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Bhojpuri Folksongs and Culture

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Folk Songs and Literature

Through literature, a community speaks its mind and shares its heart freely, fully and beautifully. It is a rich and reliable source to study its life. Across the world, all communities, major or minor, have asserted their nativity in literary form. This paper is a humble effort to analyze the culture of Bhojpuri society through one of its literary forms, i.e. 'Folk-Song'. India portrays 'unity in diversity' in its great panorama of myriad cultures. Living in one country, Indians are blessed with diverse cultures; and Bhojpuri culture is one of them and it also contributes to the diversity of the country.

Folk songs reveal especially the individual views and customs of a particular society. Alan Lomax argues in his *The Good and the Beautiful in Folk Song* that "Since a folk song is transmitted orally by all or most members of a culture, generation after generation, it represents an extremely high consensus about patterns of meaning and behavior of cultural rather than individual significance." Further, in his *Folk Song Style and Culture*, he says, "Expressive behavior may be one of the most sensitive and reliable indicators of culture patterns and social structure. Apparently as people live, they do sing." Thus, folk songs represent the culture and

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

Neelam Yadav, M.A., NET, Ph.D. (Linguistics)

Bhojpuri Folksongs and Culture

customs of a society significantly. In the present paper, it is illustrated how Bhojpuri folk songs are tinged with varied facets of Bhojpuri culture and customs, even from gender point of view.

Bhojpuri Language and Literature

Bhojpuri serves as a regional language, spoken in sections of north-central and eastern India. It is spoken in the neighboring region of the southern plains of Nepal. Bhojpuri as a language is also spoken in Guyana, Suriname, Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago and Mauritius. As for the decision of the government of India, during the enumeration of census, they had disagreed and estimated Bhojpuri to be a dialect of Hindi. However, presently, the government of India has contrived to grant Bhojpuri a `statutory` status as a national scheduled language. Bhojpuri is being split when sharing vocabulary with Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu and other Indo-Aryan languages of northern India.

Bhojpuri was known as the `Northern Frontier Province Language` during the rule of British Empire in India. It had adopted a patriotic tone then, and after independence it turned into a `language of the community`. During the latter period, the literature in Bhojpuri was more tilted and inclined towards the humanitarian sentiments and conflicts; and it followed the dispirited and depressed economic development of the Bhojpuri speaking region.

In the modern days, Bhojpuri literature, folklore, art and culture is marked by the eminent presence of writers, poets, politicians and actors that have lent it an innovative and novel dimension, a kind of `revivification`. Notable contributors to this trend includes: Anand Sandhidoot, Pandey Kapil, Ashok Dwivedi, Bhikari Thakur, and others in India. Ashok Dwivedi, Editor of the popular Bhojpuri magazine Paati (Ballia), Onkareshwar Pandey (writer and Editor of world`s first Bhojpuri news weekly, from Delhi) and finished bulks of work in compliance with the Bhojpuri culture and language, and documenting the bonded and apprenticed laborers` arrival on the island.

Different Forms of Bhojpuri Folk Songs and Women`s Emotions

There are different forms of Bhojpuri folk songs which reflect the colourful shades of Bhojpuri culture. One of the most popular and well known forms of folk music - *Kajris* are often sung by classical and semi classical musicians.

The word *Kajri* is possibly a derivative of *Kajal* - meaning *Kohl* or *Black*. In a country of sizzling hot summers - the black monsoon clouds bring with them relief and great joy – filling the human beings with a need to sing out loud. This is the moment for the *Kajri* to be sung, *Kajari* songs are the rain songs of Bhojpuri regions - seem to attract especially the Bhojpuri women. For example in the following *Kajari* song a lady is addressing her sister-in-law and

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

Neelam Yadav, M.A., NET, Ph.D. (Linguistics)

Bhojpuri Folksongs and Culture

refusing to go with her husband in the rainy season because she wants to enjoy rain freely, which she can't do at her in-law's place.

***Saiyā more āvē anavaiyā ho,
Savanavā mẽ nā jaibai bhauji,
Sone ke thālī mein Jeonā parosalīn
Saiyā more rahē chāhe jāē ho,
Savanavā mẽ nā jaibai bhaujī.***

*(My husband is coming to take me away,
but O sister-in-law I will not go in rainy season,
I served him in golden salver,
whether my husband stays or leaves,
O sister-in-law ! I will not go in rainy season,)*

(Ashutosh Malaviya. <http://www.bhojpuri.org.htm.com/BhojpuriSahitya> Sangrah.)

On the other hand, in another *kajari song*, a woman is craving for her husband, not wishing to let him go to another country, this shows the opposite of what is mentioned in the example (1), such as:

***Pardeswā na jaio piyā sāwan me,
Bādal garje, bijuri chamake,
Piyā binu morā jiyā dhadake...***

*(O my dear husband! don't go to another country in sawan (rainy season),
roaring sound of clouds, and lightning of thunder,
frighten me a lot without husband...)*

Thus, it shows the fluctuating condition of a Bhojpuri woman, which even shows the difference of place, when she was at her mother's place she was not willing to come back to her in-laws' house, even with her husband, in the rainy season. Whereas when she was at her in-laws' house, she wants her husband to be with her in the season as she is not comfortable listening to the roar of thunder and lightning. This fear might be the fear of the place (in-laws' house) which doesn't make her feel comfortable, and she is longing for her husband to be with her as she considers him the closest one in the family. Of course, in Bhojpuri community a girl is always instructed and expected to be perfect to fit in her in-laws' house, and this might vitiate sometimes her natural feelings also.

Restrictions for an Unmarried Girl

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

Neelam Yadav, M.A., NET, Ph.D. (Linguistics)

Bhojpuri Folksongs and Culture

Another example of *kajari song* indicates the restrictions for an unmarried girl in the Bhojpuri society, how her brother's wife taunts her when she wants to go outside in the rainy season to play rain song.

*Kaise khele jābe sāwan me kajariyā,
badariā ghere anganā mē,
Bhauji bole aisan boli hamare lākh kareje goli,
tu ta chadhal bādu hamari najariyā,
Badariyā ghere anganā me...
Tut ta jāte hau akeli tohare sang nā sahelī,
kul ta gheri lehan tohari dagariyā,
Badariyā ghere anganā me...*

*(How shall I go to play rain song as clouds clustering around the courtyard,
My brother's wife's taunt is as bullet holes my heart;
I keep an eye on you (brother's wife says),
clouds clustering around the courtyard.,
You are going alone without friends,
and all (lads) might surround you on the way.
(Brother's wife taunts and moreover intimates her fear and says)
Clouds clustering around the courtyard)*

So, if we talk about typical Bhojpuri culture, it doesn't allow unmarried girls to go alone anywhere due to fear of molestation, and family members also keep check on her activities rigidly.

Romantic and Pathetic Situations

Jhoomar is another shade of Bhojpuri folk-song. Thematically it deals with the women's thoughts, feelings and dreams of marriage, and certain romantic or pathetic situations belonging to it. Marriage system of any society is a great reflection of the culture, e.g.

*Naihar mein rahaĩ, badā re sukh kainĩ, khele ke milal gotiyā re sanvariya,
Sasurā mein ailĩ, badā re dukh painĩ, bele ke milal, rotiyā re sānvariya...*

*(Being at mother's house, I underwent lot of facilities, and played with pills,
O dear husband!,*

*My In-laws' house, I underwent lot of griefs and jolts, and I have to make
chapattis)*

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

Neelam Yadav, M.A., NET, Ph.D. (Linguistics)

Bhojpuri Folksongs and Culture

Here, the above mentioned example of Jhoomar intimates us of the phase of a woman's life before and after marriage, how before marriage she was leading a frivolous life; and facing adverse circumstances at the later phase of her life. Thus, the lines indicate the culture of the women of the society.

On Women's Attire

Next instance produces certain other cultural elements regarding women's wear and costumes e.g.

*Chatak chunari laike kaa kariho guiya
Nā hamare pāyal nā hamare chhājal,
Akel bichhuā laike kā kariho guiyān,
Chatak chunari laike kā kariho guiyān*

(What I will do with such hot and loud stole, O dear
I have no anklet to wear,
Then what will I do with the only toe-ring,
What will I do with such hot and loud stole, O dear friend!)

In the above lines the terms '*chhaajal*' and '*bichhuā*' stand for the ornaments '*anklet*' and '*toe-ring*' respectively which is compulsory, for married women to wear. In the lines above, a woman complains to her friend about anklet and toe-ring. She says what is the use of '*chunari*' because she has no anklet to wear and same with the toe-ring. Married women are always fond of wearing these ornaments. Thus, the lines indicate the craze for these set of ornaments along with *chatak chunari* (*attractive stole*).

Physical Appearance of Bhojpuri Males

Pahchaan is an appraisal song of the nature and physical appearance of Bhojpuri males, e.g.

*Lilara par chamcham shān,ta janiha ki hawe bhojpuriyā...
Chamkat suruj samān ,ta janiha ki hawe bhojpuriyā...
Hriday khulā āsmān ,ta janiha ki hawe bhojpuriyā...
Jān se bhi pyārā swabhimān,ta janiha ki hawe bhojpuriyā ...*

(If forehead is shining with glory, means he belongs to the Bhojpuri community...
If shining like sun, means he belongs to the Bhojpuri community...
If he is open hearted like sky, means he belongs to the Bhojpuri community...)

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

Neelam Yadav, M.A., NET, Ph.D. (Linguistics)

Bhojpuri Folksongs and Culture

If he love self respect than death, means he belongs to the Bhojpuri community)
(Mahadev Pandey ‘Nirmal’: <http://www.bhojpuri.org.htm.com/> Bhojpuri Sahitya Sangrah

The folk-song, here, focuses the glorified personality of Bhojpuri men. The following lines present the physical descriptions of ‘Bhojpuriya’ (Bhojpuri people), e.g.

*Lamhar charahar chamakat badanawā,
Dekhte bujhas pahalwān,ta janiha ki hawe bhojpuriyā...
Gorakhpur,Kashi,Tirath Harihar Nāth ke,
Buxar Viswamitr Ramji ke saath ke
Garb se karihe bakhān ,ta janiha ki hawe bhojpuriyā.
Desh khatir hathwe me jān,ta janiha ki hawe bhojpuriyā. ...*

(A long, tall, and shining body,
if you think him a wrestler at first sight it means he belongs to the
Bhojpuri community,

Gorakhpur, Kashi, Pilgrimage of Harihar Naath,
Buxar, and the company of Vishwa Mitra,

If he praises proudly means he belongs to the Bhojpuri community (Bhojpuriyā).

If he is always ready to die for the country, means...)

(Mahadev Pandey ‘Nirmal’: <http://www.bhojpuri.org.htm.com/> Bhojpuri Sahitya Sangrah.)

Thus, it shows that Bhojpuri men are physically well-built, religious, and they love to talk about pilgrimages, and are very patriotic by nature. Although it might be a biased description by the poet as every poet loves to praise his own land and people.

Bhojpuri Marriages

If we talk about Bhojpuri marriages, we can find varieties of customs in the community, followed in the marriages, are really unique and attractive. There are ample examples of marriage songs which present beautiful and live illustrations of the marriage customs, e.g.

*Dudhiyahi matiyā se bhitiyā potāyil,
gayi ke gobrā se ānganā lipāyil,
kache kache basawā ke madhawā gadāyil...*

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

Neelam Yadav, M.A., NET, Ph.D. (Linguistics)

Bhojpuri Folksongs and Culture

(Walls are clayed with white clay,
courtyard is cleaned with cow dung,
green bamboos are used to build a thatch (for the conduction of the marriage
rituals of bride and bridegroom under the shade.)

Mud Houses

Mud houses are found in countryside areas of Bhojpuri speaking community, so during any auspicious occasion walls are clayed for cleanliness and courtyard is cleaned by spreading and wiping the surface finely with cow dung. 'Mandhawa' is very significant in Bhojpuri marriage which is built and shaded with the help of five green bamboos under which all the rituals, Kanyadaan, Sindoor daan, Pheraa, of marriage are conducted. E.g.

*Sindhur sambhār ke uthahiā e sundar bar,
Mātā-pitāa kanyādān toke kaile ho,
Aankhe ka putari banahiā e sundar bar.*

(Lift up vermilion very carefully, O beautiful groom,
Mother-father has donated daughter,
make her apple of your eyes, , O beautiful groom,)

The significance of vermilion is great in Bhojpuri marriages, so the groom is being made aware of it, while they lift it up to place it into the hair-parting of the bridegroom.

In the marriage ritual of kanyādān, parents now hand over the responsibilities of their daughter to the groom, and the groom accepts the shouldering of the responsibilities promised; this is done to the accompaniment of ritual chanting.

After marriage, the time of farewell of the bride arrives. The moment is full of compassion and moving. During 'bidāi' (farewell) a bride is always instructed by her mother to be very obliged to her in-laws and husband, e.g.

*beti ke bidai hola bhayile bihanawā,
rowat rowat aankh suzi gayile sabke,
doliya taiyār āj jāli bāchhi tadake,
sāsu e sasur ke charan gangā jal ha,
patī ke charan swarg as nirmal ha,*

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

Neelam Yadav, M.A., NET, Ph.D. (Linguistics)

Bhojpuri Folksongs and Culture

kahli mahtāri jini bhuliha kahanwa, beti ke...

(Now in the early morning daughter is being bid farewell by her family members, everybody's eyes are swollen, 'doli' (palanquin) is ready for the daughter is going in the dawn, the feet of mother-in-law and father-in-law are pure water of the Ganga, and husband's feet are like heaven, mother says not to forget this phrase.)

A Rainbow Culture

Thus, Bhojpuri society has a rainbow culture. If we talk about fast and festival of the society, we can find numerous colourful examples, such as Bhojpuri songs on 'Chhat pooja' beautifully express its customs. Similarly 'sohar' is one of the varieties of folk-songs which is sung especially on the occasion of the birth of a male child, and thus emphasize strong gender distinction in the society, e.g,

*Dhan dhan bhāg lalanawā tu lehalaa janamawā ho,
Lalanā lāl bhailē kulwā ka dīpak,
Gaganwā ka chanawā ho.*

(O my baby (boy)! It's my good luck that you have taken birth, it is a baby boy who has been born to light up the lamp of the dynasty, is the moon in the sky.)

Generally birth of a baby boy is celebrated and felicitated to a great extent in the society; Bhojpuri society has not been untouched by this culture of gender discrimination. Although, there has been a drastic change in the society regarding baby girls' birth celebration, yet peoples' feelings are intangible somewhere concerning this matter.

To Conclude

Thus, folk-songs are the genuine source that reveal to a great extent the culture and customs of any society. As we saw, in the paper different songs are mentioned for different occasions which inform us about the system, custom and culture the society follows. The folk songs that are actually sung on the occasions of marriage, child birth, or fasts and festivals actually acquaint us with even on how and when to celebrate them. Along with this we can also get a clue to their interpersonal relationships. The traditional fragrance of these folk songs enchants us by their Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

Neelam Yadav, M.A., NET, Ph.D. (Linguistics)

Bhojpuri Folksongs and Culture

peculiar charm. Sometimes we are thrilled to imagine about the atmosphere of the land where these songs are composed and sung. They are also a distinguishing mark of the artistic prowess and intellectual potential of the Bhojpuri community to produce the literary pieces of lasting beauty and significance. Thus folk literature introduces us to the common man, and, of course, makes us feel the aura of the speech communities. For all these reasons, Bhojpuri folk literature deserves to be placed in the rich corpus of Indian folk literature.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 6 June 2012
Neelam Yadav, M.A., NET, Ph.D. (Linguistics)
Bhojpuri Folksongs and Culture