contribute to its scope. Globalisation can take place very smoothly through its healthy interaction with minority languages; and at the same time, such languages should take this interaction as an exposure for their enrichment. Thus, globalisation and minority languages have the potential to complement each other. Languages of both majorities and minorities should be taken equally to facilitate national identity, scientific research, and commerce in the age of globalisation.

Issues such as language assessment, linguistic representation, identity creation, confidence and self-esteem, existing education systems, and prevailing attitudes towards linguistic minorities should be reconsidered and act accordingly to promote the indigenous languages in the global platform. We need to understand the process of language revitalization and its successful implementation to hold back and enrich these languages. It is evident from several modern examples that an engendered language can once again become alive and vigorous subjected to the concerned community's hard determination and the government policies. Some instances of revived languages are Ainu, Barngarla, Belarusian, Chochenyo, Cornish, Dalmatian, Hawaiian and so on. Thus, the idea of language revitalization is not a complete failure.

David Crystal (2002), in his book *Language Death*, suggests 6 factors that can help in language revival (p. 130-141). He opines that an endangered language can progress if its speakers can:

1. improve the status of their language within the mainstream community,
2. improve their economic condition,
3. have more legitimate power in the eyes of the dominant linguistic group,
4. make strong presence of their language in the education system,
5. create the script of their language, and
6. Can use electronic technology.

We will, however, focus on how technological aspects of globalisation and especially education as part of globalisation can help endangered/minority languages progress.

Mass-media technologies and interactive technologies are the most useful means that can effectively stop the process of linguistic genocide. Mass-media technologies, which had earlier focused on promoting linguistic homogeneity and were in favour of driving out minority languages, are now helping those endangered languages to make a comeback. Interactive technologies such as Web sites, e-mail, and e-messaging system should be made accessible to the speakers of minority languages to communicate to the mainstream by creating and distributing media in their own languages.

A comprehensive and digitalized storage of audio-visual and textual documents should be made available for future generations. Community-based language documentation programmes can incorporate audio/audio-visual recordings of the existing oral literature. Information about indigenous life-style, language, and culture can also be documented through interviews with the elders who still have the fluency. Such documents should be made available on screen by making specific websites and through creative and social networking sites such as YouTube, Twitter, Kickstarter and Facebook. The websites of UNESCO and Ethnologue offer e-space that allows users to send feedback, contribute comments, and suggest amendments on their existing catalogue. Thus, interactive technology facilitates conversation and invites world-wide participation and contributions from researchers, language speakers themselves and any other stakeholders.

Culture-specific programmes such as folkdance, folksong etc should be frequently organized at national and international levels for the glorification of aboriginal cultures. This provides an effective platform to exhibit their rich heritage which can consolidate their will power and lead to the realization of linguistic value. Unless the linguistic minorities become

conscious of restoring and promoting their own languages, the dream of language revival and the existence of multilingual society will remain as a far-cry.

Globalisation is not just a process but an ideology. It opens the door for the linguistic minorities to be ideologically colonized. The real reason behind the phenomena of linguistic genocide is the borrowed idea of being monolingual prevalent in West. But, the monolingual mindset stands in sharp contrast to the reality of India, whose pride remains in its linguistic diversity. Hence, monolingualism should be our primary concern, not globalisation. On contrary, globalisation is something that can lead us to a more connected and more interdependent world. By having access to technology, it can help the researchers engaged in documenting and protecting the endangered languages.

However, all such attempts to revive/revitalize minority languages can only be successful if intergenerational language transmission can take place naturally. For this, the younger generation should be encouraged to use the mother tongue at home. Unless a language is used at home, it is hardly possible to revive a dying language. A language can successfully be passed to the next generation only if it becomes a regular means of communication for its speakers.

Education is another essential factor that can successfully hold back the minority languages. The educational policies for minorities, local administration and teacher education institutions have the potential to turn over the destiny of linguistic minorities. Policymakers have a greater role to play in this context. They can change or modify the existing policies and make specific and accessible policies for the minorities through negotiation with all the major stakeholders including concerned language groups. As a result, the new policies can create interest and public awareness among users. The new policies should be made in view of promoting multidisciplinary teaching and workgroups.

An exclusive focus should be given in the area of minority language education while preparing the school curriculum. It should be strictly mentioned in the curriculum that the medium of instruction should be their mother tongue at least for the beginners. It is easier for a language to survive with all its vigour if it is used as the language of instruction in educational

institutions. Minority language will not only be studied but also be made as a means through which other subjects can be studied. In such case, the chances of language revitalization are very high as it creates a very natural context for teaching and learning where languages are most likely to be picked up and ended up being used by children and teenagers.

Textbooks should incorporate the content for beginners based on the indigenous life-style. Teaching Strategies should be modified and new ones can formulated for the classroom. Such strategies should aim at breaking linguistic power structure by giving equal importance to learners' mother tongue. Strategies should be adopted to understand learners' use of interlinguistic strategies and not to take them as errors or mistakes.

However well-planned a curriculum is, it can only be materialized if we have the trained and efficient teachers. Therefore, the teacher education institutions should organize exclusive training programmes that enable teachers to comprehend and act accordingly in ethno-linguistically diverse contexts. They will be educated to integrate different aptitudes, knowledge, and follow multidisciplinary approaches while dealing with diversity. The teachers will be made capable of using the indigenous resources available with students in the classroom. Therefore, it is suggested to have the teachers from the concerned community as they well understand their language and culture along with feeling and emotion of the learners. Additionally local stakeholders can bring positive repercussions through their action. They can provide language and culture-based information on traditional practices. They can also invest in space, resources and teacher support.

Even if technology and education are taken into consideration what is more important is the natural use of the language at home where children are encouraged to become active users of a language. This can immensely maintain the process of intergenerational transmission of minority languages. Another best way to revitalize a language is to establish *language nest* otherwise known as Pre-school Language Nest Programme. It is an idea originated in New Zealand where grown up speakers of a language can participate in early childhood education to facilitate intergenerational language transmission and to create new language speakers. It is a process where elders are assigned children to whom they carry over the language in a natural setting, be it at formal or informal setting.

Thus, there are a number of methods that can work together for the revival and glorification of minority languages. It is possible even in the age of globalisation to maintain the linguistic diversity in a country like India, where globalisation can be an opportunity for minority languages for their enrichment and minority resources in turn can broaden the scope of globalisation. Thus, globalisation and linguistic minorities can be complementary to each other.

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## **“Words, words, words”: Cohesion in the English Coursebook at the Primary Level in Telangana State**

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### **Abstract**

Appropriate knowledge and use of cohesive devices are two of the imperatives in any discourse. Young learners’ attention should be drawn to language, and arguably, cohesive devices should receive high priority; and this is achieved, chiefly through the textbooks. In order to investigate the extent to which the prescribed textbooks of English in Telangana, India, provide such exposure to students in Classes III, IV, and V in government-run schools, especially in the context of ELF, the distribution and frequency of lexical cohesive devices in all the lessons in Class III, and selected texts in Classes IV and V were analysed using frameworks proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Paltridge (2011). The findings of the study revealed that there are not only differences in the distribution of cohesive devices across the textbooks but also in the frequency of their occurrences. It was noted that amongst the lexical cohesive devices *repetition* was found extensively in the three books; amongst the various types of collocations, verb and noun types of collocations were abundant. However, exercises designed to develop the use of lexical cohesive devices were negligible at just one per each book. Findings of this study, hopefully, will be of some use to teachers and materials developers.

**Keywords:** textbooks, lexical cohesive devices, young learners

### **I. Introduction**

In *Hamlet* Act II Scene II, Polonius asks Hamlet what he is reading, to which Hamlet replies, “Words, words, words”. Hamlet’s commonsensical yet obvious answer has a lot of guidance for

the coursebook writer. To begin with, the term word is notoriously difficult to define. Words combine to make sense across the subject matter as text nestles in context, and learners negotiate syntactic, paradigmatic, and pragmatic issues in reading. For teachers and materials producers, the teaching of words presents unique opportunities and difficulties. Some researchers have pointed out that an average reader requires anywhere between five to seventeen times of exposure to a word. How can this be achieved in the classroom? What role does the coursebook play in achieving it? What other issues does a good coursebook address? The present study of the coursebooks in Telangana State attempts to uncover the oftenundeclared aims and assumptions of coursebook writers.

Krishnaswamy's (2006, p.156) pronouncement that the changing role of English, the liberalization of the economy, the opening up of the market and the increasing employment opportunities for English-knowing educated Indians have made the English language acceptable to a vast majority of Indians in contemporary India. They further note, 'It is communication skills in English that have a worldwide market, because English has become the language of business and commerce, trade and technology, journalism and electronic media, the Internet, and IT-enabled services (pp. 155-156). It is noteworthy that English as Lingua Franca Studies is a growing area with many institutions offering elaborate and specialist courses in the field. Given the pivotal role that English plays in the shaping of the future of many young learners, it is inevitable that we consider how language competencies are developed amongst young ESL learners in India. One of the major sources of language learning for students attending classes in the government-run schools in one of the southern states of India—Telangana—is through the English language textbooks distributed free of cost to the students.

Teaching materials are a key component in most language programs. Whether the teacher uses a textbook, institutionally prepared materials, or his or her own materials, instructional materials generally serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom. In the case of inexperienced teachers, materials may also serve as a form of teacher training. (Richards (2002:251, cited in McGrath 2013). This is augmented by Jack C. Richards (cited in Nigel, 2013) who states: A fact of life in the majority of language-learning classrooms around the world is that commercial or teacher-made materials generally provide the core resources that teachers and students depend on. Despite the



opportunities provided by blended learning and other Web-based initiatives, traditional books or print-based learning materials continue to play an important role in the lives of the majority of teachers and learners . . . the majority of the world's English language teachers are not native speakers of English and may have limited teacher training – for such teachers, well-designed materials can provide rich sources of learning input as well as facilitate teacher development.. Similarly, Ur (1991, p 193), in response to the question about how necessary a coursebook is, states ‘ Personally, I very much prefer to use a coursebook. I find that a set framework helps me to regulate and time my programme . . . Moreover, in my experience learners too prefer to have one. . . It seems that the possession of a coursebook may carry a certain prestige’. Brown (2001, p 136) observes, ‘The most obvious and most common form of material support for language instruction comes through textbooks’. Following the distinction made by Brown (ibid), texts are any of a wide variety of types and genres of linguistic forms. Texts can be spoken or written. Textbooks are one type of text, a book for use in an educational curriculum’. Thus, textbooks/coursebooks provide language exposure and input for learners. Having established this, it is imperative to consider how cohesion is treated in the instructional materials produced to develop language competencies. The next section discusses the role of cohesion in learning English.

## II. Review of literature

In the introductory chapter in *Cohesion in English*, Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp 2-3) observe: ‘A text may be spoken or written, prose or verse, dialogue or monologue. It may be anything from a single proverb to a whole play, from a momentary cry for help to an all-day discussion on a committee. A text is a unit of language in use. . .The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text’. Continuing the discussion of the general meaning of cohesion, the authors (ibid.) they note that the general meaning of cohesion is embodied in the concept of text. Cohesion is a necessary though not a sufficient condition for the creation of text. . .Cohesion expresses the continuity that exists between one part of the text and another. The authors discuss cohesion under the five headings of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. Of the five, reference, substitution, and ellipsis are grammatical while lexical cohesion is semantic. Conjunction is on the border-line of the grammatical and lexical heads. (p 304).

Cook (1989, p 127) states ‘Cohesion has always been neglected in language teaching, where sentences have been created, manipulated, and assessed in isolation. . . The results of this neglect are familiar to teachers and learners at all levels, for they affect both production and processing. . . The neglect of cohesion arises partly from a simple lack of awareness. . . Even now, when extensive research has been done on cohesion, there is still a reluctance to give it much prominence in language pedagogy.

According to Paltridge (2011) lexical cohesion ‘refers to relationships in meaning between lexical items in a text and, in particular content words and the relationship between them. The main kinds of lexical cohesion are *repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy* and *collocation*’.

Having established the importance of understanding cohesion in language teaching and learning, the next section presents a brief on studies that have been conducted to understand the distribution of cohesive devices in English language textbooks across the world.

Reza and Azam (2011) attempted to investigate the spread of discourse markers in the reading comprehension sections of Iranian High School English textbooks. The findings of their study indicated that there was a significant difference in the frequency of samples of discourse markers in the texts. Cho et.al (2014) analysed the distribution of cohesive devices in English textbooks prescribed for study in Seoul and found that lexical cohesive devices such as synonyms, collocations, for instance are rarely available for the learners in the texts.

A similar study conducted by Oroji and Ghane (2014) revealed that ellipsis and substitution were used found in the texts abundantly as opposed to lexical cohesive devices which were scarcely present. On the contrary, a study by Khodareza and Ashouri (2016) indicated that samples of lexical cohesive devices are found abundantly in the textbooks used for ESP courses in a university in Iran as opposed the presence of grammatical cohesive devices. It is interesting to note that a comprehensive list of studies conducted by researchers outside India is available for analysis but there is a paucity in data as far as research in the domain as far as the Indian context is concerned. With this aim, the present study attempted to investigate the distribution of lexical cohesive devices in three textbooks—Classes III, IV, and V—prescribed for study by young learners in government schools of Telangana, India.

The following research questions had been formulated:

1. What are the types of lexical cohesive devices and their frequencies of occurrences across the three textbooks?
2. Are there any differences in the use of lexical cohesive devices across the three textbooks prescribed for study for the young learners?

### III. Methodology

#### i) Sample

For the study, three textbooks produced by The Government of Telangana, Department of School Education, 2016, were analysed. In Telangana students are admitted to Class I at the age of 5, to government run-schools. English as a subject is introduced in Class I itself. As mentioned in their Prefaces, the books are ‘prepared on a holistic approach of language learning. . . . The activities are designed as per children’s knowledge and experiences which ensure their active participation in Teaching Learning Process. The main aim of teaching English is to help learners evolve themselves as independent users of English’ (Preface, iii). The following is a brief of the number of lessons along with word-length in the three textbooks chosen for analysis

Sl No	Class	Title of the lesson	No. of words
	III	Talking train	171
		Swamy and the magic beans	214
		I like it this way	190
		The mouse and the pencil	207

		The little red hen	137
		Mary and the three bears	242
		The animal school	323
		Birbal outwits the cheat	269
	<b>Total</b>		<b>1753</b>

In order to ensure homogeneity amongst the texts for analysis in terms of its length, four texts from the textbook prescribed for study in Class IV were selected. The number of words in these four texts amounted to 1797. From the textbook of Class V, three texts were chosen; the total number of words being 1769. Thus, it was ensured that the number of words in the texts being analysed were more or less the same.

In the light of the principle of content analysis, the texts were analysed to investigate the distribution of lexical cohesive devices, their frequency in the chosen texts. Using the comparative analysis method, similarities and differences in the presence of and frequency in the presence of cohesive devices were arrived at. Data was quantified in percentages and numbers. Texts were analysed first for the instances of *repetition*, *synonymy*, *antonymy*, *hyponymy*, and *meronymy*. Subsequently, the data was entered into a Microsoft Excel sheet for each of the texts and tabulated. Then the texts were analysed for various types of collocations and entered in the excel sheet. Data was then validated by another member in the School. Differences in identification were discussed and eliminated. Thus, inter-rater validity was established for the data.

## ii) Framework

In order to investigate the distribution of lexical cohesive devices in the three books titled *My English World*, Class III, IV, and V, the framework proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976)

and Paltridge (2011) was used. According to Halliday and Hasan, 1976, ‘The use of general words as cohesive elements, however, when seen from the lexical point of view, is merely a special case of much more general phenomenon which we may term as REITERATION. Reiteration is a form of lexical cohesion which involves the repetition of a lexical item, at one end of the scale; the use of a general word to refer back to a lexical item, at the other end of the scale; and a number of things in between—the use of a synonym, near-synonym, or superordinate.’ Further, discussing the categories of words that contribute in making a text cohesive, the authors conclude that ‘We can therefore extend the basis of the lexical relationship that features as a cohesive force and say that there is cohesion between any pair of lexical items that stand to each other in some recognizable lexicosemantic (word meaning) relation. This would include not only synonyms and near-synonyms, . . . and super-ordinates, but also pairs of opposites of various kinds, complementary , . . . antonyms . . . It also includes pairs of words drawn from the same ordered series . . . The members of such sets often stand in some recognizable semantic relation to one another; they may be related as part to whole, . . . or as part to part; they may be co-hyponyms of the same superordinate term . . .’ (p 287)

In summary, Halliday and Hasan propose the general concept of lexical framework as follows:

Type of lexical cohesion:

Referential relation:

### I. Reiteration

a) same word (repetition)

i) same referent

b) synonym (or near-synonym)

ii) inclusive

c) superordinate

iii) exclusive

d) general word

iv) unrelated

### 2. Collocation

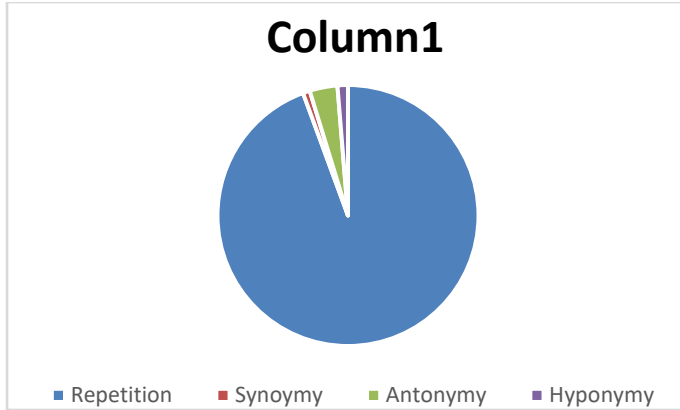
In the literature of discourse analysis, variations in the categories of lexical cohesive devices is seen. Several researchers such as Stotsky (1983), Tanskanen (2006), and Mahlber (2009) have critiqued Halliday and Hasan’s categories of lexical cohesion. Hoey (1991) observes that Halliday and Hasan did not provide enough scope for lexical cohesion. Subsequently, in 1984

Hasan revised the categories to include *meronymy*, *hyponymy*, *synonymy*, *antonymy*, along with *repetition*. As mentioned earlier, Paltridge (2011) includes *repetition*, *synonymy*, *antonymy*, *hyponymy*, *meronymy*. For this study Paltridge and Hasan's categories of lexical cohesive devices have been applied where *collocation* is also an integral part of the categories.

#### IV. Data analysis

The following section presents details of the data analysis. Lexical cohesive devices present in Class III are presented first, followed by Classes IV and V.

Lesson-Title	Repetition	Synonymy	Antonymy	Hyponymy	Meronymy	Total
Talking Train	20	--	2	1	-	23
Swamy and the magic beans	28	-	2	2	-	32
I like it this way	22	-	-	-	-	22
The mouse and the pencil	21	-	-	-	-	39
The lion and the mouse	17	-	1	-	-	
The little red hen	50	-	-	-	-	50
Mary and the three bears	30	-	3	-	-	33
The animal school	20					20
Birbal outwits the cheat	11	2	-	-	-	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>03</b>	-	<b>232</b>



As is evident from the above table, *repetition* as a lexical cohesive device is found to be predominantly present in the textbook of Class III.

### Collocations-Class III

Title of the lesson	V + N	Adj + N	N + V	Adv + V	V+ Adv	V+ Adj	V+ Object	V+ Adv	N + N	V + Pr N	V+ Pre p	V + V	V+ Pre Ph rase	V+past Participle	Int + N	Total
Talk-ing Train	03			--			-				05					08
Swamy and the magic beans	05	06	02	01	03											17
I like it this way	-	-	03	-	03	-	-				04				01	11
The mouse and the pencil		10			02	02	11		12							37

The lion and the mouse	01		01		01	01	02		01	01	01	02				11
The little red hen	06	01	-	-	01	01	-									09
Mary and the three bears		-	-	-	01	-	04						01	03		09
The animal school	07	04	-	04							04					19
Birbal outwits the cheat		-	-		-	-	-									
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>03</b>		<b>73</b>

The above table indicates that samples of verb and noun and adjective and noun of collocations are found in most of the lessons. This is followed by samples of verb and adverb. However, in the entire textbook only one exercise is found that aims at providing practice to the learners in antonymy.

Write the opposites of the following words: (p 12)

1. yes x \_\_\_\_\_
2. small x \_\_\_\_\_
3. take x \_\_\_\_\_
4. inside x \_\_\_\_\_
5. right x \_\_\_\_\_
6. question x \_\_\_\_\_

Read the words given. Write their opposites.

words	opposites	Words	Opposites
big	small	Rich	Poor





The lion king	15	06						20		02				43
The miller, his son, and his donkey	18	04			01								01	23
Honesty	29	06												35
The unlucky face	06					05			02	08				
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>16</b>			<b>01</b>		<b>05</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>01</b>	<b>101</b>

Out of the four texts selected for analysis, sixty-eight samples of collocations of the verb and noun category have been found. A few examples of adjective and noun types have also been identified. In the entire textbook there is only exercise that aims at providing practice to the learners in the use of synonymy.

#### Exercise

Read the following paragraph. Replace the underlined words with the words from the story, which have the same meaning. (near synonymy)

Hirachand was a businessman. Once he was called to Akbar's court. Akbar ordered to kill him. Hirachand begged for his kindness. But Akbar would not hear. Poor Hirachand cried aloud. (sic.)

This section under *findings* presents an analysis of cohesive devices found in the textbook prescribed for study in Class V. As mentioned earlier, in order to ensure homogeneity in terms of the number of words across the three classes, only three texts from Class V were chosen.

### Class V

	Repetition	Synonymy	Antonymy	Hyponymy	Meronymy	Total
Let's be friends	26	-	1	1		<b>28</b>
Together we live	22	-	2	-	-	<b>24</b>
I was bad at cricket	<b>62</b>	-	<b>03</b>	<b>1</b>	-	<b>66</b>

Samples of cohesive devices found in the above table are similar to the ones identified in the other two books. Majority of samples were in the category of *repetition*.

### Collocations

Title of the lesson	V + N	Adj + N	N+ V	Adv + V	V+ Adv	N+ Adv	N+ N	Prep + N	V+ Pr N	V+ Prep	Adv + Adj	N+ Prep	Total
Let's be friends	11	12	04		02			06	05	09			49
Together we live	15	14		04	03	03	10						49
I was bad at cricket	26	05			07						03	14	55

<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>153</b>
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As illustrated in the table above, samples of verb and noun collocations have been found to be the largest in number compared to the other grammatical items found to be maximal in the texts. This is followed by collocations of adjective and noun. Texts for analysis of Class V indicated a few examples of collocations of noun and preposition, verb and adverb, and noun and noun. There was only one exercise for practice in collocations in the entire textbook.

### Exercise

Now, read the phrases given in the first column and tick in the appropriate box the words that will collocate or go together with each phrase.

phrases	sugar	salt	flowers	sticks	honey
a pinch of					
a bunch of					
a bundle of					
a lot of					
a spoonful of					

Based on the collocations you have made, frame sentences using them. One is done for you.  
a spoonful of honey: Radha takes a spoonful of honey every morning.

### V. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the lexical cohesive device *repetition* was extensively found in all the three textbooks of study—94% in Class III, 90% in Class IV, and 94% in Class V. *Repetition* shows the relation between sentences in a text. Following are some of the examples of *repetition* in the three textbooks (examples of *repetition* are in italics).

### **Class III**

*Swamy* saw a beautiful castle. He went inside. *Swamy* heard a voice. . . (“Swamy and the Magic Beans”)

The *pencil* saw a little *mouse*. The *mouse* was looking for something to eat. He found the *pencil*. (“The Mouse and the Pencil”)

Once upon a time, in a thick forest, a *lion* was sleeping under a tree. A cheerful *mouse* came there and saw the *lion*. (“The Lion and the Mouse”)

*Mary* was hungry. . . *Mary* gulped all the payasam. *Mary* was tired then. (“Mary and the Three Bears”)

### **Class IV**

*I* am the king of the forest. . . *I* was happy to have visitors as *I* was proud of my kingdom. But *I* was wrong. (“The Lion King”)

One day a *millar* and his *son* drive their *donkey* to market. . . . “Look at those fools! They are walking on foot when the *donkey* can carry one of them on his back.” This seems to make sense. So the *millar* lifts his *son* onto the *donkey* and marches along. (“The Miller, His Son, and His Donkey”)

There lived a merchant called *Hirachand* in Delhi. It was said that anyone who saw his face early in the morning would not eat anything that day. *Akbar* heard about *Hirachand*. *Akbar* wanted to know the truth. (“The Unlucky Face”)

While coming back from the school, *Chinna* went to *Chacha*’s shop. He wanted to buy some bells for his puppy. *Chacha* showed him some beautiful tinkling bells. *Chinna* liked them a lot. (Honesty)

**Class V**

Once upon a time, there was a small boy called *Hari*. . . He was strong and loved to tease all the boys and girls who went to school with him. . . *Hari* was angry. *Hari* saw a monster crab walking sideways out of the pool. (“Let’s be Friends”)

Everybody at Bojyanaik Thanda was good at cricket, except myself. *I* tried my best, but it was no good. Every time *I* tried to catch the *ball*, it seemed to escape from my hands. It was the same if *I* tried to *bat*. My *bat* seemed to miss, or the *ball* flew off the edge of it. (“I Was Bad at Cricket”)

*Gopanna* thought, ‘My people are too hungry and tired to go any further. . . I have to do something,’ he said to himself . . . *Gopanna* quickly collected four small rocks and placed them near one another in the middle of the town square. The town people peeped out of their windows and found *Gopanna* working busily. (“Together We Live”)

Examples from the three textbooks illustrate the use of repetition as the most common cohesive device; in some cases, the use of personal pronoun *I*, as the text was narrated in singular personal pronoun.

Similarly, samples of collocations from the three textbooks showed disproportionate distribution of types of collocations—the most frequently used ones being verb and noun collocations. Some examples follow (collocations are italicised):

**Class III:**

verb and noun

He went outside and *started climbing* the bean stalk.

The giant *crashed down* on the ground. (“Swamy and the Magic Beans”)

The mouse climbed onto the body of the lion and started playing. He *pulled the lion’s whiskers*. (“The Lion and the Mouse”)

“Who will *plant this grain of wheat?*” she asked (“The Little Red Hen”)

adjective and noun

He saw a *giantbeanstalk* in front of his house.

On the table there was a hen and a *goldenflute*. (“Swamy and the Magic Beans”)

#### **Class IV**

verb and noun

You, the civilized, *enteredmykingdom*. . . . You *cuttrees* for your selfish wants. (“The Lion King”)

One day a miller and his son *drive their donkey* to market. (The Miller, His Son, and His Donkey)

While coming back from the school, Chinnawent *to Chacha’s shop*. He wanted to *buy some bells* for his puppy. (“Honesty”)

#### **Class V**

verb and noun

He *was strong* and loved to tease all the boys and girls . . . So you can guess how all the children *hated him*. (Let’s be Friends)

Every time I tried to *catch the ball*, it seemed to *escape from my hands*. (I was Bad at Cricket)

Women went far in search of water and *returned with pots of water* balanced over their heads and some fodder for the cattle *tucked under their arms*. (Together We Live)

The present study reveals that there are significant differences in the distribution and frequency of cohesive devices. Further, it also reports the disparity in activities designed to promote the use of cohesive devices amongst the young learners as there is only one exercise in each of the books. Findings of the study corroborate with those by conducted by Talebinejad and Namdari (2011) who reported differences in the distribution cohesive devices in the textbooks prescribed for study for high school students in Iran. Similarly, in another study conducted to investigate the use of cohesive devices in EFL textbooks in Iran by Mansour Shabani et.al (2015) reported that grammatical and lexical cohesive devices ‘have not been

classified into a systematic order in the textbooks and thus these textbooks are in need of substantial revision’.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The present study aimed at investigating the occurrences of lexical cohesive devices in three textbooks prescribed for study by the government of Telangana, India. This was done by selecting reading texts that were similar in length and by applying the framework proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Paltridge (2011). Findings of the study revealed that amongst the lexical cohesive devices viz. *repetition*, *synonymy*, *antonymy*, *hyponymy*, and *meronymy*, *repetition* was the most frequently found lexical cohesive device across the textbooks. In terms of collocations in the books, it was revealed that verb and noun collocations were the most frequently used ones. Furthermore, the study found that out of a total number of eight lessons in each of the textbooks, only one exercise attempted to provide practice to learners in the use of lexical cohesive devices. The study has implications to the teachers to the materials writers. Teachers of English who transact the textbook in the classroom need to devise more exercises/activities to develop the young learners’ use of lexical cohesive devices. Materials writers need to take into consideration the uneven distribution of lexical cohesive devices and revise the materials. Moreover, they also need to provide more practice through activities for learners to use the lexical cohesive devices in their speech and writing.



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## **Comparative Content Analysis on Panchayati Raj System as a Topic of Class-VI Political Science Textbook between NEERT and SCERT, Odisha**

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### **Abstract**

In the present study an attempt is made to do the comparative content analysis on the Panchayati Raj System as a topic of class-VI political science textbook between NCERT & SCERT, Odisha. To meet the objective of this study data were collected from the Political science text book of NCERT & SCERT, Odisha by adopting qualitative content analysis method. It was found that 55% contents of NCERT textbook is not given in the textbook of SCERT, Odisha. In SCERT (75%) and NCERT (66%) of the illustrations with examples indicate gender neutrality and rest parts are biased in nature. NCERT contents emphasized to inculcate the all domains of cognitions knowledge (57%), understandings (28%), applications (14%), skills (14%) whereas SCERT, Odisha contents mostly promote the 94% knowledge aspect of the learners.

**Keywords:** content analysis, Panchayati Raj System, NCERT, SCERT, Odisha.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Text book is an essential guiding instructional tool for both teacher and students. It acts as informative as well as formative tool, it provide knowledge and simultaneously enable the development of competencies, skills and values. Textbook are good topical in structure using titles, sub titles, various task, questions, illustrations with examples and summaries of new concept. Content should be design in a way that encourage students to learn and complement burden of teacher's instructions. In class-VI students are at the age of 11 this age is called early adolescence, children start to feel & think in a more mature ways. In this stage political science is very necessary subject, it's the study of politics and the power of domestic, international and comparative

perspective. It entails political ideas, ideologies, institutions politics, process and behavior as well as group, class, government, diplomacy, law and war.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Panchayati Raj institutions plays a vital role in the development of elementary education. It's an important tool which cultivates the sense of responsibility and care among students and people's towards rural development. How to develop the rural areas? & How to sustain the rural development? Sustainable development of rural areas can be done only through healthy environment and quality education. Without quality education and healthy environment, the sustainable development of rural / village's area are impossible.

For quality education formations quality textbook is very essential. "Textbook is an basic teaching & learning materials which enables the students to acquire the necessary knowledge, develop critical, creative and critical thinking and develop their mental skill." (Poljak 1983) "Textbook is a textual teaching medium and part of educational tool that aids both efficiency of teaching as well as individual learning." (Kovac et al 2005 p. 20) .Textbook is an important educational tool that mediate knowledge to new generations (Pallo, 2006). HAM & HEINZ (2018) found that topic not included in textbook are rarely discuss in class, as teacher mostly use them as a guiding instructional tool. In the process of teaching textbook functions on both didactical as well as educational level (Jurman, 1999) .

As per the researcher literature review there is no study found about the analysis between NCERT & SCERT, Odisha on the context of Panchayati Raj System. So, it's a big research gap for the researcher and one of the core interest area to analysis between NCERT & SCERT, Odisha contents, cover on this topic, pattern of organizations, number of activity boxes and kinds of illustrations.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the concept of Panchayati Raj System as a topic of class-VI NCERT & SCERT. Odisha.
2. To compare and contrast the Panchayati Raj System as a topic of class-VI prescribed by NCERT & SCERT, Odisha.

3. To study the number and types of (local ex. & global ex.) Illustrations with examples with reference to gender biased and neutrality.
4. To study the way of organization (horizontally & vertically) pattern of the same content of class-VI NCERT & SCERT, Odisha.
5. To find out the number of activity boxes on the basis of domain of cognitions like (knowledge, understanding, applications, skills )in NCERT & SCERT, Odisha political science textbook in the content of Panchayati Raj System .

### **Research Questions**

1. How much level of intensive information given by both NCERT & SCERT, ODISHA?
2. In which way the NCERT & SCERT ODISHA are presenting the same topic?
3. What is the pattern of organization (horizontally& vertically) of the contents?
4. How many activity boxes (think & answer boxes, check your progress boxes & activity boxes) presented by both NCERT & SCERT ODISHA to make students more. Creative?
5. What kind of pictorials or illustration are given by both NCERT & SCERT ODISHA (local example & global example) for better comprehensions power of students?

### **Conceptual Definition of the Key Terms –**

**CONTENT ANALYSIS:** - It's a qualitative research tool or technique that is used widely to Analysis the content and it's features.It's an approach used to quantify qualitative information by sorting data and comparing different pieces of information to summarize it into useful information.

**PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM:** -Panchayati Raj system as a system of government which consists of 3 levels. It's a form of government at village level where each village is responsible for its own activities.

**SCERT:** -It stands for **STATE COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING**.Being an autonomous body of the government of India, it deals with school education and academic activities like curriculum formulation, textbook preparation, teacher's handbook & teacher training Analysis.

**NCERT:-*NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING***, it's an autonomous organization set up in 1961 by the government of India to assist and advise the central and state government on policies & Programme for qualitative improvement in school education.

### **Limitation of the Study**

1. The present study will be confined to the Analysis of the topic of Panchayati Raj system class-VI social & political life -1 Text Book of NCERT & SCERT, ODISHA Political science textbook –*Rajaniti Vigyana*.
2. Further content Analysis will be confined the analysis of :
  - Intensive level of the Content present.
  - Pattern of organization of same content.
  - Types & number of illustrations & examples given for the same topic.
  - Kinds of activity boxes on the basis of cognitive domain.

### **Research Method**

In the present study researcher used the ***CONTENT ANALYSIS*** method to analyze the content of Panchayati Raj System as a topic given in NCERT & SCERT, Odisha.

### **Population**

Standard-VI Political Science textbook NCERT & SCERT, ODISHA books namely "***social & political life-1***" and SCERT Odisha board namely "***Rajaniti Vigyana***" constitute the population.

### **Sample**

Panchayati Raj system is one of the topic taken as sample in the present study. ***Purposive sampling technique*** will be employed to select this topic.

### **Tools & Techniques**

Collection of data is very important in every research study. Tools are the instrument through which the information and data are collected and techniques are the procedure and process through which tools are used for data collection. As the present study is a qualitative content

analysis research, no specified developed tool has been used to analyze the content. The researcher has simply used *document analysis* method and *logical method* to analyze the content of Panchayati Raj System of NCERT and SCERT, Odisha.

### Statistical Techniques Used

*Simple percentage* technique has been used to analyze the quantitative data like compare & contrast the same topic, study the number and types of examples, way of organizing the content, number of activity boxes with reference to gender bias and neutrality.

### Procedure of Content Analysis

From the review related literature researcher find out multiple research work on content analysis between two countries syllabus, two states boards syllabus on the subject of Mathematics, English on various dimensions but there is less research work conducted on the subject of political science content Panchayati Raj System (PRS) which is the backbone of the Indian Political System.

So, first of all researcher selected the two books of political science prescribed by NCERT & SCERT, Odisha class-VI, secondly researcher studied both the books content properly in an in-depth way with complete understanding, thirdly researcher found Panchayati Raj System present in both the books in a different pattern. According to the objectives researcher analyzed the same content one by one, by the help of Content Analysis method by using simple percentage.

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION–

#### *DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS ABOUT TEXT BOOK*

NCERT (Delhi)	SCERT(Odisha)
Book name-	<b>Book Name-</b>
political life -1	<b>RajanitiVigyana</b>
Class – VI	<b>Class – VI</b>

Total no. of pages – 84	Total no. of pages – 89
Content page – 03	Content page – 04

## OBJECTIVE WISE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRITATIONS

**1<sup>st</sup> objective is to study the concept of panchayati Raj System in NCERT & SCERT, Odisha.**

### Concept present in NCERT:

In this chapter NCERT explain about *Gram Sabha 1<sup>st</sup>*.

**GRAM SABHA:** Gram Sabha meeting is begins from Sarpanch who is the head of the Panchayat & member of the panchayat is called Sarpanch. After discussing about the meaning of Gram Sabha this book moves towards the **HARDAR VILLAGE** panchayats water & water shortage problems. In HARDAR village panchayat one of the villager's called Suru suggest overhead tank to increase the supply of water. Tijiya another villagers suggest overhead tank is not enough to supply water every time so we need something more permanent as ground water. Anwar is another villager tells about water conservations that he had once seen in the state of Maharashtra, it's called water shade development & he heard that government gives money for this work.

Another local realistic discussion in this book is the BPL list prepared by HARDAR village Panchayat, here Natwar is one of the villager who was richest having vehicles' but how he can be listed as BPL, Birju is the land lords of that village still he is also listed, but BPL scheme is mean for poor's. Om Prakash is a land less labour who was not listed. Villagers are whispering with each other then Sarpanch of that Villager notice all the villagers "ask if anyone has to say anything" in this meeting Saroj one villager stand & says that Om Prakash name should be BPL list, then



Sarpanch ask to the person who did Survey, Sarpanch gives instructions to check Om Prakash eligibility criteria and listed out his name on the BPL list.

**GRAM PANCHAYAT-**From the discussion of HARDAR gram panchayat it will clear that Gram Panchayat have to be approved by Gram Sabha. Village panchayat problem can be solved by Sarpanch, ward Member, Secretary.

**THREE LEVELS OF PANCHAYAT-** By providing a realistic examples of HARDAR Villagers problem on water & BPL list and their solutions,students are able to recognize the importance of participations of peoples & their own government. Panchs& gram panchayat answerable to the gram Sabha because member of gram Sabha elected them to the gram panchayat.Gram Panchayat extends two other levels which is called Jnpad Panchayat or the panchayat samite, under this so many gram panchayats are there. Above the Panchayat samite District Panchayat or Zilla Parishad is present.Zilla Parishad actually makes developmental plan for district level, with the help of Panchayat Samiti & it also regulate the, moneydistribution among all gram panchayat.

### **Concept Present in *SCERT,Odisha Book***

SCERT book introduce the Panchayati Raj System from a dialogical conversation'sbetween two characterSunita & Prakash.

### **Summary of the Dialogue**

One day Prakash enter in to the Sunita's house with some paper in his hand, at that time surprisingly,Sunita ask to the Prakash "why you are holding this pieces of papers?" Prakash said today our village is going to elect its Sarpanch, Ward Members,Samiti Sabhya & Zilla Parishad Sabhya. Prakash told to the Sunita whatever the list of membership present in my hand all can give vote, itsyour responsibility you have to take your family members to the vote center. Then Sunita asks to the Prakash what will happen when everyone got vote?

After this dialogical discussion SCERT introduce the topic of Local Self Government. In this part this book describes about the central and state government, itsheadquarters, number of

villages and town present in India. It finally How Local Self Government is important for Democratic country like India.

### **Panchayati Raj System**

In this paragraph SCERT book describe the historical origin & establishment things system for the 1<sup>st</sup> time and its decentralization process in PanchayatLevel, Block Level & Zilla Parishad.

### **Division of Panchayati Raj System- in SCERT**

#### **Rural level**

- Village/panchayat
- Panchayat Samiti
- Zilla Parishad

#### **Composition of Gram Panchayat: In this paragraph SCERT mentioned –**

1. How many population required for one gram panchayat?
2. How many ward members are needed for one Gram Panchayat?
3. Reservations for STs& SCs & Procedure and service period of Sarpanch & Ward Members.

#### **Functions Of Gram Panchayat:-1.Compulsory functions 2. Optional Function's**

#### **Gram Sabha:**In this paragraph SCERT mentioned

- Eligibility of voting Gram Sabha & Gram Panchayat.
- Composition of the Gram Sabha & its head.
- Functions, roles & responsibilities of Gram Sabha.
- How many times yearly meetings are conducted in a year?

#### **Taxes Collections of Gram Panchayat**

<b>Own grants</b>	<b>Government Grants</b>  Given by government funds.
Market	
Pond	
Rickshaw puller	
Chariots'	
Vehicle's	

### **Panchayat Samiti & Zilla Parishad**

SCERT descriptively mentioned-

- Concept & origination of Panchayat samiti & Zilla Parishad
- Functions of Panchayat Samiti & Zilla Parishad.
- Taxes collections

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Objective-2 Comparison of the content P. R. S. as a topic prescribed by NCERT &amp; SCERT, Odisha Political science Text Book.</b></li> </ul> |
|---|

### **SIMILAR CONCEPT PRESENT IN NCERT & SCERT TEXTBOOK**

<b>NCERT CONTENT</b>	<b>SCERT CONTENT</b>
Panchayati Raj system	Panchayati Raj system
Gram Sabha	Gram Sabha
Gram Panchayat	Gram Panchayat
Panchayat Samiti	Panchayat Samiti

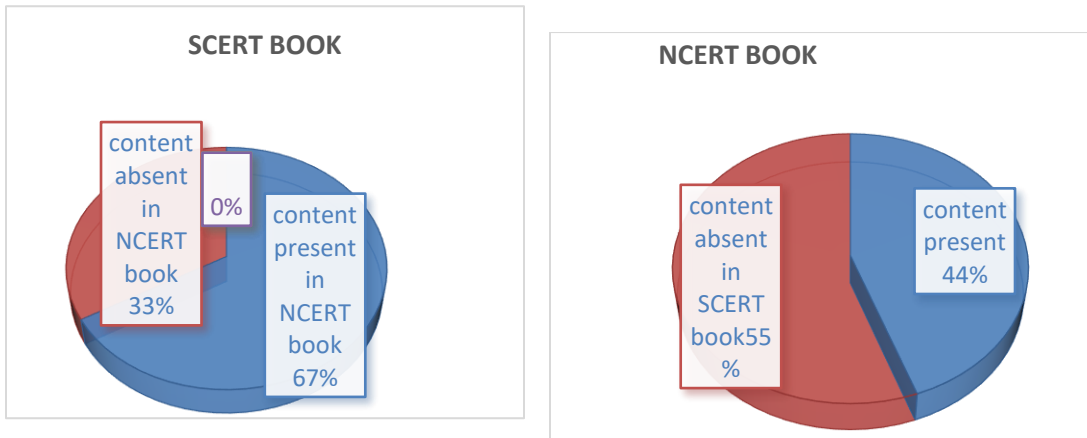
Zilla Parishad	Zilla Parishad
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**DISIMILIAR CONTENT PRESENT IN NCERT & SCERT, Odisha**

<b>NCERT CONTENTS</b>	<b>SCERT CONTENTS</b>
Realistic story of HARDAR village panchayat regarding to solve the panchayats problem .	Dialogical conversation's between Sunita & Prakash about Panchayat Elections.
Provision <i>Nirmla Gram Purashkar</i> for village Pancha in Maharashtra state.	No such concept is given in this book.
No such concept is given.	Concept of Local Self Government.
Gram Panchayats Tax collection process given.	Tax collections process of Gram panchayat, Panchayat Samiti & Zilla Parishad.
Sarpanch roles is give n with people's active participations.	Compositions, Roles , Responsibilities & developmental work of Rural Local Self Government.(P.R.S)

Concepts are present with realistic examples with knowledge construction by student themselves.	All kinds of information are directly given without any real example, knowledge aspects are mostly emphasized.
Questions present in Activity boxes are mostly understanding, applications & skill based.	Questions are mostly prepared to checked the knowledge aspect of student.

Figure- 4.1 figure-4.2



From the above comparative pie chart figure number 4.1. & 4.2. depict that the percentage of similar and dis-similar contents present in the political science text book of class-VI, NCERT & SCERT, Odhisha. From the above figure Researcher conclude that -

- 55% contents of NCERT text-book is not given by the text book of SCERT, Odisha.
- SCERT book's 67% contents are clearly & systematically present in NCERT, Delhi.
- 44% contents of SCERT & NCERT text-book of political science are similar.
- 33% contents of SCERT textbook is not clearly given in the book of NCERT.

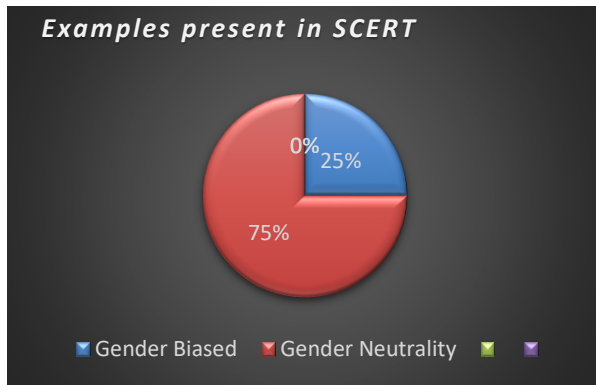
**Objective-3 To study the number and types (local ex. & Global ex.) of illustrations with examples with reference to gender bias and neutrality.**

[Table 4.4.]

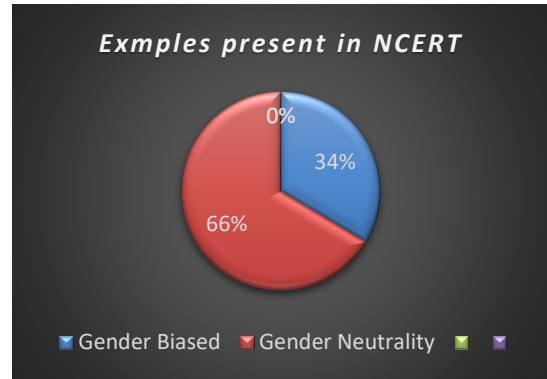
NCERT concept on Gender Bias[*]& Gender Neutrality[#]	Concept SCERT on Gender Bias[*] & Gender Neutrality[#]
[*] While introducing the HARDAR village panchayats , only <b>6 male</b> name of that villagers are mentioned.	[#] while SCERT introducing P.R.S. represent a dialogical conversations between one boy child and one girl child.
[#] In the paragraph of Gram Sabha two meetings pictures are pasted where both male & female are equally participated.	[#] <b>while</b> introducing the concept of Local Self Government this book paste a picture of Gram Sabha where number of male & female are equally participated.

<p>[#] paragraph of Gram Panchayat present a picture the two village Panchs one is male &amp; another is female who were awarded the Nirmala Gram Purashkar in 2005 for their excellent work for gram panchayat.</p>	<p>Under the paragraph of the functions of Gram panchayat Two pictures are pasted –</p> <p>1. [#] Picture of public library where both boys &amp; girls are allowed.2. [*] pictures of Fisheries in village pond where males are there.</p>
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In Table 4.2. To increase the clarity of the above table’s data Researcher symbolized gender biased in to [\*] & gender neutrality into [#]



[Figure 4.3.]



[Figure 4.4.]

After analyzing the number and types of illustrations with examples with reference to gender bias and neutrality. from the above table 4.3.& figure 4.3. & 4.4. Researcher summarize that -

- In SCERT, Odisha text-book 75% pictures illustration with example indicate the gender neutrality , that means both genders participation is equally important for village panchayats development.

- 25% examples illustrated gender biased. It's reflect participations of male member is more important for development.
- In NCERT text-book 66% examples & pictures support the gender neutrality. This text-book reflect women-empowerment, equal respect with full participations.
- 34% pictures are gender biased in nature.

**Objective-4 To study the way of organization [Horizontally {#} & Vertically {\*}] pattern of the same content of class-VI Text-book of NCERT & SCERT, Odisha.**

Same content	NCERT	SCERT
Concept of Panchayati Raj	Indirectly with a realistic example this concept mentioned. {*}	Directly through dialogue or conversations concept is introduced. {#}
Gram Sabha	In depth discussion with understanding and application level of content is present. {*}	A brief information is present with emphasizing the aspect of knowledge domain. {#}
Gram Panchayat	Present the concept with a local example, for promoting understanding aspect of students. {*}	Lots of information's present directly in this book like functions, compositions, tax collections etc. {*}



**[Table4.5.]**

**In table 4.5. In order to make a clear cut idea regarding horizontal and vertical content Researcher symbolized horizontal content in to [#] & vertical content in to [\*]**

Panchayat Samiti	Less memorizing contents are present with connecting to the real environment, it will improve the student understanding.	Intensive knowledge based information's are directly present without any example. Student only memorize the functions, compositions, funding etc without understanding.
Zilla Parishad	One interactive session between school H.M & head of the Zilla Parishad. There is no any functions, roles, responsibilities, tax collections are present.	No such interactive session. Much more information is given regarding the composition, functions , roles & responsibilities etc.

After the analysis & interpretations of the way of organization and the pattern of the same content Panchayati Raj System as a topic of political science text book class-VI NCERT & SCERT, Odisha .Investigators interpret that from the table 4.5. –

- While introducing the concept of PRS NCERT text-books whole contents are indirectly provided with realistic examples.
- In NCERT Text-book in-depth discussion of the content is given with full of understanding, especially it focus towards the development of the applicability power of students.

- Contents present in NCERT textbook is mostly emphasized to promote the learners all four domains of knowledge in an equal or balance manner.
- NCERT textbook highly demanded for an interactive session with H.M and head of Zilla Parishad to inculcate the practical knowledge among the students.
- SCERT, Odisha text-book provide all kind of information's directly without any local examples, its makes the learner bored and passive.
- In SCERT text-book there is least amount of quality contents are given, no facility for any interactive session & learner are unaware about their constructions of knowledge.

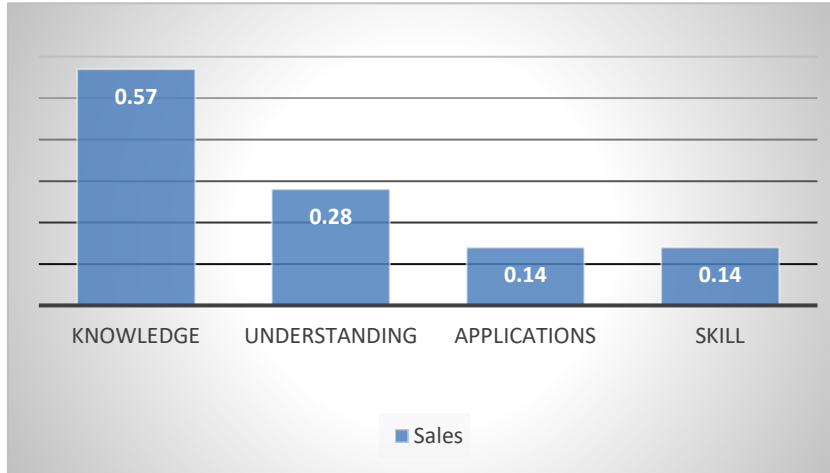
**Objective-5 To find out the number of Activity boxes on the basis of domain (knowledge, understanding, applications & skills) present in the political science book of NCERT & SCERT, Odisha.**

**[Table 4.6.]**

**Boxes Activity present in NCERT(out of seven)**

<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Understanding</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Skill</b>
<b>04 (57%)</b>	<b>02(28%)</b>	<b>01(14%)</b>	<b>01(14%)</b>

**[Figure 4.5.]**



By using the simple percentage method researcher

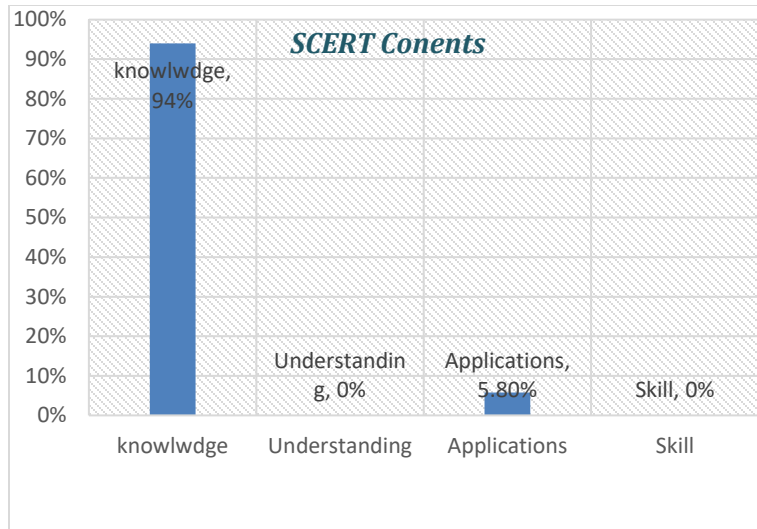
analyze the number of activity boxes present in the concept of PRS. After the end of the study researcher conclude that from the table 4.6. and figure 4.5.-

- NCERT, Delhi text-book of political science give equal emphasis on all the domain of knowledge. 57% of the content present in this textbook mainly framed to check the knowledge aspect of the learners. 28% of the contents are tried to enhance the understanding power of the learner. 14% contents are present to evaluate the learner application power, rest 14% of the contents are tried to make the the learner skillful.

**[Table 4.7.]**

**Activity Boxes present in SCERT, Odisha. (out of seventeen boxes)**

Knowledge	Understanding	Application	Skill
16(94%)	00(0%)	01(5.8%)	00(0%)



**[Figure 4.6.]**

After analyzing the activity boxes present in SCERT Book, Odisha Researcher find out that 94% boxes are tried to check the knowledge aspect of student, it mostly emphasize to make the learner knowledgeable with lots of information by asking questions on what, who & when. 6% boxes are framed to check the applicability power of student. There is no such activity boxes to check the Understanding and Skill aspect of learner of class-VI.

### Summary

Textbook plays an important role in bringing about continuity, orderliness, system and objectivity in teacher and student activity. Sixth class students generally are of 10 to 11 years old. This is the transitional period between childhood and adolescent period. Textbook is the most authentic medium of socialization at this stage for children. Children of this age have the common tendency to accept and utilize the ideas and values incorporated in them through teachers or textbooks. At this stage they construct the concept of gender and social roles in such way as society teaches them. They develop either positive or negative attitude towards male and female as the content of textbook teach to develop in them.

Researcher present study emphasize the concept of panchayati raj system is a topic of political science text book, it work for the rural development and protect of environment. This Panchayati Raj Institution plays avital role in development of elementary education, which is an important tool to cultivate a scene of responsibility & care among students, how to develop the rural area and

how to sustain the rural development? Without quality education and healthy environment sustainable development is impossible.

### **Findings**

After the end of analysis of the topic Panchayati Raj System present in the both the boards namely NCERT, Delhi & SCERT, Odisha researcher conclude some findings:

- I. In NCERT Book Q.R code is available for e-learning materials, but in SCERT, Odisha there is no such e-learning study materials facility available.
- II. It is found that SCERT, Odisha books content is more quantitative in nature, whereas NCERT, Delhi books material is completely qualitative in nature.
- III. The text book of SCERT, Odisha provide direct information, without any realistic example whereas, textbook of NCERT, Delhi book present its content with realistic example by some interactive session with H.M & Head of Zilla Parishad.
- IV. In NCERT Book, 57% of the boxes are provided to assess knowledge aspect of the learner, 28% of the boxes are provided for understanding aspect, 14% of the boxes are framed to enhance the applicability level & rest 14 % boxes are tried to make the learner skilful.
- V. In SCERT Book- 94% boxes are given to enhance the knowledge aspect of learner, 6% boxes tried to promote application power of the learner. There is no questions on understanding and skill aspect.
- VI. NCERT, Delhi textbook of political science give equal emphasis on all the domain of knowledge. 57% of the content present in this textbook mainly framed to check the knowledge aspect of the learners. 28% of the contents are tried to enhance the understanding power of the learner. 14% contents are present to evaluate the learner application power, rest 14% of the contents are tried to make the learner skilful.
- VII. In NCERT Text-book in-depth discussion of the content is given with full of understanding, especially it focus towards the development of the applicability power of students.
- VIII. In NCERT Text-book in-depth discussion of the content is given with full of understanding, especially it focus towards the development of the applicability power of students.

- IX. Contents present in NCERT textbook is mostly emphasized to promote the learners all four domains of knowledge in an equal or balance manner.
- X. NCERT textbook highly demanded for an interactive session with H.M and head of Zilla Parishad to inculcate the practical knowledge among the students.
- XI. In SCERT, Odisha text-book 75% pictures illustration with example indicate the gender neutrality , that means both genders participation is equally important for village panchayats development.
- XII. 25% examples illustrated gender biased. It's reflect participations of male member is more important for rural development.
- XIII. In NCERT text-book 66% examples & pictures support the gender neutrality. This text-book reflect women-empowerment & equal respect with full participations.

#### **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS-**

- I. This study will be helpful for the curriculum constructor because while they are preparing new curriculum they should emphasized quality contents with realistic examples so, that it will enhance the more knowledge about the topic.
- II. This study will be helpful for the teacher as well as the learner,because from the previous research study researcher found that teacher strictly followed the textbook while they delivering the content, as a tool.When the textbook level of information is qualitative, informative & intensive as per the student comprehension level & interest so that teacher also teach accordingly inside the classroom with the help of their guiding tool. So, it will ultimately benefited for the student's.
- III. Present study will be helpful societal member or society, because local self-government is the foundations of the Indian politics , when the people are aware about their roles, responsibility & functions of P.R.S., especially towards education, health, agricultural development, men, women & children development & their participations , so that it will empower all the people who involve in decentralizations planning.

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## **Dalits and Higher Education in India**

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### **Abstract**

Ever since Indian higher education system treats education as a public good inevitably then it belongs to social sector. For years together it has been trying its level best to uplift the weaker section of our Indian society. "Higher the educational profile, higher the upward mobility," can be considered as a theory. If dalits are provided good education, then education itself may lead to upward mobility. Education can serve as catalyst for upward mobility. The untouchables who number more than 220 million known as dalits have been systematically neglected and ostracized in our Indian society for many years. The dalits still suffer the stigma of untouchability's. They are socially frail, economically needy and politically powerless. Many dalits are still illiterates. The present paper would be an attempt to evaluate the level of education of dalit in India modern education has brought the changes in the social and economic life of the Scheduled Caste community in India. But, all the castes included under the category of Scheduled Caste and women of Scheduled Caste category are not incorporated in the mainstream of higher education. Thus present study is about the Scheduled Caste and higher education. It mainly studies higher education scenario among Scheduled Caste, constitutional provisions for the educational development of Scheduled Caste and factors influencing higher education status among Scheduled Caste. The castes included under Scheduled Caste category are characterized by extreme social, educational and economic backwardness occurred due to traditional practice of untouchability. Hence certain provisions for the educational and economic development of scheduled castes were incorporated in the Constitution of India which is discussed in the present paper. The data about literacy and higher education enrolment among Scheduled Caste students in India is showing positive trend but the increase in Gross Enrolment Ratio is gradual. As well as it can be reflected that enrolment in the higher education is lower compare to primary and secondary level of education. The factor influencing higher



education includes adverse economic condition, family background, discrimination in higher education, Language, government provisions, or facility, reservation policy, privatization, gender disparities, syllabus/curriculum etc. which discussed in detail in the present paper.

**Keywords:** *Scheduled Caste, Higher Education, Constitutional Provisions, Gross Enrolment Ratio*

## **Introduction**

Introduction Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been identified as the two most backward groups of Indian Society. They include all such castes, races or tribes, which have been declared as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes by the Constitution of India under the provisions of Article 341 and 342 of the Constitution of India. Scheduled Castes generally represent those communities, which have suffered from the stigma of untouchability in one form or the other. Scheduled Tribes are generally those who have been living in seclusion in hills and forests, more or less untouched by modern civilization and development. Scheduled Castes constitute about 15 per cent of the total population of the country while Scheduled Tribes constitute about 7.5 per cent of the total Indian Population. Thus, together, these groups constitute a little more than one fifth of the total population of the country.

This is true for almost every institution in India. On a daily basis, students from SC, ST, and OBC communities face discrimination in these educational places on various levels. The caste and class hegemony in the educational, political, social, and economical spaces by the upper-caste is prominent across the country. Even after controlling most of the spaces and resources of the country, this Supreme Court statement about reservation is quite funny and ironical. From an undergraduate student in Delhi University to a Masters student at IIT Gandhinagar, my experience has taught me that these educational spaces are casteist and elitist, and are controlled by upper castes. These places are more casteist than my village in Bihar.

## **SC, ST, OBC data from educational institutions**

Even 12 years after the implementation of OBC reservation for faculty members, there is not a single professor from the community in most of the 40 central universities in India. According

to data presented by Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank in the Rajya Sabha, in Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru, only 2.1 per cent candidates admitted to the PhD programmes were from the ST category, 9 per cent were from SC and 8 per cent from OBC categories from 2016-2020. And it was the same for integrated PhD programmes: 9 per cent of the total admitted candidates were from SC category, 1.2 per cent from ST and 5 per cent from OBC categories.

In the 17 Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), 1.7 per cent of total PhD candidates were from ST category, 9 per cent from SC and 27.4 per cent from OBC. These trends are similar or even worse in other institutes like NITs and IISERs. Even after getting admission, it is challenging for students from the reserved category to continue the course. If you see the dropout trends from these premium educational institutions, the majority of the students will be from SC/ST/OBC categories. In 2019, Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, in a written reply to the Parliament, said that 48 per cent of students dropping out of the IITs and over 62.6 per cent from IIMs are from the SC, ST and OBC categories. If we look at faculty data in these institutions from reserved categories, the representation is minuscule. According to data by the education ministry, presented in 2019 in Lok Sabha, out of 6,043 faculty members at the 23 IITs, 149 were SCs and 21 were STs — they made up less than 3 per cent of the total number of faculty members.

**Most of the IITs do not have a single professor from the SC/ST community.**

The educational system is captured by the upper caste in such a way that it is very difficult for people from reserved categories to invade and make their space. Editors and series editors of reputed journals and big publishing houses, professors, vice-chancellors, director, deans, non-teaching staff — the gatekeepers of the caste system are everywhere to stop the growth of SCs, STs and OBCs. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of SC and ST students at the undergraduate level, which stands at 23% and 17.2% respectively, is unsatisfactory — both numbers being short of the national average of 26.3%. These undergraduates are aiming to cross the seas to develop their skills and be part of new ideas, research and innovation. If every deserving child gets the desired support, imagine how much talent and energy will be added to the engine of India's new growth story. This cannot happen through people's charity. It is the duty of the State.

## Conclusion

The exclusionary policies in these educational spaces lead the reserved category students to drop out of the educational institutes. The discrimination is so systemic and institutionalised that it is tough for students from reserved categories to survive and continue their academic passion. For instance, if look at subaltern studies, most of the academicians who have made a niche for themselves are upper caste. If we analyse these things through the lens of Edward W. Said's seminal book *Orientalism*, we can understand more about the discourse relating to upper caste vs the other caste in India, just like the debate of elite vs non-elite and occidental's vs orientals

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## Interview with Mr. Dhira Mallick

### About Mr. Dhira Mallick:

Mr. Dhira Mallick is a well-known and much-revered personality in the world of Odia theatre and cinema. He is the founder and the secretary of SatabdiraKalakar theatre group. He holds a degree in Drama from Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Bhubaneswar. Mr. Mallick has been acting in local theatrical productions since childhood and began directing stage plays in the 1970s. He is known for his direction in the plays “Juga Jyoti” (1979), “Arun RangarPakhi” (1980), and “Avatar” (1986). Mr. Mallick is the author of six Odia plays. Besides stage plays, he has also directed many screenplays and documentaries for Odia television. In fact, he has also acted in various TV serials and feature films. He is the receiver of numerous national and international awards and has brought laurels for the Odia theatre industry globally and continues to do so.



### About the interviewer:

Ankit Rath received his MA in English Literature degree in 2022 from The English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Hyderabad. He is an amateur researcher in the fields of ritual and performance studies with a specific focus on Odia culture. His current work revolves around the tradition of Danda Nata in the Ganjam district of Odisha. He has been offered a place for a DPhil in Theology and Religion for the 2023-24 session at the University of Oxford, UK, to further his studies.

### About the interview:

This interview was taken on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2023, in the office of SatabdiraKalakar, Bhubaneswar. The aim of the interview was to get a perspective on the situation of Odia theatre from a director’s point of view, with a specific focus on the Odia tradition of the absurd and J.P. Das’s play, “ଅସଂଗତନାଟକ” (Odia for “AsangataNataka”; Tr. “Absurd Play”).

### **Interview:**

**AR:** Hello, sir. Thank you for this opportunity to interview you today. I have a few questions for you which I will be putting to you regarding your life, your career in the line of drama, and your direction of J.P. Das’s play, “ଅସଂଗତନାଟକ” (Odia for “AsangataNataka”; Tr. “Absurd Play”).

Your contributions to the field of Odia theatre and cinema have been unparalleled, as many may know. Could you please tell us how you started in this line of work?

**DM:** Actually, what we call ‘drama’ in theatre terms - be it the skill of acting, direction, set design, or anything else – is an inherently human quality. More so in the case of acting than anything else. Such skills are honed in many different ways, from daily activities like interacting with people, or going to acting schools. They all stand a good chance of teaching one how to ‘act’.

When I was nine years old, in my 4<sup>th</sup> standard in school, the local merchant union organized a play in the nearby market. For that, they required a child artist to play the role of ‘Chota Raju’ in a play named “କଂସାକବାଟ” (Odia for “Kansa Kabata). I got to play that role and I received a good bit of appreciation for it, along with a cash award of ₹2. I continued to participate in dramas during my time in high school after that. The teachers who directed the plays had a fair knowledge of *The Natyasastra* and other similar treatises that were commonly available. This combined with their experience as teachers led them to be good directors.

Then I moved on to college. I studied at the Bhadrakh College, Odisha, and served when I directed three plays: “ବୈରାଗିରସଂସାର” (Odia for “BairagiraSansara”), “ମୁଁଶୈତାନ୍ନହୁଛି” (Odia for “Mu ShaitaanKahuchi”), “ଯାପରେକ’ଣ?” (Odia for “Yaa Pare Kana?”).

I joined the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and moved to Bhubaneswar in 1973. During my time there, Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Bhubaneswar, started its Department of Drama. Although the institution was founded in 1964, it only focused on music, song, and dance in the beginning. I did my Diploma in Drama there from 1975 through 1977, as I served at the RBI, with special permission. Then I founded SatabdiraKalakkar in the year 1976. The first play we staged was “ଆଜିରରାଜା” (Odia for “Ajira Raja”), which I had directed. Then we staged Ramakant Banerjee’s plays “ନିଷ୍ଠରଂଗ” (Odia for “Nistaranga”), “କୁହୁଡ଼ି” (Odia for “Kuhudi”), and “ନିର୍ଲିପ୍ତ” (Odia for “Nirlipta”), who also happened to be one of our coordinators. We then also staged the works of other playwrights such as Sudhakar Nanda’s “ଅଶ୍ରୁମ୍ୟାଅନାଳ” (Odia for “AshrumyaAnala”).

When we founded SatabdiraKalakar, there were barely any similar organizations in existence. Only a handful of what I would call ‘group theatres’ existed, including SanketaSrujani and United Artist, in both Bhubaneswar and throughout Odisha.

We began staging plays on a regular basis from 1976 onwards in Rabindra Mandap. In 1980, we began our own theatre festival and we began staging five plays annually instead of the usual two or three. The tickets for the front row seats were ₹5 and ₹10 for front row and balcony seats respectively, whereas originally, we only charged ₹2 and ₹5 for the said seats. This continued till the year 1986.

People used to attend the festivals in large numbers. Since we had employees of the offices of the RBI, SBI, IDC, and the Secretariat of Odisha as members, we used to allot each member a certain ticket quota to push-sale. Say, for example, a member is allotted 20 tickets for the front row, and they had to pay us ₹200 no matter the sale of said tickets. This forced the person to sell the tickets by hook or by crook. So, we used to get our audience, as somebody who pays for the ticket would definitely want to see what he/she paid for. Whether they like it or not, people would talk about it, and give us further publicity. That is how it was then. The rent for Rabindra Mandap was ₹80 at the time and that for lights and sounds, which we had to arrange separately, was ₹120.

In the year 1987, we organized our first-ever Children’s Theatre Festival. We also organized a Children’s Theatre Workshop along with that, for we realised that just as in the fields of

education, politics, science, or even art, in this field too, the children are our future. We used to teach them the basics of writing a play, staging a play, stage design, costume design, etc. as part of the workshops. The annual Children's Theatre Festival continued till 1997.

In 1998, we organized a national theatre festival as we felt a need to have a glimpse into the theatrical works that existed throughout the country. Not even the Government of Odisha had organized anything of this scale before, let alone any other institutions. So began our annual tradition of a national multilingual drama festival called the Kalinga NatyaMahotsava (KNM). Plays from various languages, including Hindi, Bangla, Assamese, Telugu, Tamil, and Gujarati, were staged. The 25<sup>th</sup> rendition of KNM was organized this February. It was held for a span of five days from 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> February, unlike the week-long festivals that preceded it. This was because Rabindra Mandap no longer allows anyone to book the venue for more than five days at a stretch.

This year, apart from Odia plays, we staged a Bengali play and a Hindi play from Ujjain, and we successfully wrapped it up. In this way, we ourselves, the artists, the audience, the playwrights, and everyone else gets the chance to get a view of what is happening nationally in the field of theatre and how they continue to develop. We believe that it also allows for cultural exchange to take place. People come here and observe our monuments, lifestyle, and culture; in exchange, we watch their plays. Thus, I feel that KNM is a successful venture and will continue to be so in the coming days.

**AR:** Thank you for such an eloquent account of your journey in the world of theatre so far, sir. I would now like to ask you about your views on the number of playwrights in Odisha being much smaller than that of poets, novelists, and short story writers. Please provide us with your valuable comments on the situation.

**DM:** You see, in recent years, there has occurred a fusion between literature and drama. Drama has traditionally been the form of art that works towards the promotion of a language, more so than folk songs or dances, or even classical forms. It is so because drama form has its roots in the five Vedas. We already begin to draw a relationship between literature and drama here.

Literature is always present in written form which limits its consumption. When the same thing is staged, more people may watch it at the same time.



We stage many Odia plays out of Odisha. We recently staged a play in Kanpur. In Vijaywada too, we staged a play called “ଦଶବତାର” (Odia for “Dashavatara”). We then did more plays in Pondicherry. Thus, through the dramatic medium, we attempt to facilitate a better understanding of the Odia language.

We have adapted the stories of Manoj Das, Bibhuti Patnaik, Fakir Mohan, Gourahari Das, and many others for the stage. In this year’s festival, we presented a dramatic rendition of Gourahari Das’s “ହାରମୋନିୟମ୍” (Odia for “Harmonium”). I, therefore, think we have reached a stage where Odia literature and drama have become a part of the same whole. What starts out first as a part of the literary sphere, through such adaptations, takes the form of drama and gets further exposure. While a few people may read a book, a significantly larger number of them would watch a stage play of the same. To add, the more times a play is staged, the bigger the audience. Like, if, say, we stage a play once in Bhubaneswar, once in Berhampur, then in Balasore, and then in Rourkela, the collective number of the audience comes up to be very high. It also ends up instilling a sense of literature in the people who would otherwise remain unaware.

We at SatabdiraKalakar have staged many plays outside of Odisha as part of many festivals including Bharat Ranga Mahotsava organized by the National School of Drama in Delhi, EZCC in Kolkata, and SCZCC in Vishakhapatnam. We have staged Odia plays throughout India. As I mentioned, we adapt short stories of writers like Rabi Satpathy and Sahadev Sahoo for the stage. So, unlike the time when literature and drama existed as their own separate streams in Odisha, now the two are bound to be intermingled. This works for the benefit of both Odia literature and drama on a national scale.

**AR:** Thank you so much for these valuable insights on the situation of Odia literature and Odia theatre. As you have mentioned, we find an overlap between the two in recent years. Therefore, it is not uncalled for to see Western influences making their way into the Odia cultural formations. The tradition of the Absurd, in particular, has successfully taken root, among other notable influences, and has resulted in Manoranjan Das’s “ଅରଣ୍ୟଫସଲ” (Odia for “AranyaFasala”: Tr.: “The Wild Harvest”) and J.P. Das’s “ଅସଂଗତନାଟକ”. What are your views on this matter?

**DM:** Let me discuss the matter in brief. The period between the 1940s to 1970s was the golden age of Odia drama. Annapurna, A.B., Puri and Cuttack, Janata, Odisha Theatres, Utkal Theatres, Ekamra Theatres, all these groups used to stage plays every night, for there was no television or cinema at the time. People used to travel by bullock carts to watch the plays that were staged for days and months.

From the 1980s to 1995, within this span of 10 or so years, we see many experiments happening. That resulted in Manoranjan Das's "ଅରଣ୍ୟଫସଲ" and "କାଠଗୋଡ଼ା" (Odia for "Katha Ghoda"; Tr.: "The Wooden Horse"), Biswajit Das's "ମୃଗୟା" (Odia for "Mrugaya"), Bijaya Mishra's "ଶବ୍ଦାହକମାନେ" (Odia for "Saba Bahaka Mane") and "ଜଣେରାଜାଥିଲେ" (Odia for "Jane Raja Thile"), which came later, and of course, J.P. Das's ଅସଂଗଠନାଟକ". These plays largely remained beyond the understanding of the common audience at the time. The ideal audience for such plays would be those with a fair knowledge of drama and literature, or just somewhat literate at the minimum. Only those may relate the connection of "ଅରଣ୍ୟଫସଲ" with the social hierarchy and understand the specific issues that it addresses. To simply understand what these plays try to convey, or what direction they take, one needs to have an understanding of the nuances. This made the common audience, who came for simple entertainment, become distant from the stage. This does not mean that there is no place for experimentalism in theatre. There definitely is. But what the audience does not understand, they do not like.

Although the audience for such plays grew smaller, the playwrights showed no signs of slowing down. Rather, there was a competitive spirit that emerged amongst them. When "Waiting for Godot" was first staged, it brought about a movement throughout Europe, which gradually became global. It got Odia dramatists excited to write similar absurdist works, but they also lost much of their audience.

The following years were marked by a return to the story-based, social and historical drama, and *gitanatya* or musical theatre. That very Bijaya Mishra wrote "ଜଞ୍ଜା" (Odia for "Jantaa") and "ତଟନିରଞ୍ଜନା" (Odia for "Tata Niranjana"), Manoranjan Das, "କ୍ଳାନ୍ତପ୍ରଜାପତି" (Odia for "Klanta Prajapati") and "ଶବ୍ଦଲିପି" (Odia for "Shabdaliipi"), and Biswajit Das wrote "ମହାମନ୍ତ୍ର" (Odia for

“Mahamantra”), and “ପ୍ରତାପଗଡ଼ରେଦୁଇଦିନ” (Odia for “Pratapagada re Dui Din”). And so, the audience began to grow again, for these were plays that they could make sense of, unlike earlier. Although these plays bore multiple layers of meaning, they still remained mostly within the sphere of common understanding. “ତଚ୍ଚିରଞ୍ଜନା”, for example, is based on Buddha’s life, which almost everyone knows about to some extent, and that enables any viewer to read between the lines. Hence, such plays sort of worked towards resuscitating the Odia theatre, as they discussed social and political issues through legends and allegories. Such plays remain popular to this day.

Many plays are adapted from popular literature, as you have mentioned. We stage plays in translation in Odisha too. We recently adapted “Enemy of the People” for the Odia stage as “ଜନଶତ୍ରୁ” (Odia for “Janashatru”). The plays we stage are those that we feel the general audience will easily understand. Apart from the productions of SatabdiraKalakar, others have staged plays such as “आषाढकाएकदिन” (Hindi for “Aashadh ka Ek Din”) and “Hayavadana”. We should know what exists in the literature of other languages. Translated plays hence staged, therefore, help with important and necessary engagement with them.

**AR:** As per Dr. J.P. Das himself, you were the only person brave enough to stage “ଅସଂଗତନାଟକ”, and you did it quite successfully. You mentioned that it remains largely beyond the understanding of the common audience, which speaks a lot about its difficulty. So, I would like you to shed some light on how you developed the stage play and what was your vision behind it.

**DM:** I can definitely tell you that understanding this play in the first reading is indeed difficult. I read it thrice to gain a perspective on what it said, and each subsequent reading brought with it new insights. This play has an extraordinary essence. And after multiple readings, I felt the need to stage it. In his play, J.P. Das explores the concept of ‘Time’ and presents it in a unique light to us. The viewers, therefore, might appreciate something different once in a while. Although it would be difficult for the general audience to grasp, I thought, if they remain attentive, it might not be so much so.

It was then that I set out to develop the stage play, including stage design, costume design, music, etc. I then took it to the team for rehearsal. There, as it turned out, the crew was unable to understand the play at first. So, I asked them to read the text multiple times. I gave them copies

of the entire text to read and not just their parts from the script. They had to understand the play, their character, and their own part as actors to pull off the act. The text needed to speak to the actors for them to be able to act it out.

All of us read the play over and over, both by ourselves and together, and discussed it. This exercise enabled us all to come to a collective understanding of how the drama would take shape. Everyone got excited about it as they came to see how it was to play out. I then began the standing composition and gave the stage adaptation form.

The stage play turned out to be quite satisfactory and successful at the Rabindra Mandap when it finally went live.

**AR:** While developing the stage play, how did you go about the casting? I feel there are quite a few characters in the play that might give any director a difficult time bringing them on stage, such as the characters Girl-I and Girl-II.

**DM:** My casting process begins with a group reading of the play. The script is first read by X, then Y reads a few pages, and then Z reads a few more. Through their way of reading, I can determine how well they are able to grasp the idea of the text. That provides me with a platform whereon I can build the stage play further. Another obvious factor is the face. I always have a rough image of the character in my mind and I look for an actor who would potentially come the closest to it. So, one who is fit to play a character is determined through their looks, their voice and their understanding of the play.

Now, for the two characters that you have mentioned specifically: yes, I did have some trouble with them in the beginning. The primary reason for that was that the number of female artists is comparatively small, both in Odisha and in general. Still, I was able to cast two women for the roles. One of them was my wife, and another was a member of our theatre group. When the play was staged in 1989, the two were made to look very similar with similar costumes and hairstyles. Now, in contrast to that, there was the person playing the role of the Clockface. It was just a man, wearing a huge working clock on his head. On the stage, we had a massive clock, three feet high. The two worked well together. The sense of time in this play came from the two being on the stage together.

I think that would be it regarding the process.

**AR:** I cannot help but feel that staging this play has been a pleasant experience for you, sir. People belonging to a later generation have no way of seeing any stage plays of Dr J.P. Das's "ଅରବିନ୍ଦନାଟକ" since there are no recordings or even photos of it on any public domains. Would you consider staging the drama again, if the opportunity arises?

**DM:** The play definitely has a lot of value, both on the literary and the dramatic ends. The problem with staging the play again is the finance. Our stage plays are usually funded by the Government of Odisha, the Sangeet Natak Akademi, and the Ministry of Culture, among others. In 1989, this play was staged under the Sangeet Natak Akademi scheme.

Staging a drama costs us around ₹50,000 at the very least. On the higher side, the budget could go up to ₹1.5-2 lakhs. So, if we may secure adequate funding, we will stage it again. I feel that more people need to witness this play. There is a sense of newness to it that today's audience might appreciate a lot.

**AR:** As a senior theatre artist and an experienced director, what are your views on the future of theatre in Odisha?

**DM:** I will tell you what I have observed: More dramas have been staged in 2022 and 2023, as compared to the number of dramas staged annually in the years before the pandemic hit us. An organisation called Odisha Natya Sangha exists. They, in collaboration with the Government of Odisha, came up with a program called 'NatyaDhaara' in 2012. Under this program, four plays are organized every month: Three in the Bhanja Kala Mandap on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of every month, and one in Rabindra Mandap on every second Sunday. The groups existing within a radius of 200 km would stage plays in the Bhanja Kala Mandap, and those existing outside the said area can stage their plays in the Rabindra Mandap. Along with that, there are other festivals organized by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, and state and national-level festivals organized by SatabdiraKalakar, happening annually. Other programmes are also organized in other places as well, such as in Rourkela, Paradeep, Bhadrak, Dhenkanal, Baripada, and Balasore. So, one can see for themselves the attention that drama gets in Odisha. This leads me to believe that the

future of theatre in Odisha is bright. I also believe that staging more plays will impact our culture and society positively, it will also help in further promoting our language.

**AR:** There are many young and talented artists and playwrights in Odisha and in India who aspire to make it big someday. So, as a veteran in the field of drama, what message would you like to impart to them?

**DM:** First of all, any artist, especially one in the field of drama must be a good human being. If the person does not have a healthy mind, he/she will not be able to comprehend social values properly. Any creative must keep these values in its perspective. The creation process involves the skills of observation, imagination and imitation. An artist also needs to master self-discipline. Be disciplined, obedient, and a good person. Then, to decide if one wants to write, act, or direct, one should read a lot of books and watch a lot of stage plays. It is only through such rigorous involvement with drama that the artists' eyes will truly open.

**AR:** Thank you so much for your time, sir. I am sure this conversation will inspire artists and scholars both locally and nationally and will help drive more attention towards Odia drama and literature.

**An intimate interview with Prof Pabitra Sarkar, a noted Linguist and former Vice Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India**

**Interviewed by Prof Aditi Ghosh**

**Department of Linguistics, Calcutta University, Kolkata**

Professor Pabitra Sarkar is one of the most well-known and well-respected names in Bengal on both sides of the national boundary. I recently had a chance to witness how widely he is respected, admired and treasured in Bangladesh. And here in Kolkata, he has been an inseparable part of the city. We grew up seeing and listening to him discussing issues pertaining to education and the Bangla language. Humble, polite, generous, always smiling yet unswerving in social and ideological commitments, he has been one of the Bengali icons of our times.

Though I have had the opportunity to interact with Professor Sarkar at various conferences and academic events, this interview gave me the chance to learn about the history, the lifelong discipline, the hard work, and the strong sense of purpose that has made him so versatile and prolific. We talked about various topics, started with our shared interest – linguistics and discovered that we have another shared interest – crows.

I am apprehensive, that this interview has not done justice to Professor Sarkar’s multifaceted personality. But it was indeed a great honour and a most enjoyable experience for me.



Prof Aditi Ghosh



Prof Pabitra Sarkar, A Noted Linguist of India

Aditi

Sir, we shall start the interview with Linguistics. How do you think the discipline has developed through the years? Who, according to you are the most influential figures?

Professor Sarkar

Well, the history is pretty well-known.

The new kind of linguistics, I mean 'modern' linguistic science, had begun in Kolkata in about 1786 at the Asiatic Society of this city, as every student of linguistics knows. What happened in the first century and a little later, from the late 18th century and during the whole of the 19th century, linguistics was of the kind that is called historical and comparative. That means, you trace the history of the language and language family with the help of comparing others, presumably related, modern languages, then tracing back their past and ultimately reaching the original language that is supposed to be the mother of all of these languages, of the family, of course. Now, on one count, there are about 29 families of languages in this world.



After that, I should say by the beginning of the 20th century, the focus on history and comparison on languages was diverted, diverted by a man called Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), who said that it's not the past of the language or the genetic relationship of the languages that were important. What, instead, was important is to look at how a language functions. That is, how its sounds are organised into words or morphemes, how these words are organised into sentences, how sentences vary, diversify, to express different kinds of thoughts and feelings of a person. And that means that the structure of the language should be the more important area of study. From then on, from the early 20th century, there arose in Europe — a kind of linguistics called Structural Linguistics, mainly initiated by Saussure. And that kind of structural linguistics was also followed by a band of American linguists who were trying to save from destruction the moribund Indian languages — now called Native American languages — and they, somewhat independently and partly encouraged by Saussure's ideas, also developed a variety of structural linguistics in America which they called Descriptive Linguistics. The main theoretician of which was Leonard Bloomfield, who, along with others, suggested a strict methodology that had to be followed.. Descriptive linguistics also worked upward from the smallest units of the language — the sound — and found out how they combined to make morphemes and words and then how words were combined into immediate constituents, ultimately to reach the major unit, the sentence. And so there were at least 3 levels, which were to be investigated: the phonetic or phonemic level, the morphemic level, and then the sentence level or syntactic level. With the advent of Structural and Descriptive Linguistics, the main emphasis fell on language that is actually spoken, while written language, which Historical and Comparative Linguistics took as a base to start off, was not found relevant any longer. The major concern was not many languages now, those in a family for example, but on one particular language, whose 'items and arrangements' of them are to be discovered and described.

What, however, happened in 1957 was altogether different. A guy called Noam Chomsky (1928-) came by and he kind of thoroughly changed all that. He wanted to work from the top, i.e., the sentence, down to the sounds. He said that sounds were of course very important, as were the next higher units, the morphemes. But it is more important to discover how a human being says about 5000 sentences a day and how these sentences — unlimited in number, — are created in a language. So, you forget about -- he didn't say exactly in these terms, of course -- you forget history or relationships of languages, you forget about how sentences are made by joining various components, at levels which were claimed as autonomous. But you focus rather on how hundreds

and thousands of sentences are created in a language every day, how the grammar of a language handles that. What are the processes by which so many sentences can be created by a man or by a man's brain every day in the course of the day-to-day transactions? And Chomsky's first answer was transformation. By transformation, he meant that there are some basic patterns of sentences in a language, and these basic patterns are changed, or transformed into other patterns in order to make new sentences. For example, an active sentence can be turned into a passive sentence. A positive sentence can be turned into a question or a negative sentence. These were his first answers in his 1957 book 'Syntactic Structures'. But later on, as people around him and his students at MIT, when they started researching along the same line, said 'No, this cannot be true because a man wants to say negative sentences from the very beginning. He doesn't begin with a positive or affirmative sentence and then transforms it. At least that is not what our intuition tells us.' So Chomsky next arrived at a point where he had to acknowledge that transformations cannot change meaning. They rather retain meaning. Although that has also been questioned later, as a passive of a sentence does not carry exactly the same meaning, and the focus on the Subject is lost in the passive. Without counting such possibilities, he arrived at a solution which is called Generation. Transformation as well as Generation. So, his Transformational Grammar now had become a Transformational-Generative Grammar. This is what is called Chomsky's Standard Theory. It is recorded in his book 'Aspects of the Theory of Syntax' (1965), which marks the 'Classical Phase' of Chomsky's work.

How is a sentence generated, then? Chomsky's idea was that there were more than one, at least two at that point, levels of such generation. One is called the deep level. At the deep level words and the primary structure of the sentence are created in the human brain. This is called the Deep Structure of the sentence. The process of making the fully uttered sentence (the Phonetic Structure) is organized in the manner of an assembly line, in which three components are placed in this order: the Base Component, the Transformational Component and the Phonological Component. This DS is formed or given in what is called the Base Component. It has another component to get resources from, which is the Semantic Component. Then the Deep Structure acts as an input to the next Transformational Component—it is fed into it. The TC works on the loosely organized DS and makes it strictly organized, imposing grammatical relationships on the words and organizing them in proper grammatical order. These processes are called Transformations. Transformations attach grammatical affixes of tense, number, etc., change the order of the words,

and give the sentence its acceptable grammatical shape. Next, the correct grammatical sentence is fed into the Phonological Component where the final pronunciation of the sentence in question is determined, and only after which the sentence comes out as the fully uttered piece of a language. So, first generation, then transformation. For Chomsky, Transformations relate to the Syntax of the grammar of the language, and that is central, while Semantics and Phonology are marginal. That is how we can get a surface sentence, which is uttered ultimately. But then again against Chomsky didn't stop. His idea of generation became deeper and deeper, and transformations kind of lost their importance in due course. Generation became more and more important later in his Extended Standard Theory (1980), and the role of transformations was limited to a minimum. In this later theory, transformations were allowed only to move was all and there were other schools, generative schools, one was called Generative Semantics. That is what happened during the last phase of the 20th century. Chomsky still wanted to retain the importance of syntax, but in the Generative Semantics School, they said, the sentence was an aftermath of generation. Generation was all important. syntax had a minimal role. So that is how I guess, it developed.

And then I should say (laughs) I lost track of all those things because I didn't do theoretical linguistics for a long time. Go and ask Probal Dasgupta and others for even later developments. I am still doing work on Bangla grammar with more interest in the analysis of data than fixing it to some theory. This is my idea of the change in the study of linguistics during the two centuries plus twenty-five years.

### **Aditi**

#### **What was your first work on linguistics? When did you start studying linguistics?**

Professor Sarkar

I started studying linguistics in India. You know, when I was at Jadavpur (university), I attended two summer schools of linguistics. One was held at Annamalai University in 1967 and another was held at MS University, Baroda next year. And I don't know whether it will be immodest if I say that I did rather well in both the summer schools – I mean, score-wise. Then Dr Devipada Bhattacharya, suggested, 'Why don't you pursue linguistics further?'. So, I took his words seriously and began preparations for sitting privately in the M A examination in Comparative Philology at the University of Calcutta. I didn't do that, as it happened. An Advertisement for the Fulbright Scholarship for 1969-70 reached my Department at that time.. And my Head of the Department Professor Ajit Dattta suggested that I apply. I applied. I got the scholarship and went

to Chicago to do linguistics. There my first work in linguistics, apart from papers written for the course, was my MA dissertation. It was on the Compound Verb Structure of Bengali. And then the Generative Phonology of Segmental Phonemes of Standard Colloquial Bengali. These are my first works in linguistics. I didn't write about linguistics before or I didn't work on linguistics before, except for answering questions in the summer schools. Then also when I wrote in Chicago for journals, I wrote on literary subjects, for example in the *Journal of South Asian Literature* published in America.

Aditi

**Who were your teachers there?**

Professor Sarkar

My guide was Norman Zide who was an India specialist, particularly in Mundari languages. He died recently. But my other teachers were James McCawley. You may have heard of him, he was one of Chomsky's brightest students. Another was Eric Hamp, who was a very good historicist-cum-comparativist. Then there was the Slavicist - Jacob Kurylowicz, who taught me stylistics. Among the others, there were Greek teacher Nicolas Kazazis, American Jerry Sadock, who taught us syntax. The Frenchman Gerard Duffloth gave phonetics lessons, and I. J. Gelb was the teacher of Graphemics, that is the study of writing. McCawley's Japanese wife Noriki also taught us syntax.

Aditi

**So those were the heydays of generative syntax.**

Professor Sarkar

Yeah, yeah, that's true. And Chicago University, at that time, was 3rd in the university ranking in America, in linguistics. First was MIT, second was, I think, Harvard, and then Chicago.

Aditi

**Did they focus on anything else other than purely structural linguistics? Was there any department, studying, perhaps in an interdisciplinary way?**

Professor Sarkar

The interdisciplinary thing was not that much in vogue at that time. Some courses in linguistics itself were interdisciplinary in nature. For example, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, statistical linguistics etc., which I took. I took several other courses. Yes, of course... for example, I took a course on writing by a very famous man – I. J. Gelb– he wrote a book on the study of writing. I

took other courses, French, German and Greek courses. Elsewhere, I mean in the summer schools, I took Anthropological Linguistics and Cultural Linguistics – in India.

Aditi

**OK so, I wanted to ask, how do you think linguists can contribute to the real world? Because sometimes linguistics becomes very theoretical, very abstract. So, what do you think linguists' contribution leads to in real life?**

Professor Sarkar

Yes, the social life. Well, language is a social thing, you know. It is distinctively human, and therefore, it has to be social too. One of the criticisms that were thrown against Chomsky and theoretical linguistics was that it kind of neglected society and that is why then — Hymes, Labov, Householder and others – they created a parallel kind of discipline, sociolinguistics – of which I took a course also. And I heard I heard quite a few lectures, by invited speakers, luminaries in fact, men like Chomsky, Roman Jakobson, Peter Ladefoged, William Labov etc. But, I mean, unless you take society into it, language is, I should say, not very much worth. You have to look at how language can be used for societal organisation and progress. For example, how the national language is determined, how the official language is determined, how the language for education or instruction is determined, and how such languages can be made easier for children to learn. So, a linguist must also be a responsible and committed social being, who has to see that language is not used to harm society. Sociolinguistics has developed a branch called Language Planning. Language Planning comes to the aid of society. There is also clinical linguistics which is used to treat children with language difficulties. So, there are several branches of linguistics – Psycholinguistics is another. So theoretical linguistics should not forget the applied part of linguistics, which is a great help to all society and individuals.

Aditi

**Sir, if we can delve a little bit more into this topic of Language Planning, especially for a country like India, which is extremely multilingual – it's not an easy task, right? I think you have been involved in some planning activities as well. If you could talk about that – your experience – and what are what is important when one plans language in a multilingual society, what are the factors that one should be aware of?**

Professor Sarkar

The main objective should be to maintain a kind of harmony and kind of peaceful existence among the multilingual groups because groups have a tendency to be in conflict with each other as it's happening in India now. Linguists have this philosophical position that all languages are equal. There is no better language or lesser language. Languages become rich or poor, powerful or weak for no intrinsic reasons, but for external factors. It is only the presence or absence of opportunities that makes a language weaker or stronger.

So, English became the world language because it had several opportunities. It was helped by the imperial design of the British people. If Santali were in that position, it, in its turn, could be as great as English. That is the scientific attitude toward languages as also towards dialects. No dialect is higher or lower than another. Even the standard dialect becomes a standard because of the opportunities it gets from society and the language planners. It is made to do several functions which dialects cannot do, as dialects are seldom written. A standard dialect is written. There in fact are many ways in which linguistics and sociolinguistics can help the society to survive and make further progress.

Aditi

**Sir, the problem is – though it is not always the case – there seems to be a conflict between loving your mother tongue and loving diversity, because for diversity to flourish you have to, you know, give some space to the others.**

Professor Sarkar

That's right. Any kind of narrowness doesn't help. You can love your mother tongue, but you must also love others' mother tongues. That is why you cannot browbeat, look down upon, or dominate over other mother tongues. No group should dominate over another group in a democratic society. So that kind of linguistic jingoism should not be practised.

Aditi

**Continuing with the issues of Language Planning in a diverse country like India or a diverse city like Kolkata, I have witnessed that discourses on the mother tongue often end up with discourses on Bangla only. Some celebrations of International Mother Tongue Day, become exclusively by, of and for the Bengalis programme. And we also tend to ignore that Kolkata is actually, it's not a city just for the Bengalis, it's a cosmopolitan and very diverse city from the very beginning. What are your thoughts on that?**

Professor Sarkar

Of course, since it was done on 21st February, International Mother Tongue, then all mother tongues should be given equal opportunity. No, it should never just Bengali. Yes. Bengali language movement was the basis of it. And there was this heroic sacrifice of lives Everyone acknowledges that. But it now is linked up with all the neglected mother tongues of the world. So, Bengalis should also consider that. They should not dominate the 21st February celebrations.

Aditi

**Connected to the issue of mother tongue, we have several researches and studies that show that mother tongue-based education, particularly in primary schools, is very beneficial for children. It's not just good for the language but essential for the children themselves. It's good for their cognitive development.**

**But The thing is, there are two kinds of problems here. One is that for minor languages we do not have the textbooks, we do not have the schools. And for non-minor languages, languages like Bengali, for one class of people at least, the attraction towards sending their children to schools where Bengal is a medium of instruction is getting less. At least that's our perception. We will have to confirm it with studies, but it seems to be reduced. So, what is your opinion on this?**

Professor Sarkar

I will first touch upon the minority's problem. Well, there are several kinds of minorities, often migrant minorities, who do not stay in one place. Or if they live in small groups and their children cannot form a whole class. It is to be noticed with such minorities, small and floating minorities, they use the major language of the area as a second language. They are quite fluent in the second language. So if a state cannot organise mother tongue education for all of them, they should opt for the major language of the area. I think that that is what Santals have been doing, or the Chakmas have been doing in Bangladesh. Because there is no other way. The state cannot provide unless it is a sizable minority. But if it is a very small minority. They have to adopt the LWC - i.e., the language of wider communication. But if they have a large and permanent presence, all efforts should be made by the state to provide at least the basic mother tongue education to their children. But the so-called majority languages like Bengali. It is true, and I believe as a linguist, and whatever my small, meagre knowledge of psycholinguistics is, that – it is also the UNESCO motto – that what I cannot understand, I do not learn. So every student must learn the basic things in their own language. And I claim that this should extend even to the highest level, to higher and

specialized education like medical education, engineering etc. And this is what is done in Germany, Japan, China, Russia, Greece, even in Vietnam. What do they do? They feverishly translate English texts, because modern knowledge is produced in the West, in English for a large part mostly, and the knowledge has to be absorbed by us, and these countries do a vigorous kind of translation, a whole range of translating soldiers are there who translate overnight. So, if you can transform the knowledge, transfer the knowledge into your own language, then you can educate in your own language. But we cannot do that. What we are doing in India, in South Asia, I should say, we are still depending on English in a servile way. Even in the 2020 Language Education Policy (NEP), it is proposed that ‘mother tongue instruction should continue ‘up to class 8 and possibly beyond’. But they cannot be bold enough to say that we should move beyond right from now, we should move beyond, step by step, if necessary. Say within the next five years we should extend that at least till class 12, then, in the next five years till the graduate level, then, in another defined period, till the highest level. The so-called *swadeshiwalahs* – they do not say these things yet. But OK, I accept the thing that English is needed. English of course, is needed. We should say, it's a different kind of reality in South Asia, so English you should learn. The first few classes should be in Bangla, Odiya, Marathi, Hindi or whatever, and I am glad that now CBSE schools, they have decided to go for Bengali, or the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. I have of course some problem with the term ‘mother tongue’ because mother tongue is never the medium of instruction but the standard form of the mother tongue is. I call it the *i-mother tongue* or the mother tongue used for instruction. Anyway, at least we should now go for mother tongue, step by step, upward. But English should be retained as an ancillary language, and it should be taught with all kinds of seriousness.

But I have a rider in that. What is it that we should not teach? Not English literature. We should teach the English language—the language—the communicative language, the spoken and the written language in which one communicates well and freely and fluently. There should be classes of English language, not English literature. I don't mean that we don't need English literature in India. Of course, we do. English has great literature, but we should also have Russian literature, Greek literature, Japanese literature. There are great books. So there should be a course on world literature, but there should be a course on the English language.

That is how I think about it. I have also written on it.





**“The Order of Rising Sun” Japan conferred this award to Prof Pabitra Sarkar**

Aditi

**Sir, continuing the issue of higher education in English and translating higher education knowledge texts, if we can achieve that ideal of producing knowledge text in all other languages, and how do we produce it? After all, our aim should be also to produce knowledge. Right? Not just translate. So which language should we choose then, ideally?**

Professor Sarkar

Well, you have both options. You know your own language, that is your standard language. You should write for your own people also. And also you should write also in English because at that time, expectedly, you know both languages. You are good in Bengali. You are good in English because that is how English should be taught. Maybe from Class 6 English should be taught as a spoken language as well as a written one. it should be taught well and very seriously. So that by class 12, a boy or a girl becomes fluent in both. But I have a word of caution for the mother-languages-*wallahs* also. They should write a kind of Bengali that is understood by all because not all of us can write fluent and simple Bengali. We write very difficult and kind of literary, somewhat pedantic. Bengali, that a student cannot easily understand. I have noticed that in the textbooks of primary schools that the Bengali that they have written.... students from villages cannot at all understand. That's a problem.

Aditi

**Yes. That was actually my next question because in Bengali, when we translate knowledge texts in Bengali, it tends to become very artificial and almost like Bankim Chandra's novels, a very Sanskritised text. So, is that really doing any good for the Language?**

Professor Sarkar

No, no, not at all. That was my word of caution that there should be workshops. How or in which kind of Bengali translations should be done? That's if you have workshops with, say, children's authors and they should work out how serious writing can be done in simple Bengali or simple Odiya or Hindi..

Aditi

**Sir, let me play the Devil's Advocate here. When we will actually take up a project of translating texts in huge numbers, the quality will automatically decline. Will that be the case, do you think?**

Professor Sarkar

Not if you prepare the translator well. After some grilling, you give them the task. If they know other languages besides English, they should also translate from such other languages also. For example, if someone knows French or Japanese. They should know how the Japanese people have done it, by consulting with the Japanese people. See if the Japanese texts; are translated from English. Are they readable? How are the reactions to the newly coined Japanese terms? Other nations have been doing this for ages, you know.

Aditi

**I would want to continue a little more on this topic. For example, recently somebody wanted to write a thesis on a topic which is theoretically modern, technical and all the new literature available is in English and it's also very dynamic. New literature coming up every day. But they wanted to write it in Bengali. So... if you write something technical and modern, you would want to get your thesis be evaluated by the experts in the field who might not know Bengali. Right? So, what do you think of producing new knowledge, perhaps world-class knowledge, but restricting it from reaching the wider audience? Will that not be, in a way, detrimental?**

Professor Sarkar

Unless you begin it at some point, you cannot go further, that's the problem. So I mean you. It's a totally new and very original kind of research it should be published in English first, that is what I

think because it has to be read by others also, if it's quite original, mind it. But if it is a humdrum kind of research, as many of our students do, let them do it in Bengali, and then that's it, that should be an option. The option should be there.

Aditi

**Circling back to the issue of the medium of instruction, when we were growing up, the government schools and Bangla medium schools were prestigious schools. And there's no problem in admitting children in Bengali medium Government schools, even if you are from the higher strata of society, socio-economically that is. But now Bengali medium schools, I think it is associated with a kind of failure in a way. Parents cannot afford expensive English medium schools. That's why they are sending children to the Bangla medium school. Where did this shift happen?**

Professor Sarkar

Ah, there may be several reasons. One is that the standard of instruction in government school schools has deteriorated. There may be administrative negligence. There may be several social reasons for that. Even the teachers of government schools, they send their children to English Medium school private schools, you know. But good Bangla-medium schools are still very popular.

Aditi

**My generation, they are doing very well in their respective fields from Bangla medium schools, but they cannot even think of sending their children.**

Professor Sarkar

Right, right. That is one reason. The second reason I think the change in this social attitude is that English is the language of all kinds of opportunities. It is regarded as 'the' language of success, you know. So English has a priority in teaching. So we are sending our children to English medium schools....and there is a truth in it. But I also see a kind of social problem in that ... a kind of danger. And what is the danger – I'm just writing an article about that – it may be published soon– that the English education, or the glorification of it — English education is alright — but, the unusual glorification of it, has kind of disrupted the Indian social structure. Those who know English, they have become *babus* and those who don't know it, they are not *babus*. They are a kind of outcasts. And *babus* have developed an attitude towards the non-*babus*. They can address them with the derogatory tui, *tora* or *tomra* or *tumi* and they don;t regard them as human beings.

For example, a rickshaw puller or a street vendor. we, *babus* we don't give them the due respect. That has kind of, I mean, torn asunder our society in two segments, *babus* and non-*babus*. This is a social evil we have to fight against.

Another problem is – English, or the over-dominance of it — is also destroying our own speech. With the kind of Bengali you speak, what they call it –*khicuri* – with several splattering of English words like, ‘I mean’ ‘*actually'e kathaata bolte chaaini*, ‘But’ *o aamaake e kathaata bollo*’ .... I mean, you can use borrowed English words – ‘chair’, ‘table’, ‘light’, ‘fan’, ‘train’. But you use adverbs which, you don't need. Bengali has a lot of Bengali words for adverbs. You probably have read my article *buli mishran, buli lomphon* that deals with code-switching and code shifting? So, this happens, and Bengali has become a kind of distorted Bengali among the so-called educated class of Bengalis. That's the problem. This, I think, happens in other Indian languages, too.

There is also a kind of danger from Hindi. It is our official language. We should regard it as such. Also, there is a kind of infiltration of the Hindi culture, in all societies of India, Hindi movies we go and see .... Hindi songs, we sing. This thing even in the earlier — *bhajans*, the Hindi songs ... the Hindi is not alien to us and it should not be regarded as such. But mixing your language with unnecessary Hindi words – is not done. Once again, it changes the shape of your own language.

Aditi

**It's one prominent influence (of Hindi) that I've noticed is that *kaenonaa* (meaning ‘because’, colloquial term) is getting replaced by *kaeneki* (under the influence of Hindi *kyunki*)**

Professor Sarkar

That's right.

Aditi

***kenokiis* not Bangla, I mean, it has become Bangla perhaps. We'll have to see...**

Professor Sarkar

Yes. It's our students, who do that all the time and there are new words like *dhaamaakaa, bindaas* and others...

Also, there is a kind of dialectical influence that has touched our standard speech. People are saying *enaar* (‘his/her’ respectful) or *onaar* (‘his/her’) instead of *enr* and *onr*. In West Bengal, we didn't say *onaar*. We didn't say in our *onnaar*, but in our owner has become so familiar.

Aditi:

**Yes! I didn't even know.... I say *onaar* all the time! (Laughs)**

Professor Sarkar

No, it was *enr* and *onr* with *chandrabinu* (nasalization). (laughs)

Aditi

**Another thing is that if you are done well in life, people sometimes get quite surprised, to know that you are from a Bengali medium school. I mean, it seems to me that (for some) it is completely unthinkable that students from Bengali medium can do well. Which is not really, you know, supported by the facts.**

Professor Sarkar

Right, right. And I have talked about this hundreds of times that, if you want to learn English, you can start it at any stage— any stage. I am a village boy from East Bengal. A refugee student at that. And I thought I should learn English better after, in fact, my graduation with Bangla Hounours. So, I started learning. English step by step, reading good texts and grammar and newspapers – English newspapers and somehow, I can now pull around ... No problem at all. I have gone overseas on Fulbright, I wrote papers and dissertations in English,. I have taught there in a university for two years. I have found no problem there. I can communicate and I have written about how to learn English in Bengali because that I think Bengali students need some help in learning English in their mother tongue.

Aditi

**Now we come to the part about spelling reforms. So, this is one thing that personally, I have struggled with spelling in all the languages that I have learned, including Bangla. And since you have worked on the spelling reforms .... First of all, why do we need it? And then how do we decide what is correct?**

Professor Sarkar

Uh, the objective is to give the new learners – not the grown-ups – the easiest way to learn to spell. So, we did two things together when we worked at the Bangla Akademi. One, we made some complex letters transparent. . Because, for example, the *ng + g* in Bengali – the cluster did not show what consonants were there. And *h+m* did not show what letters formed it. Combinations of consonants and vowels also had problems. You wrote *sh+u*, *k+u* in a different way than you wrote *khu-u* or *c+u*. And so, we wanted wipe out the disparity and make them somewhat similar. That was what I learned from my own teacher at Chicago. That you make them easier to learn for

children. And the arguments that were given against doing this, I don't think they are tenable these arguments. They are not tenable. So that's what we did. Then Sanskrit also had, you know, differential spellings for the same words, you know. Quite a few words, hundreds of words. Like long and short *i* the palatal and cerebral *s*. and we had with us Monier Williams all the time. And found that well, Bengali pronunciation has short *i*, it does not have a long *i* pronunciation. So, why not make it more familiar? that is why some Sanskrit words also with the short *i* and *u*. So, for example, *abani*,---*usha* and *uusha* you have both. We retained the short *u*. So *shayaka* we retain the palatal *s* not the dental *s*. For non-tatsama words we made it closer to pronunciation, pronunciation. But couldn't all. We couldn't do all. Right? Bangladesh wanted to remove cerebral *I*. I said no, cannot do that. You have so many words. There are so many words. So, you cannot do that... you cannot do all. But what we wanted to tell the students were learning them, that you will learn and write once spelling, but you will find several spellings in texts, in all that tests, you will find more than one spelling. So, learn one to read and write and learn others to read only. That that is the instruction. that that is how I think English spelling is also taught. Because the children asked why is there a 'p' in 'psychology'? Why is it there? And we say that it is just there, you have to learn it. We can give no rules. So, there is a kind of compulsion there. And the practice is, I think, followed in all languages, in English, in French, particularly in French. I know, you have done your work in French ...

Aditi

**Yes, particularly French. But also, English. Barnard Shaw was very annoyed with that...**

Professor Sarkar

Right, right. Yeah, (laughs) he couldn't change it! He... he put several thousands of pounds in a bank which still lay there, unused.

Aditi:

**He couldn't change with all the money .... He started writing in Pitman's shorthand because...**

Professor Sarkar

All the money .... English spelling, it didn't change. (laughs)

Aditi

**If we talk about a little bit about Bangladesh now.**

Professor Sarkar

OK.

Aditi

**I visited Bangladesh for the first time this year. But both my parents are originally from Bangladesh. And what I felt was that — it's not just about the fact that we are speaking the same language — but it is something else... I felt the artificialness of boundaries that we draw, that there is so much, you know, connection between us. I don't feel that kind of connection in Kolkata with some people, at least. So, even after 75 years of being apart from each other. What is it? This is just the language? The common culture? What is it that binds us together?**

Professor Sarkar

The language, the common culture, are there. But we mix with the kind of people, who are quite aware ... you know, we belong to the same intellectual class, and they have a feeling that the partition was useless and it couldn't solve any problem. But there is also a growing number of people in Bangladesh who think in Islamic terms. You know, we do not quite mix with them, but the class we mix with, they are very close to us, very hospitable. They show a warmth of reception which you do not find elsewhere. So, I mean, this is a sad South Asian reality that we had a Partition and both you and I are victims of that, but it couldn't solve any problem. Now all I cherish is a deep, cordial relationship between India and Bangladesh. I see that, we couldn't have that with Pakistan. It would have been much better if we could have that, too.

Aditi

**And there is a general understanding that ....do you think they have more respect for Bengali language, literature and Bengali people, in general, than Indian Bengalis, who have other aspirations? I guess I'm generalising... Perhaps I should not be doing that.**

Professor Sarkar

They do, culturally speaking, they do. Because I know it is in Bangladeshi people, they try to maintain Bengali anywhere they go in the world. In America, this year they have organised a Tagore birth anniversary and they invited me to be there.

And I went there and found, excellent maintenance of their own culture and language, and when they are singing Tagore songs, all kinds of Bengali songs, writing poetry, bringing out newspapers, weekly and daily newspapers. Also, there are news channels and television channels. So, I mean I think Bangladeshi people are more interested and involved in their culture over there.

I generally think they are still, but I have also my doubts. Because there is a fringe population in Dhaka who also are sending their children to English medium schools. They belong to a certain class, so I don't know how safe the Bengali culture will be in their hands.

Aditi

**Sir, can we talk about the university systems and administration now? You have been a professor, have worked in several administrative capacities and as a vice-chancellor...**

Professor Sarkar

The less said the better! Because now it has become an area of farcical activities. The governor and the government are at loggerheads, and vice chancellors are coming and going like bagatelle, you know? And I don't know..... I mean, the whole educational system .... is being destroyed right before our eyes! It is very sad and ...takes up most of my time ... I'm concerned about that very much! ... the situation in education that is prevailing in West Bengal.

Aditi

**And what about the spurt of Universities? there are so many universities right now ....**

Professor Sarkar

Yeah, we didn't need them! We didn't need them! You just....in a spree of establishing new universities... without minimum equipment, minimum readiness .... Look at the departments. they have one teacher, two teachers; where there should be some nine or ten. Even I don't know how many teachers you have now.

Aditi

**Three only! out of ten!**

Professor Sarkar

Only three? Where there are ten posts! In the famous Department of Linguistics at Calcutta University! In the Department of Bengali, they had thirteen or fourteen sanctioned posts. Now they have only five teachers. So ... it's in shambles ... the whole education system... it's in shambles...

Aditi

**And with this, the New Education Policy is coming... and we don't even have a very good understanding of what is expected of us...**

Professor Sarkar



No! We don't understand! It's a totally misguided education policy. They want to teach 5 languages by class 12! That's absurd! I mean, so ...everything is in the doldrums.

Aditi

**Sir, you are a writer of literature - fictions, essays, travelogues, you are a linguist... you are also a singer and have also acted in plays..... a silly question, but do you have any favourites?**

Professor Sarkar

I don't think I have any favourite. I am what is called a Jack of all trades and Master of none. But what I did at one phase, I did do it all my heart and mind. So, when I acted in plays, I thought about theatre and drama and I wrote about it; wrote quite seriously. People should judge about their standards, but I was quite in it. I involved myself very seriously. When I did linguistics later, it demanded all my attention and love... I still love linguistics and continue to write on linguistic topics, but in Bengali mostly, that is why I came back from the US. That I should write in Bengali about linguistics. I give Bengali students an inkling of what little I know, of linguistics or anything. In Bengali--in plain and simple Bengali that even a schoolboy can follow.

Aditi

**Another thing, a little advice about how to do so many things within a limited time. There are only 24 hours in a day. I cannot seem to be able do nearly enough that I hope to achieve. How do you manage time? Any time management tips for us?**

Professor Sarkar

Actually, it's probably in your genes, you know. For example, I don't know why, I had an urge to sing from my very childhood. So, I sang loudly, shouting away – on the streets – everywhere. So that was kind of, I mean probably it was kind of genetic thing. I also did so many things. Maybe it's in my genes. How do I time manage? Because I'm a free man now – I ... no ... well, I should not say that– not a free man because I have to attend so many meetings and all that. What I do is... I... have various problems also. I have blood sugar. I take insulin and I have a heart problem, I had to have 3 pacemakers, this is my 3rd pacemaker.

But what I do is I get up at 6:15. I go on to my terrace and feed the crows ---

Aditi:

**OH? I do that too! I will send you videos. I talk with them...**

Professor Sarkar

Good, very good. Very good, very good. And they eat from my hand.

Aditi:

**Same here. Oh my God!**

Professor Sarkar

I walk for about 25 minutes or so on all the terrace –come back – sing about six Tagore songs with my harmonium, then I take my breakfast and several other things..... medicines, newspaper all that. And then I go to my computer by 9.30 or so. From 9-30 to say 12:00 o'clock. I work on the computer. I say, well, there are several things and try to finish them, send them off to various journals. I have to write columns in newspapers also and then I take my bath and come to eat. I take rest about for about 2 to 3 hours then after. 4:00 o'clock. If I don't have anywhere to go, I mean there are several calls or meetings, then I go to the computer again and work till 8.30, take my food, soup and toast, and then go back to the computer from 9 to 10, I work. And then I go to bed at ten.

Aditi:

**Every day?**

Professor Sarkar

Every day. If I am home, of course. And I thank ... thank the nature, I thank my life that I am keeping a good health — working health. For all these years, I haven't had any serious illness for the last 20 years, except for when I went for surgeries. That's it.

Aditi

**About the philosophies of life because... I was reading Bertrand Russel's essay the other day on the 'good life', and I was thinking it is not the same for everyone ... it could be ... achieving something, acquiring something or, you know, playing flute all day, doing nothing else. Our philosophies of life are influenced by our environment. Aren't they? So, in this context, what would be your advice for the younger generation? what is a good life? How to determine?**

Professor Sarkar

Once again, as you said, it depends on your own life. The way you have grown, the way you have developed, the class you have come to belong to, the society you belong to. So, you think – that it is just one life. I don't believe in any previous life or any afterlife. It is just one life. When you

grow up, you kind of think about what are you going to make with this life. So, if you must desire things, maybe in your class, you need a car, you need a good home, an apartment, a computer and all those things. But, you must also think that you will not take all these things with you when you die. Death is a reality. You are born to die, so you will be perturbed by the news that a minister has taken about 20 or 50 crores of money from people and cached it somewhere, put it somewhere. But the poor fellow didn't think at all, — OK, even if he weren't jailed — he didn't ever think that he couldn't use up all the 50,00,00,000 of rupees and eat or drink or enjoy enough that will exhaust the 50 crores.

Aditi

**If I may interrupt, I went to Austria once for a conference and at that time it struck as very strange to me.... that they would close all the shops at 5. So, I was wondering, and asked them, 'How do you run their business?' They said that even if they kept the shop open till 10, they would only earn a bit more and they didn't need that. They had other things to do and enjoy in life. This was not their entire life. This was work.**

Prof. Sarkar

That's marvellous..

Aditi

**So, they just close all the shops at 5 and go somewhere and perhaps just sit and talk – something like *adda* in our culture.**

Professor Sarkar

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Enjoy your life. Relax.

Aditi:

**Sometimes we confuse work with life.**

Professor Sarkar

Yeah! Yeah! What are you going to do with your life? A crucial question asked by Bankim Chandra -- *e jibon loiya ki koribo?* ('what shall I do with this life?'). Must think of that. And you don't have enough time in this life.

Aditi:

**And according to Russel, a good life is inspired by love and guided by wisdom –As**

**I'm ageing, I'm also becoming more philosophical. I often think about how I'm spending my days.**

Professor Sarkar

Certainly! Wisdom and love! Love and Wisdom! Absolutely correct!

Yeah, yeah! That's why I have written a book about death. *Mrityu: jiboner prothom path* ('death: the first lesson of life'). First thing you learn in life — (laughs) not the first thing, maybe so figuratively.

Aditi

**Sir, we shall end this interview with your limericks. Since when did you start writing? And it's like you almost chronicling history with your limericks. So, have you already published a book on this?**

Professor Sarkar

One book has been published, it's called Limeri-Corona, written during the Corona time. Yeah.

Aditi:

**Did you start during the Corona period?**

Professor Sarkar

No. I wrote Limericks earlier. There's a book *chotoder limerick* ('Limerick for children'). But during Corona -time, writing Limerick became a passion with me. (laughs) I wrote quite a few and those have been published by *Mitro o Ghosh* and I think one publisher from Bangladesh is also publishing another collection of them.

Aditi

**I think this will be a good documentation for history. Perhaps another 100 years from now, they will know what was happening day by day. Thank you, sir, for giving us your time.**

Professor Sarkar

Thank you.

Dr Mahendra K Mishra, Chief Editor, Lokaratna with Prof Pabitra Sarkar and Shanta T

