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

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The objectives of the journal are:

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 - To publish seminal articles written by senior scholars on Folklores, making them available from the original sources. It would help present lives of folklorists, outlining their substantial contribution to existing resources.
 - To publish book reviews, field work reports, descriptions of research projects and announcements for seminars and workshops.
 - To present interviews with eminent folklorists and scholars from India and abroad.
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From the Desk of the Editor-in-Chief

The Himalaya is melting due to environmental degradation. Now there is a serious setback in maintaining the equilibrium of environment of the great mountain for human development intervention. Over five decades the ecologists like Vandana Shiva, Sundar lal Bahuguna, Sekhar Pathak, Rajendra Sharma and many activists questioned the construction of dams on rivers, opposed the modern development activities harmful for environments. When the Himalayas was Devatma (divine soul) till then it was a place of sacred ecology for the whole globe. Gradually when the modern world was infatuated with its greed to grab land, water and trees, the crisis emerged. Many mountains in the Himalayas became modern cities, and flow of the water was obstructed. The sacred ecology is remained limited to myths and legends. Rivers like Chandrabhaga also lost its serenity. Now the native animals including human animals are at threat and their survival has become a dangerous issue. When nature is disturbed, it takes in own course of action. Now Joshi math city is going to be vacated for its land sliding. Similarly many river side roads and buildings are also falling down, by which many people losing their home land and properties. The perils has started from last five decades and slowly it has grabbed the Himalayans ecologically and the consequences are now realised. Ecology and its planetary crisis has been repeatedly studied and the ecologists are seriously warning the globe to restore the globe by safeguarding the earth, water, air and forests. The atomic bombs and nuclear war has put the earth on a danger of devastation. The human civilization had never been witnessed such a devastation where the earth will crack for its ecological imbalance and human settlement will leave their homes. Had it been a natural calamities, there was a solace to fight it, but when the conscious destruction of nature occurs, it is a civilizational curse to humankind.

Looking at the cultural lens, I feel that the esoteric ecological knowledge of the Himalayas and its deep knowledge is either unknown to the development planners or they are in a trap to modern development which does not supportive to the eternity of nature. Richard Cahn,

‘ the effect of corporate globalisation have been equally profound on other species, as we have experienced 1000 times the historical rate of normal background extinction, with upwards of 30 percent of all mammals, birds, and amphibians currently threatened with permanent disappearance (MEA, 2005, p.4) In other words, over the span of just few

decades we are involved in a mass die-off nonhuman animals such as we have not witnessed for 5 million years, and worse yet, prediction for the future expect these rates of extinction to increase tenfold. P.5, quoted in "Critical Pedagogy, Eco literacy and Planetary Crisis: The Eco Pedagogy Movement" written by Richard Cahn, Peter Lang, USA)

Not only this, the crisis are manifold, may it be ocean or desert, Europe, or America, Russia or Ukraine, China or Taiwan, India or Pakistan. The globe has turned into a wasteland and many more destruction are yet to be witnessed.

In such a situation, it is the ecological knowledge that is in the cultural practices of people can save the globe. The most nonliterate people of the globe who lived in the productive practice worshipping nature as spiritual entity can have the strength of sustaining the globe. This knowledge is represented and expressed in the folklore, language, and ritual practices of many communities of the globe. I remember Prof Sekhar Pathak, a historian of the Himalayas, who has travelled the whole of the great mountain and have collected the local knowledge related to it. Another expert on the Himalayan studies is Prof Mark Turin, an anthropologist who has studied the mountain, being close to its lap. These writers tremendous knowledge on the Himalayas, I presume, this has not explored by the development planners on sustaining the Himalayas. This mountain is not only safeguard Indian ecology and culture, but the whole globe. If the Himalayas, the father of spirituality, and the river as its daughter are in threat, who will be the Bhagiratha to bring the mother Ganga to the earth. The mythology of Ganga is a sacred geography that spells out the deep rooted faith of many Indians in their everyday life.

The present volume of Lokaratna is based on such themes like Community, Ritual, and Performance contributed by the eminent writers, scholars field researchers of different field. The sacred geography and its manifestation in visual art, seeds, rituals, even in sacred groves, courtyards and many more facets of culture have been analysed from an eco-pedagogy point of view. These articles mostly represent the collective social memories and the purpose of action in the act of human creativity, maybe it is oral tradition, rites and rituals, visual arts or performances.

I wish this volume will attract the readers for a dialogue on sustaining the globe through their cultural actions. My heartfelt thanks to the editorial group who have voluntarily, and meticulously edited the articles and made it possible to bring out this journal to be published by Folklore Foundation.

Mahendra Kumar Mishra

From the Desk of the Executive Editor



Community, Ritual, and Performance

Rituals and performances are intimately related. Most of the performances of different communities are associated with rituals. These rituals could be related to social customs like village festivals, welcome of guests or could be life cycle rituals like, birth of a child, marriage or death. Rituals could also be in the honour of the village deities or local gods and goddesses. These rituals have social, psychological and physical functions. Whenever there are rituals, there are performances such as songs, music, chants and dances. These folk forms are rich resources of communities. They offer us knowledge on different aspects of life of communities. The theme of this issue of *Lokaratna* is Ritual. We have as many as ten articles in the folklore section and most of them are devoted different aspects of rituals and communities. Chubala Sanglir's article titled "Agriculture Related Cultural Traditions of the Ao Nagas: Rites and Rituals, Major Festivals" relates agriculture to the identity of the Ao Nagas and describes their rites, rituals and festivals, agricultural practices, customs, and rituals. Hari Madhab Ray's article titled "Mashan deity of the Rajbanshis: its forms, types and rituals" introduces the mashan deities worshipped by the Rajbanshis of Cooch Behar and describes various forms of worship offered to them. Rukulu Kezo, Metseilhouthie Mor, and Vezolu Puro in their article titled "Reconstructing the Lost Past of the Nagas through a Discourse on the *Tenyimia* Way of Life" explore the cultural past of the Nagas of the North East India by looking at the representation of the Nagas and their aspects of culture by the western scholars. Jagannath Mohanty studies the tribal paintings of the tribes in Odisha and foregrounds the paintings that are normally done as part of rituals. He has extensively conducted field work among many tribes of Odisha to understand and interpret the meaning of visual arts of the tribes. Amit Kumar and Rabindranath Sarma's article titled "Folklore and Film: Film based on Famous Folktale Suhani Mehar" study the relationship between film and folklore and discuss a film that has been made using a folktale. Bidisha Chakravorty in her article titled "The saas-bahu paradigm: Portrayal of mother-in-law in Bhojpuri folk songs" studies the representation of the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in Bhojpuri folk songs. Vahini Billu in her article titled "Oral Narratives and the Cultural Identity of Fisher folk from Emic Perspective" studies the representation of the woman narrators of folklore in the context of folktales of the fisher folk in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. Sukanya Kar's article titled "Unearthing Voices: A Study of the Miscellaneous Social Customs and Marriage Practices of the Rajbanshis of Bengal" explains the social customs and marriage rituals of the Rajbanshis in

the Cooch Behar region of West Bengal. Tsutshowe-ü Sekhamoin the article titled “*Wu Tso* (Charmstone): Credence of Khezha Naga” explores the beliefs of the Khezho Nagas concerning charm stone. Devesh Bisht in his article titled “Resisting Democracy: Classical Art Forms as Sites of Socio-Cultural Hegemonies” foregrounds the art form and examines communities’ participation in them. Kalpana Mukunda Iyengar and Shreya Singh in their article “Rusty in Room on the Roof: Cycle of Socialization” highlight the socializing activities of the protagonist Rusy in Ruskin Bond’s novel – *The Room on the Roof*. Sangeeta Jawla in her article titled “Bhakti and Pottery” discusses the poetry of the saint poet Gora Bhakta Kumbhar and explores different aspects of his poems. Swapnarani Singh in her article titled The Short Stories of Jagannath Prasad Das: A Critical Analysis” discusses the short stories of J.P. Das and examines their different features that make his short stories unique. The pedagogy section has many informative articles. Gedam Kamalakar and Kandi Kamala’s article “New Direction in Higher Education in India discusses some of the features of new education policy in India. Revathi Sinivas and Aditi Das in their article “Task-readiness framework: Schematic familiarity and written performance” assess the performance of learners in writing. Sangeetha P. In her article “Using Children’s Literature to teach Reading and Writing: Strategies to counter Matthew Effect” proposes certain strategies to use children’s literature to equip students with reading and writing skills. There are three Book-Reviews in the Book-Reviews section. Hitesh Kumar Mishra reviews Tagore’s Gitanjali translated by Pradeep K. Panda. Pramod K.Das reviews a book titled *Life’s Little Tales* written by B.N. Patnaik. Sharoon Sunny reviews a book titled *Methods of Teaching English* edited by Anand Mahanand, Amit Kumar and Subhasis Nanda. *Jodan Aalang* A multilingual tribal poetry anthology has been written by Niranjan Khuntia, a senior Gandhian scholar from Odisha has been reviewed by Dr Mahendra Kumar Mishra. The Interview Section has an interview of Tirtho Mukherjee by Mahesh Kumar Dey.

Lokaratna has reached its twenty-five years celebrating its silver jubilee with the team of scholars and intellectuals. Founded by the visionary scholar Dr Mahendra K. Mishra in a humble way it has reached its glory now. We have many prominent scholars who have been associated with it as members of the board of advisors and members of the editorial boards. We have also many erudite scholars contributing to its richness. The articles included in the journal are of highly good quality. We would like to thank the contributors for their valuable contributions to this volume. All the articles included here are research based and substantial. We also thank the members of the editorial board for going through the articles and reviewing them. We thank Dr Monali Sahu Pathange for the thematic cover design. Lastly, we thank Dr Mahendra K. Mishra for his guidance and encouragement. Here we offer the *Lokaratna* to all our readers!

Anand Mahanand

Executive Editor

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Lokaratna Vol. XV (June, 2023)

Call for Papers

We invite original and un-published research articles, in the fields of Folklore, Literature, Culture, Pedagogy including English Language Teaching for the 15th volume of *Lokaratna*; a peer-reviewed International online journal with ISSN: 2347-6427. Papers that are under consideration by any other journal should not be submitted. Contributors are requested to adopt the following guidelines of (APA manual -7th edition) to write their papers:

- Font - Times New Roman with 12 font size
- Line spacing - double
- The paper should have an abstract of 150 -200 words.
- The abstract should be followed by about 5 key words.
- For in-text citation and references, please follow the APA style (7th Edition).

Contributors are requested to read the latest volumes of *Lokarana* and follow the same academic conventions.

Deadline for the submission of the manuscript is 31.03.2023 and could be mailed to:

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FOLKLORE



Agriculture Related Cultural Traditions of the Ao Nagas:

Rites and Rituals, Major Festivals

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Abstract

Culture is a great pointer to locate people's identity. Attempts have been made to bring out how agricultural practices are intimately associated with many social and cultural customs, patterns and even habits. Since time immemorial, the dominant economy of the Nagas has been agriculture. Many communal as well as individual socio-religious activities are associated with agricultural operation. The present work focuses on the various beliefs relating to agricultural practices associated with the early Ao Naga. The concept of Lijaba (considered as the supreme by the early Ao Naga) and the beliefs in spirits relating to agriculture has been analysed to show how it led to the development of various rites and rituals, observance of gennas, some of which developed into major festivals that gives distinct identity to the Ao Naga community. Nagas are heterogeneous people and hence there is no common Naga festival as such. Each tribe has their own festival celebrated at their own time in every calendar year. The present work aims to shed light on the ideas behind the Ao Naga folk beliefs emphasizing on the rites and ceremonies in the development of major festivals like Moatsü and Tsüngrem Mong celebrated by the people till today.

Keywords: agriculture, folk belief, culture, festivals, identity

Introduction

Different Naga tribes have developed their unique life styles, mode of production, belief systems and various other cultural practices making themselves as homogenous units. Therefore, Nagas as a whole bears a heterogeneous character with complexities and variations which has been re-modeled and re-defined in accordance to the needs of the people and their environment. As such, in the Naga country we come across regional variations in agricultural practices, tools and implements, land use pattern, type of ownership though the subsistence pattern is almost the same. The cultural traditions thus developed in the process of people's interaction with nature gives out distinct local identities as well as distinct festivals particular to every tribe.

Agriculture has been the dominant economy. Manufacturing and trade had been in a very rudimentary form and were supplementary in nature. In relation to the topographic and climatic features, both *jhum* and wet rice/terraced cultivation were practiced. The terrain being hilly, *Jhumming* was carried on a more massive scale and perhaps owing to sparse population with abundance of land. However, the mode of production follows a similar pattern in both the economies. This paper attempts to study as to how many of the Naga cultural traditions, especially major festivals found its basis in the traditional worship system, in the observance of rites and rituals related to agriculture.

Development of Communal feeling in relation to Economic Practices: Among the Ao people, the relation of production are expressed in the form of communal labor system, where labor activities are based on simple reciprocal co-operative effort. During agricultural operations, households could mobilize the labor of the neighbors and kinsmen on the basis of reciprocity. Exchange of labor in the form of communal labor system has been the driving force and become the concrete basis of Ao Naga agricultural practices. Along the same lines, speaking about the Naga economic practices, Sanyu (1995:54) opined that ‘labor is a part of social relations and it is the communal labor that is the bottleneck of production’. With no advanced technique for agricultural operation in the hilly terrain, it calls for human labor and community solidarity where the communal system of labor organization becomes the greatest mechanism for production. Nienu observes that ‘higher level of dependency exists in Naga society than in others, but unlike the subservient dependency on his landlord (a common practice among the plains people, with a rigid caste system as the basis of their social structure), the Naga individual’s contribution to and participation in achieving group solidarity operates at a higher level. (Nienu 2015:129). Likewise, the communal labor system, the core of the economic practices is reflected in the nature of celebrating festivals with communal feelings.

Agriculture related traditional Beliefs: Development of Rites and Rituals: Right from the selection of the plot of land for cultivation up to harvesting, people perform various rites and rituals with reverence. Traditionally, people used to observe various rites before they undertook to cutting and clearing of the jungle for cultivation. The most auspicious days for burning are the seventh or ninth days after the full moon’ (Mills: 1973:111). After burning the jungle, people observed the *alurongmung*¹. There is another very important observance to purify the burnt field known as *alumeshimung*. People pray and sacrifice a fowl, so that they can work on the field with good health and bless with bumper crops. In this way, observance of the rites and rituals become a social responsibility. The ideas behind the rites and ceremonies are functional in character. Every rite and ritual has to be done perfectly for the prosperity of the land depends on the bounties of the spirit they worshipped. It was believed that ‘one will not prosper if he omits the sacrifices due to the deities around him, who unappeased, are ever ready to blight his crops and bring illness and death upon him and to his family’ (Jamir, L.S. 2012:79). The Ao Nagas believed in *Lijaba* as

¹*Alurongmung* in Ao Naga dialect means field-burning observance. *Alu* (Field), *rong* (Burn), *mung* (Religious observance involving abstinence).

possessing both benevolent and malevolent attributes. The supreme should be appeased for fear of retributions as well as for blessings and protection. Along with the ritual ceremonies, people observed *Anempong* ,(Ao dialect) understood as consecration and severe restrictions in eating habit and especially for movement of the people for a particular period of time. All this was done to gain favor of *Lijaba*. ‘Every ceremony is followed by *genna*, called *Anempong* .*Anempong* is observed just before and after every ceremony, it is a period of purification during which, the entire normal activities should be ceased...failure to observe or misconduct of such *Anempong* leads tragedy and misfortune’ (Jamir, T.N & Lanunungsang,A.2005:125). People believed in *Lijaba*’s bounties for good harvests. Therefore, different ritual ceremonies were performed and *genna* observed which culminated in *Moatsü* celebration in the form of festival.

One very interesting rite before *Moatsü* was the seed offering ceremony (*Metsüwalok* in Ao Naga dialect). This is done after the germination of the seeds where ‘one of the priests bring a newly grown plants from the field and transplants them near the village gate while the whole villagers observe another *genna* for one day. After transplanting the plants, a feast with pork, egg and chicken follows. The priests, *Putir*, a clan representative of the village republic eat the meat. If the plants grow well, it was considered as good omen’ (Jamir, T.N & Lanunungsang,A.2005:128). Since observance of the ceremonies involves the whole village, it brings out a communal feeling and further cements social relationship. Here, we can trace a clear linkage between prosperity, celebration of festivals and the peoples’ faith in its observances.

Moatsü Festival: Among the Ao Nagas, *Moatsü* is the most important festival. It is observed as the festival of blessings and is celebrated in the month of May just after completion of sowing seeds. The celebration may be taken as akin to how we celebrate after a successful business establishment and for the prosperity of the enterprise. The celebration stretches for three days continuously where people invoke blessings upon the crops, they have planted for people were dependent on agriculture. We can gather the idea that the main objective of the *Moatsü* celebration was to invoke the blessings of God for the crops they have planted and to protect the crops from any calamities till the harvest is done. Jamir, L.S writes, they worship God for healthy growth of the seeds they have sown in their field and for good season throughout the year.(Jamir, L.S.2012:80).

The interpretation of the meaning of *Moatsü* is given by Purtongzuk where he writes, *Moatsü* means(fencing of paddy) *mo* means (paddy) *atsü* means (fence). It come from marking a division between dry, (*Tsüngkum*) and rainy season, (*Mei*.). Through this festival, blessing is sought for the entire village community. This festival is observed when the sowing of grains in new fields (*luti*) had just been finished and the grains in the old field *pen* (*maibo*) germinates in the eleventh month (Longchar,P.2002:288). Amid the celebration, one prominent feature of the *Moatsü* celebration is marked by certain overt rituals related to fertility-

During this festival one of the ‘symbolic celebrations is *Sangpangtu*, where a big fire is lit and men and women sit around it putting on their complete best attire, the womenfolk serves the wine and meat. Village witch doctors forecast whether good or evil days are awaiting the people and the village by readings of the celebration of the *Moats* festival. This festival was also marked with ritualistic public fornication of a young virgin and a pubescent boy to mark the fertility of the land at that time. This ritual was stopped since the advent of Christianity to the land’.²

Tsungrem Mong³: This festival is celebrated in spring on the eve of harvest. The beauty about this festival is that it marks the physical ease and relaxation after a long toil of plantation and tending of crops in the field. During the bygone days, this festival was celebrated to invoke blessings from the Supreme. People pray for bountiful harvest and offered sacrifices⁴. *Tsüngrem Mong* festival is celebrated from 1st to 3rd August every calendar year. Its main object is to offer prayer for a good harvest and good crops from the cultivated field. They pray and worship their god for his abundant blessings and protection upon their fields and other crops from natural calamities or from wild animals.

Looking into the origins of *Tsüngrem Mong* festival, it goes back to Chungliyimti, (the origin myth of the Ao people says that they emerged out of *Longterok* Six stones at Chungliyimti). Story about the origin of *Tsüngrem Mong* as narrated by Longkumer, A., says that while living at Chungliyimti, two friends namely Tsüngremsang and Merangsang used to cultivate their fields with utmost care and the crops were equally good and healthy. However, at the time of harvest, Tsüngremsang had a bumper harvest but Merangsang’s harvest was not as expected, much lesser than Tsüngremsang. Therefore, when inquired upon Tsüngremsang said, he used to offer sacrifice to win the favor of god and hence, blessed with bountiful harvest. Next year, Merangsang too following the advice of Tsüngremsang, observed all the rites and rituals and was thus blessed with abundant harvest. Henceforth, all the villagers followed suit and offered sacrifice to the god with all necessary rites and ritualistic observances in the form of *Tsüngrem Mong* celebration.⁵

In this *Tsüngrem Mong* celebration, on the ‘first day a pig is sacrificed outside the oldest hut and a piece of meat is given to the house at each end of the main village street, this is a present for *Lijaba*, the Supreme being, distributed in this way he is bound to find it ready for him from whichever directions he enters the village.’⁶ This kind of observance shows how the people had reverential respect as well as fear lest they offend the supreme and bring misfortunes to the village.

²<https://mokokchung.nic.in.nagaland.gov.in>

³*TsüngremMong /Tsüngremmong orTsüngremMung* is understood in the same sense.

⁴Information provided by Imnatoshi, Mokokchung, 22nd January 2021

⁵Information provided by AlemtoshiLongkumer on 5th October 2022, Kohima, Nagaland.

⁶<https://ipr.nagaland.gov.in>

Therefore, every ritual was done with much precision to appease the god to gain his favor. In celebrating the festival, both young and old clad in their finest attire come out to enjoy the occasion which is marked by singing, dancing and feasting in appreciation and thanking the god for the good crops to be harvested. Here, the idea of mutual benefit, ‘You give us this, so we give you this in return’ can be discerned from all these observances.

Development of Songs and Dance: Singing and dancing during celebration of festivals has become a crucial element of the Naga cultural tradition. Every festival is marked by singing, dancing and merry-making. Every tribe has developed their own particular tune and dance steps which gives them their own identity. Every Naga tribe celebrates their festivals to this day by both young and old with much fun and vigor. In observing these festivals, it gives the people a sense of communal feeling and strengthens the bond as belonging to a tribe. Also, observance of the festival binds the entire community and gives them a distinct socio-cultural identity. All these shows that the activities related to economic practices are highly entwined with the socio-religious and cultural life of the people. It also indicates how many of the Naga identity find its basis in the traditional economic practices.

Song lines are sung by a leader of the singing group and the rest will repeat the line in unison. Some of the songs sung popularly during *Moatsü* and *Tsüngrem Mong* festivals are produced here as narrated by Alemtoshi Longkumer⁷.

***Moatsü* Songs:**

1. *Moatsünungmatenerbo*

Oh! Yimkulemabener

Temsenumungwarla

Oh! Niarongjenaalirko

Translation:

Those who abstain from participating in *Moatsü* celebration

Oh! They bear no witness to the village

Though I go to attain my field whilst others are celebrating

Oh! I am isolated and lonely.

2. *Oh! We Sepenzüingar*

Anomalet a ni, Anomalet a ni!

Ne yoshi ne tarane!

Translation:

Oh! Comrade/peer group

The wine has no effect

⁷These are the songs sung by the Longsa villagers. Information of the songs provided by Alemtoshi Longkumer, Kohima on 5th October 2022.

We are yet to get drunk
We are awaiting for more meat and for the finest wine.

3. *Oh! Yimkonglendenko*

Oh! YimkongTsüingremkulemtira

Tsüingsangmoajang ma no

Oh! Tsümanashitajungakikulemtira

Tsüingsangtajungmoajangma no.

Translation:

Oh! Fellow villagers

If we can worship our village god

May he bless us with good weather!

Oh! If we can offer him a good bull (*Tsümanashi*)⁸

Bless us with a good weather.

TsüingremMong Songs:

Oh! Chungliyihtikongnung

Oh! Among tsümongtepumesettdang

Tsüingremsang o Merangbanetapuriyimteter

Amongjimongsayakone.

SangputenemnungiatemkimongLijabamongmonga

Lanutarennatimongtangayariaamonger.

Translation:

Oh! In the stretch of Chungliyihti

Oh! When ceremonial celebrations were not yet observed

Tsüingremsang and *Merangba* established a strong friendship and
that mark the beginnings of *TsungremMong* celebrations.

From the top of the Sangpo hill to the hearth of house

Both young and old participated in its observances with dance and merry-making.

The Supreme Being takes various manifestations. When he is related to creation, the earth and vegetation, people call him as *Lijaba*. He is the one who bestows blessings. *Lijaba*'s advice to cut the string or strap of the rice basket after enough harvest is very significant. The cutting of the strap implies that one should have a limit. An excessive accumulation of rice is not approved of by *Lijaba* because this will make a person proud and also insensitive to others' needs. Only a limited amount of grain which will be sufficient for the needs of the family should be preserved. 'Therefore the AOs never approve of the accumulation of wealth. The accumulation of wealth is a violation of *sobaliba*, the core of the AO community's sustaining principle. One is considered as being rich only when one shares what has with the needy' (Longchar 2000: 18-19). The distributive nature of wealth during the feasts of merit bears testimony to this idea. All this suggests the non-

⁸Bulls from the plains of Assam were supposed to be the perfect ones to be offered in sacrifices. It is referred to as *tsümanashi* by the AO people.

accumulative nature of the Naga economic practice. A community feeling of giving and sharing can be located in this very nature of agricultural practices.

Conclusion: Among the Naga people, there are variations in agricultural practices, tools and implements used, land use pattern, type of ownership, social formation though the subsistence pattern is almost the same. Therefore, while adjusting to their environment, different forms of economic practices and relations develop to perpetuate their existence and culture. As such, every Naga tribe develops their own rites and rituals and festivals associated with agriculture. The idea of prosperity and surplus production among the Ao Naga, like all the other Naga tribes, are inextricably mingled with religious ideology. Social ideology which includes its superstition, religious beliefs, and loyalties is a social product. To Gordon Childe (1942:22), ‘this ideology greatly shaped the outlook of the people, its socio-economic formations; it also acts as a binding force, as a regulator of social life’. Many communal as well as individual socio-religious rites are associated with agricultural operation. The rites and ceremonies are functional in character and traditionally, the essence of socio-religious and socio-cultural life of the people lies in the observance of rites and rituals. Some of the rites and ceremonies associated with agriculture assume the nature of major festivals which keep binding the entire community.

Among the Ao Nagas, *Moatsü* is the most important festival. It is observed as the festival of blessings and celebrates in the month of May just after completion of sowing seeds to invoke blessings upon the new grains and *Tsüngrem Mong* is the festival of thanks-giving which is celebrated in the month of August just before harvest. Likewise, The Lotha Nagas celebrates *Tohku Emong*, the post-harvest festival in the month of November as a time to rejoice the fruit of hard work in the field. *Aoling Monyu* festival is celebrated by the Konyaks in the month of April to welcome the spring season and pray for prosperity of their field. The main object of the *Aoling* is celebrating the presence of *Wangwan*, the divine spirit of blessing...’this is a time when people remember their friends and relatives...it is also a time of peace and reconciliation. Anyone willing to make peace and reconciliation by forgiving the past incidence or debts takes the opportunity of *Aoling* festival as they share the feasts, singing and dancing together. *Aoling Monyu* is closed with community social work on the last day’.(The *Morung Express*, 6 April ,2015)

What we can observe from celebrating these festivals is that, it promotes a sense of communal feeling and strengthens the bond as belonging to a tribe or a community. In observing the festival, it cements the entire community and gives them a distinct socio-cultural identity. Agricultural activity is an economic activity, but for the Nagas it is more associated with socio-cultural practices and thereby it becomes highly entwined and this tradition still continues despite of the many waves of change. Today’s generation celebrates their festivals with splendid display and with much vigor. By celebrating traditional festivals, it helps keep the memories of the bygone years alive and thus the rich cultural heritage is preserved.

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Mashan Deity of the Rajbanshis: Its Forms, Types and Rituals

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Abstract

Mashan, Masan or Masnais a very powerful male deity worshipped by the Rajbanshis. Depending on the place and the physical characteristics of the deity, and nature of disease thrust upon to the inflicted person, Mashan deity has got various names. According to Sanyal (1965:162), Mashan are of sixteen types, Girija Shankar Ray (1999: 20) classifies Mashan in 18 types and the prevailing belief of Coochbehar, there are one hundred twenty types (choy kuri) of Mashan. This study will reexamine the Mashan deity and its various types, idol forms of the deity, articles for worship, mantras (incantation), and belief regarding the cure from the deity if a person is possessed by it. The author collects information from different primary and secondary sources in order to carry out this study. The author also collects information from some Facebook pages as for example Mashan Associations, Dotor Sarinda group and also from some personal Facebook pages. The author also uses his Facebook post to collect information on the Mashan deity, its forms of rituals and ingredients for worship, prevailing belief etc. Many people from the Facebook friend lists responded to the author on that post. In Addition, the author personally visited many places and collected first-hand information on the Mashan deity.

Keywords: mashan, folklore, rituals, worship, rajbanshi, north bengal, god/goddess, cooch-behar

1. Introduction

Mashan, Masan or Masna⁹ is a very powerful male deity worshipped by the Rajbanshis. It is believed to be very strong, awakening, violent, most dreadful and dangerous of all spirits. It is worshipped in different places of North Bengal, Assam, Rangpur of Bangladesh. Coochbehar remains as the epicenter of worship, the sacred sanctum of the Mashan god (majan^hakurমাশানঠাকুর) is visible almost everywhere in one or two miles near the road or

⁹It is believed to be either a deity (debota) or a powerful spirit (deo). Some people address Mashan as Mashan baba or Mashan Thakur. Many people believe that the status of the powerful spirit Mashan is elevated to godlike stature following the popularity and widespread embracement of Aryanization process into Rajbanshi traditional life and culture.

desolate areas. The Rabha, Hajong and other non-Rajbanshi folks also take part in the worship.¹⁰ After the Aryanization, Mashan god is not only restricted to the Rajbanshis or Koch Rajbanshis of North Bengal and Assam, it also became a powerful cultural symbol of transformation for the community and some non-Rajbanshis also started taking part in the much wider community celebration. This article is divided in the following sections (1) Introduction (2) Research methodology (3) Types of Mashan, (4) Idols of Mashan deity and its variants, (5) Symptoms of the inflicted person, (6) Cure from the Mashan deity (7) Mantras for worshipping the deity (8) Ingredients for worshipping the deity and (9) Conclusion.

2. Research methodology

In order to carry out this study, the author collects data from both the sources: primary and secondary. The author visited different places of North Bengal to gather information from the people about the Mashan god (maʃan^hakur/দেৱমাশানঠাকুৰ/মাশানদেৱতা), its type and the way of worship etc. In his Facebook page¹¹, the author posts the following texts¹² in Rajbanshi/Kamtapuri and many people after reading the post commented and sent him valuable information about the Mashan god.

“Greetings of the day! I would like to know the Mashan god of North Bengal, West Assam, Rangpur of Bangladesh in detail. If you could send me some pictures of Mashan god, the way it is worshipped, different types of mantras, and any other stories associated with it, that would be really fruitful. My email id and WhatsApp number are given below; Email id- harimadhabray@gmail.com, WhatsApp No. 9873634502. Thank you! Dr. Hari Madhab Ray”.

The author also collects information from a Facebook group entitled “Mashan Association”¹³, where group members keep one another updated about various Mashan worship and other important cultural information about the Rajbanshis. The author also uses information from different articles to substantiate his claim on Mashan god. The photos and information collected from the people and other sources are properly acknowledged.

3. Types of Mashan

There are different types of Mashan found in the areas under study. Depending on the place and the characteristics, Mashan has various names. According to Sanyal (1965:162), Mashan are of sixteen types. Girija Shankar Ray (1999: 20) classifies Mashan in 18 types. At the time of Satyapir Puja, the invocation of Mashan god and its eighteen types are noticeable;

¹⁰In the Garo hills and some parts of Mymensingh of Bangladesh, Mashan is believed to be a powerful and awakening god.

¹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/harimadhab.ray/>

¹²See Appendix 1 Research Methodology_ <https://www.facebook.com/harimadhab.ray/>

¹³ See Facebook Group “Mashan Association” -- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/333271530065984>

- (a) আঠারোমাশানতেরোসইকালী [at^haromafan^terof^{oi} kali]
 গগনমন্ডলগিলতাল [gagonmɔndollagiltal]
 দোহাইদোহাইহাংহাংহুংহুং [dohaidohaihanhanhunhun]
Meaning “There are eighteen types of Mashan and thirteen Kali. They dwell around the earth and sky. Let cry for help and take refuge in them”

Following the prevailing belief of Coochbehar, there are one hundred twenty types (choy kuri) of Mashan;

- (b) প্রথমখাইলভাংআনন্দধরম [pɔt^homk^hailb^han¹⁴anond^horom]
 Dharam has eaten *bhang* at first
 ধরমখাইলকরমখাইলবসুমতী [d^horomk^hailk^horomk^hailbo^hsumoti]
 Dharam has eaten, Karam has eaten and Basumati has also eaten
 তারসাথেখাইলভাংলক্ষ্মীসরস্বতী [tar^hat^hek^hailb^han^hlɔkk^hi^horof^hoti]
 Along with them, Lakshmi and Saraswati have eaten *bhang*
 দেবীরপুত্রখাইলভাংকার্তিকআরগণেশ [debirputtorok^hailb^han^hkartikargone]
 The sons of the Durga, Kartik and Ganesh have also eaten *bhang*
 কালীরবেটিখাইলভাংডাকিনীযখিনি [kalir betik^hailb^han^hdakinijok^hini]
 The daughters of Kali, Dakini and Jakhini have eaten *bhang*
 যখারপুত্রখাইলভাংশশানআরমাশান [jok^harputtorok^hailb^han^hʃanarmafan]
 The sons of the Jakha, Sashan and Mashan have also eaten *bhang*
 ঠেঙ্গারনাতিখাইলভাংছয়কুড়িমাশান [t^hengarnatik^hailb^han^hʃekur^himafan]
 The grandsons of Thenga, 120 Mashans have also eaten *bhang*.

Dilip Kumar Dey (2007) talks about twenty-three types of Mashan found in the Coochbehar District only. Many people of Kokrajhar believe that Mashan are 126 types. However, we cannot reach out to a conclusive number, how many types of Mashandeity are found in the regions. Whether it is sixteen, eighteen or twenty-three or one hundred twenty-six, it is a matter of conjecture and imagination. The beliefs cannot be tested and validated by proper scientific experiments. However, the arguments in favor of sixteen types of initial Mashan can be given as the number sixteen plays a pivotal role in the Koch-Rajbanshi community. As some frequent words, [ʃolotiakola], ষোলটিয়াকলা ‘a bunch of sixteen bananas used for religious ceremony’ [ʃolomat^hrikadebi], ষোলমাতৃকাদেবীরপূজা ‘sixteen types of mother goddesses’,

¹⁴an edible preparation of marijuana made by soaking and grinding the young leaves and stems of the Cannabis sativa plant to create a paste usually mixed with milk or water in traditional Indian beverages, and known for its mild hallucinogenic effects.

[ʃolobɔinerbiaɔ]ষোলবইনেরবিয়াও, ‘sixteen sisters getting married’, [ʃoloupurani^hakur]ষোলউপুরানিঠাকুর ‘sixteen other gods’, [ʃologupini]ষোলগুপিনি ‘sixteen female friends of the Lord Krishna’ and [ʃolomaʃan]ষোলমাশান ‘sixteen types of Mashan’.

Discussed below thirty-three types of Mashan based on its nature, symptoms of the inflicted person and physical characteristics;

3.1 [barikamaʃan] বারিকামাশান

It usually lives in bamboo or areca grove. The literal meaning of the word [bari]বাড়ি means ‘house’ and when it is used with another noun as for example [am]আম+ [bari]বাড়ি = [ambari]আমবাড়ি ‘mango grove’, [jam]জাম+ [bari]বাড়ি = [jambari] জামবাড়ি ‘Jamun grove’, [holɖi]হলদি+ [bari]বাড়ি = [holɖibari] হলদিবাড়ি ‘Turmeric field’, [k^hɛt̪]খ্যাত+ [bari]বাড়ি = [k^hɛt̪bari] খ্যাতবাড়ি ‘ploughing field’. Linguistically, it is seen as an construction and the meaning of the compound words are also fixed, and it refers to name of a place. There are many place names found in the North Bengal with [bari] বাড়ি construction. The [barikamaʃan] বারিকামাশান is believed to dwell near the house premises. They are said to stay in the garden and rest under the shadow of trees or hiding in the fields. It attacks those who do not wash their mouth after their meals or if someone disrespects the deity and visits bamboo or areca grove at noon or at the time of sunset or midnight.

3.2 [picilamaʃan] পিচিলামাশান

It lives in water. The word [picila] পিচিলা means slippery. It attacks those who live near the river bank or visit the Ghats. It may live in the shiny place. At the time of fishing, a person may catch a fish and by the sight or touch he may be frightened and the fish slips out of his hand. The person may be possessed by the deity and as a result he may get fever. It is also known as [t̪iʃilamaʃan] তিসিলামাসান.

3.3 [g^haʈermaʃan] ঘাটেরমাশান

It lives near the bathing Ghat or near the bank of a river. It catches those people who excrete near the Ghats or urinates in the water of the river. It is also called [g^haʈiamaʃan] ঘাটিয়ামাশান. It is seated in lotus position inside a shrine holding a cudgel (goda or mugor) in right shoulder. The vehicle of this Mashan is big headed snake fish (Shal mach). It can be worshipped in any day but the prevailing belief is that the birth of Mashan is on Saturday, people prefer to worship the deity on Saturday. The conventional belief of the Rajbanshi people of Atharokatha Kalapani is as the following;

| | | |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 3. A ¹⁵ | নাইচতেনাইচতেনদীরঘাটোত জিবাডাংরীকালীআইয়োর চুয়াপড়িলঘাম সেইথামথাকিউবজনহইল ঘাটিয়ামাশান। | [naic̥t̥e naic̥t̥enɔ̃dir̥g̥h̥at̥ot̥] [jibad̥aŋri kali aior] [cua p̥ɔrilg̥ham] [ʃeig̥hamt̥h̥akiub̥jonhoil] [g̥h̥at̥jiamaf̥an] |
|--------------------|---|--|

Meaning “While dancing at the river bank, a large tongue protruded out of Mother Kali and she was sweating a lot and GhatiaMashan was born out of her sweat.”

3.4 [c^huciamaf̥an] ছুচিয়ামাশান

It lives in a place where people go for excretion or at roadside. It can attack the travelers. It is believed that this Mashan can attack a person on the pretext of anything and especially if a person travels alone at dawn, mid-noon or at late night (midnight). The vehicle of this Mashan is a pig. If someone is possessed by this spirit, the afflicted person can worship with lime, plantain leaf, incense and incense pot and if the deity is satisfied with the puja, the inflicted person will recover within a few days.¹⁶

3.5 [c̥olanmaf̥an] চলানমাশান

It lives on roads. It lives on the pointed wood. It is also called [c̥olonamaf̥an] ছলনামাশান. The word [c̥olona] means ‘deception’. It can deceive the travelers and they may forget their sense of direction. In some mere excuses, it can put people in danger. The inflicted person may dream of cohabiting so frequently that he/she becomes thin. The person may lose his/her appetite for food.

3.6 [b̥ohitamaf̥an] বহিতামাশান

It lives on water in floating plantain tree or on the raft of plantain trees [kolarb̥ura] কলারভুড়া. It can attack those who come in the water bodies for various purposes. The deity can float on the log of a tree or any floating objects in water.

3.7 [kalmaf̥an] কালমাশান

It lives in the crematory ground. It can attack people who travel at night. It is very dreadful and dangerous among all the Mashans. The similarity between KalMashan and Lord Shiva is worth mentioning here. After Arynaisation many Rajbanshi folks started believing that Mashan is another form of Lord Shiva who roams around in the cremation.

3.8 [kuhulimaf̥an] কুহলীমাশান

¹⁵Appendix 5 (h) Ghater mashan, Subhas Ray, Facebook page 1st April 2021

¹⁶Appendix 5 (k) Chuciya mashan, Subhas Ray, Facebook page 1st April 2021

It lives on trees. The word [kuhuli] কুহুলি or [kukil] কুকিল means ‘cuckoo’ bird. The cuckoo is known by its sweet songs and melodious tune. The [kuhulimaʃan] কুহলিমাশান deceives people by his sweet voice or tone. The Rajbanshi people try to avoid going under a tamarind or Shewra tree (Streblus asper) alone at midnight or at noon. It is believed that the powerful KuhuliMashan dwells in the tamarind or Shewra tree.

3.9 [nanɣʱamaʃan] নাঙঘামাশান

This Mashan is nude. It is also called [nenɰtɪamaʃan] ন্যাংটিয়ামাশান or [nenɰtamaʃan] ন্যাংটামাশান. If this Mashan possesses people and they do not feel like wearing clothes and strip naked.

3.10 [biʃuamaʃan] বিশুয়ামাশান

It causes pain in the whole body and abdomen. It may be accompanied by fever and severe headache. The word [biʃua] বিশুয়া is derived from the root word [biʃ] বিষ which means ‘ache’ or ‘poison’ and [-ua] is derivative suffix. The exorcist accompanied by mantra and incantation drive away the evil spirit and pain of the inflicted person.

3.11 [ɔbuamaʃan] অবুয়ামাশান

It causes vomiting. It is also known as Pairi, Sura, Tasa etc. There are five Pairis (angels) i.e. Bhul, Nur, Bura, Buri, and Swargo. If it catches the person is not able to move and suffers in paralysis. It may attack a pregnant woman.

3.12 [ʃuknamaʃan] শুকনামাশান

If it attacks the afflicted person becomes lean and thin. The person becomes so weak that he cannot stand up. It is also called [ʃuɰkamaʃan] শুটকামাশান. The word [ʃuɰka] means dry fish. It causes the afflicted person to lose weight like a dry fish. It is also called [haguramaʃan] হাগুরামাশান. The afflicted person may suffer in diarrhea or dysentery or other type stomach problems, it may excrete many times a day. The person loses his strength, becomes weak and gradually invites death.

3.13 [bʱulamaʃan] ভুলামাশান

It is a way layer. It leads people to wrong direction. If it catches, People will eventually lose their sense of direction and cannot come back home or cannot go to the desired destination. There are many sacred sanctums of the Mashan deity found near the road and while traveling one has to pay respect to the deity failing which Mashan may lead a person to wrong direction and brings

trouble.¹⁷ It is often seen that the driver or a conductor of a bus often throws coins from the moving vehicle to appease the Mashan deity in order to avoid mishap. The travelers on foot while crossing the sacred sanctum of the Mashan deity bend their heads and offer prayers to it. They often murmur the word [g^huɟuŋg^huɟuŋ] ঘুসুংঘুসুং or [g^huɟuŋg^huɟuŋmaʃan baba] ঘুসুংঘুসুংমাশানবাবা.

3.14 [dɛmʃamaʃan] ড্যামসামাশান

It causes dropsy and it dwells in the damp places and also in the lowland areas. The shrine is also found in the dense jungle. The vehicle of this Mashan is pig. To worship this Mashan one requires a pair of pigeon, a pair of red napkins (Shaluk), curd, flattened rice, big seed plantain etc.¹⁸

3.15. [uŋgiamaʃan] উঙ্গিয়ামাশান

It is chameleon like, it can take any shape or color. It may damage or harm to any person for no reason.

3.16 [nɛɾamaʃan] ন্যাড়ামাশান

It is bald headed. It is also called [c^handɪamaʃan] চান্দিয়ামাশান, [muɾiyamaʃan] মুড়িয়ামাশান, [niʃkingɪamaʃan] নিষ্কিন্দামাশান. It has eyes on his chest and hold a club and a dead child. It causes baldness to person. It roams around near the cemetery ground. It is blue in color. The shrine of [muɾiyamaʃan] মুড়িয়ামাশান is found near the road or in a desolate place and it is rarely found. Many people believe that mother of this Mashan is goddess Kali who is without head and the father is Jakha Shiva.¹⁹

3.17 [kɛɽaoramaʃan] ক্যাতাওরামাশান

It is also known as [kaɽarumaʃan] কাতারুমাশান or [kokaɾumaʃan] কোকারুমাশান. It lives near the cemetery ground or lowland areas. If it attacks the person, s/he suffers in extreme pain and develops extreme fever. Even after wearing layers of blankets/quilts (kɛɽa ক্যাতা), the person feels cold and murmurs words in bewilderment.

3.18 [kɔlirmaʃan] কলিরমাশান

¹⁷Appendix 5 (l) Bhula mashan, Subhas Ray, Facebook page 1st April 2021

¹⁸Appendix 5 (m) Dyamsa mashan, Subhas Ray, Facebook page 1st April 2021

¹⁹Appendix 5 (d) Muriya Mashan, Mahesh Roy, Mashan Association, 4th May 2012, Tufanganj and Sankar Koch Rajbanshi, 7th February 2019 in Mashan Association and Kamakhyaguri, Nayarhat Chiranjit Dakua, 27th June 2017

It lives anywhere in a village. In compare to other Mashans, this deity is very powerful and can bring tremendous damage to humans. It is born in Kali Yuga.

3.19[tɪʃilamaʃan]তিসিলামাশান

The word [tɪʃi] তিসি means linseed. It is a kind of flat seed grown in damp and low land area. The Tisilamashan lives in the Tisi field and the low land areas. The people who visit those areas for excretion or any other purpose can be attacked by this Mashan.

3.20[ɖuramaʃan]দুরামাশান

The vehicle of this Mashan is turtle/tortoise. If someone is attacked by the spirit, s/he can worship the deity with a half burnt black snake head fish (caengmachbhaja), half fried rice (bhurbhurabhaja), curd and flattened rice etc.

3.21[gʰoɾamaʃan]ঘোড়ামাশান

If it attacks people become restless and the person wanders aimlessly. The Mashan is believed to ride on horse at night. This Mashan is also called [habormaʃan]. The famous shrine named habordham is situated in the village Dumniguri. It is a century old shrine. The annual worship is carried out in pomp and grandeur. Besides, the people of the village and also nearby areas come to worship this deity if their prayers are fulfilled. At the time of marriage, the Mashan deity is also worshiped along with other god and goddesses.²⁰

3.22[bʰɛɾamaʃan]ভেড়ামাশান

The Mashan disguises himself in the form of a sheep and can misdirect a person. If it catches the afflicted person bleats like a sheep. The vehicle of this Mashan is a sheep.

3.23 [haɽimaʃan]হাতিমাশান

The powerful spirit is said to ride on an elephant. The vehicle is elephant here. In North Bengal Mahakal is also worshipped. There are some striking similarities between forest god Mahakal and [haɽimaʃan] হাতিমাশান.²¹ is noticeable.

3.24[ɟɔluamaʃan]জলুয়ামাশান

It lives in water bodies i.e. pond, lake or in river. It kills a person by drowning. It is also known as [ɟɔldamaʃan] জলদামাশান. A shrine of [ɟɔldamaʃan] জলদামাশান is found near Akhrahata at the

²⁰Appendix 5 (j) Ghora mashan, Subhas Ray, Facebook page 1st April 2021

²¹Appendix 5 (i) Hatti mashan, Subhas Ray, Facebook page 1st April 2021

river bank of Shaltiya. The local people call it [k^huʈamaramaʃan] খুটামারামাশান²². There is a belief among the Rajbanshi folks, at the time of incessant rain and flood, the river is over flooded, the water of the river run above the dangerous mark. Many things float in the gushing current of the river. The logs of many trees also float. Many people jump on the river to get hold of the floating logs which they can sell in the black market for financial benefit. They risk their lives for this. It is believed that Mashan floats on those logs as corpse and whoever comes close to collect the log, it kills the person and keeps him on top of the floating log. This Mashan is believed to be very dangerous and dreadful.

3.25[jɔlaməʃan] জ্বলামাশান

It makes fire at night. It is believed that these deities communicate at night through lights. They send signals to other Mashan or spirits in the neighboring areas. It likes to be worshipped by curd, flattened rice, flowers etc.

3.26[k^haimurʈimaʃan] খাইমূর্তিমাশান

It has a very dangerous outlook. It attacks the children. The afflicted children eats burnt earth, coil and gets high fever. If the deity is worshipped properly, the inflicted person will be cured within a few days.

3.27[poraməʃan] পোড়ামাশান or [aŋrak^hoamaʃan] আংড়াখোয়ামাশান

The afflicted person likes to eat burnt charcoal, earthen oven soil. S/he often avoids cooked meal and prefers fried and half burnt vegetables, dry fish etc. If possessed by this deity, people offer unburned curd, parched rice, fish, big seeded plantain, half burnt small black snake headed fish.

3.28[dakinimaʃan] ডাকিনীমাশান

It is also known as [pickarimaʃan] পিচকারিমাশান, [k^hoʈoramaʃan] খতরামাশান. It usually attacks an unmarried girl or married lady who delivered a baby. If an unmarried girl repeatedly sees in her dream that she is getting married and she is in the wedlock or the married woman having lost her baby, she sees in her dream that the baby is being breastfed by her; it is assumed that they are being possessed by the [dakinimaʃan] ডাকিনীমাশান.

3.29[adakaʈlimaʃan] আদাকাটলিমাশান

²²Appendix 5 (n) Khuta marar mashan Thakur, Subhas Ray, Facebook page 2nd April 2021

It roams in the crematory ground. This Mashan is thought to be the attendant of Lord Shiva and goddess Kali. It is believed that if a new born wears a [ɟap]জাপ ‘a incanted thread’ after uttering the name of [adakatlimafan]আদাকাটলিমাশান, the child will be safe from all evil power.

3.30[dʱɛlkʰaɔamaʃan]ঢালখাওয়ামাশান

The shrine is near the roadside or it is a heap of earth or a big stone. This kind of shrine is almost invisible to the passer by. If someone crosses the shrine of the Mashan god, s/he is supposed to throw a stone or a lump of soil to the Mashan god. If someone does not pay tribute [gʱuʃuŋgʱuʃuŋ]ঘুসুংঘুসুং or [hoʃoŋhoʃoŋ]হোসোংহোসোং, the Mashan gets angry and misdirects the person.

3.31[tɔʃamaʃan] টসামাশান

If it attacks a person s/he becomes deaf. One of the informants Mr. Hemanta Roy shares an anecdote, “a Mashan named Tasha Mashan (mute) is there. Once, Tasha Mashan possessed one of our uncles who used to work at our home. The uncle could not hear anything. Then we consulted the ojha (Tantrik) who told us that the Mashan near the whole has possed our uncle. When we asked Ojha what shall we do for his treatment? The ojha told us we need to pray and worship the Mashan. We asked him, what are the ingredients for puja (worship)? The ojha replied, the ingredients are; curd, flattened rice, plantain and a pig has to be sacrificed. We did it as it is advised by him. Thirty or thirty five years have passed by since it happened. Now, our uncle is doing well. In every year, Tasha Mashan is worshiped in pomp and grandeur but pig sacrifice is not done. In special occasion, if someone promises Mashan, then a pig sacrificed. Otherwise, curd, flattened rice, plantain are given at the worship of Tasha Mashan.”²³

3.32[jɔkʰamaʃan] যখামাশান

Mashan is believed to be the son of Jakha. The Aryan myth gives the equivalent name Jakkha or Kubera, a god a wealth and property. It was believed by the Rajbanshis that if a miser rich person dies and his soul does not leave for the other world. It roams around the place where he has kept his property hidden. The soul of the departed miser guards the property. The Jakha Mashan kicks out and dispels the soul of the miserly person and he himself guards and protects the property. Along with Jakha Mashan (male), Jakhi Mashani (female) is also being worshipped.²⁴

3.33 Other type of Mashan deity

²³Appendix 2 (iii) Comments of Hemanta Roy, Facebook page Hari Madhab Ray, 9th September 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/harimadhab.ray/>

²⁴Appendix 5 (p) Jakha mashan and Jakhini Mashan, Subhas Ray, Facebook page 2nd April 2021

There are various types of Mashan exist in North Bengal. It is merely a conjecture about the types of Mashans and reaching out to a conclusion regarding an absolute number of Mashan will be a herculean task. The nomenclature of Mashan depends on place, nature and the kinds of disease inflicted on the person, its symptoms; the name Mashan also changes regionally and people also come up with strange names of the deity. These are also some of the popular names of the Mashan deity as for example [dʰolamafan]ধওলামাশান, [kala mafan]কালামাশান, [gorkatamafan]গড়কাটামাশান or [ʃʱonʃʱonimafan]ঝনঝনিমাশান, [macʰuamafan]মাছুয়ামাশান, [gɔdɛamafan]গদেয়ামাশান, [gʱugramafan]ঘুগরামাশান, [ʃurmafʱan]শূরমাশান, [mɔhadebmʱafʱan]মহাদেবমাশান. etc.

4. Mashan Idol forms and its variants

The fierce statues of Mashan deity are found in the village temples or in the shabby tin or straw shades near the road or as earth mounts or heaps under a tree. The expressive visuality of the idols is striking. The idol looks very dreadful. It is mostly seated in lotus pose (Padma asan) or in a riding posture on its vehicle. The powerful spirit is said to ride on horse, pig, elephant and [ʃal mac] শালমাচ ‘big headed snake fish’. The gigantic body, its hair, its eyes, dreadful outlooks appear to be very threatening that it is very difficult to see it eye to eye. Its fierce bloodthirstiness is satisfied with the sacrifices of goats, pigs and pigeons and also half burn big/small headed snake fish. The complexion of the idol varies, it could be whitish, black or blue in color. The cork idol of Mashan deity is also worshipped and it existed as a local art industry where many people were involved in the making of cork idols of various gods and goddesses. There is hardly any dress worn by the deity, it is mostly half nude seated in a lotus position. It holds a cudgel tightly and is kept on the shoulder. In some places four hands of the idol is also seen.²⁵

5. Symptoms of the inflicted person

If one gets frightened at the sight of an approaching leech²⁶ and in consequence gets fever, s/he is suspected to be possessed by the Mashan deity. The inflicted person dreams of catching fish and may wake up at night and venture out for catching fish. The Mashan deity disguises as a friend or a neighbor or an acquaintance may invite him to join for fishing in the midnight. The deity accompanies the person near the pond, or in waterbodies where the deity kills the person.

A person who is possessed by the Mashan, s/he will eat burn charcoal, burnt soil of the earthen oven, burnt sticky earth. S/he prefers to eat all fries and roasted cereals. S/he will try to avoid cooked meals. The other symptoms are the person urinates in bed unconsciously. The person may pass semen or the woman thinks of fornication, cohabiting with a man in dream. The person talks in his sleep, he cannot sleep and becomes restless. The other extreme symptoms are diarrhea,

²⁵ See Appendix 5 for types of Mashan and a few photos of the deities

²⁶ [bʰɔʃa jok] ভইষাজোক ‘big leech’. It is also believed that if a person sees in dream an approaching buffalo and by the sight he is frightened, s/he may be possessed by the deity.

dysentery, stomach ache, indigestion, vertigo and high fever. He rapidly loses his good health, becomes weak and finally invites death.

6. Cure from the Mashan deity

If someone is frightened by the dreadful sight of the Mashan deity and elders may advise the person to wet a stone in a pure water²⁷ and to drink the water. They may also advise the person to keep a small piece of iron mostly a knife or a big knife under the mattress or pillow. It is believed that Mashan will not come close if someone holds or touches an object made up of iron. In many Rajbanshi households, it is seen that they keep some articles made of iron under the pillow or mattress. The young boy and girl also wear a waist iron girdle and a small piece of iron in order to protect themselves from the evil spirit.

If a person develops some of the above symptoms (in 5) and s/he is thought to be possessed by the Mashan spirit, an exorcist (Ojha) is called for. After listening all the details, the exorcist looks closely to the possessed person, examines the body temperature and other symptoms. After coming to the house of the possessed person, the exorcist takes some pure water in a metal glass and a few basil leaves. He utters some incantations over the basil leaves and throws the leaves into the water of the glass. This is called [ʃɔlpɔra]/জলপরা. He advises the afflicted person to drink it twice or thrice a day. He may also give an incanted thread to tie up in wrist of the person. The exorcist may also advise the person or the family members to worship the Mashan deity for cure. If the symptoms continue and the person does not recover in a few days, the exorcist may perform other types of Mantras or rituals to dispel the evil spirit from the body of the affected person.

7. Mantras for Worshipping the Mashan deity

In general, there are no mantras for worshipping Mashan. Anybody can worship Mashan god and performs the Puja. After the Aryanisation and Kshatriyisation, the use of Sanskrit mantra along with Bengali is highly noticeable at the time of Mashan worship;

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---|-----------|-------------|----------|--------------|-------------|
| | নমঃ | কুবেরম | ধনদং | খড়্গং | দ্বিভুজুং | পীতবাসং |
| 7.(a) | [nɔmo] | [kuberɔm] | [d̪ʱɔnoɖɔŋ] | [kʰɔgɔŋ] | [d̪wibʱuʃɔŋ] | [pit̪baʃɔŋ] |
| | প্রসন্নবদন | দেব | দক্ষ | গুহ্যক | সেবিতং | |
| | [prasɔnnobɔdon] | [deb] | [d̪akkʃa] | [guhyk] | [sebɪtɔŋ] | |
| | Mashan is compared to god Kuber and Daksha. | | | | | |

| | | |
|--------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 7. (b) | যত্রদেবোযগেশ্বরো | [ʃɔttorodebo ʃogeʃʃɔr] |
| | যত্রপার্থধনঃধরধনঞ্জয় | [ʃɔttoropart̪ʱod̪ʱɔnoɖʱar̪d̪ʱɔnonʃɔe] |
| | যত্রমাশানগদাকাধেন | [ʃɔttoromaʃangɔɖakad̪ʱen] |
| | তত্রতত্রশ্রীবিজয়সর্বত্র। | [t̪ɔttorot̪ɔttoroʃribɪʃɔeʃɔrbottoro] |

²⁷Water from river Ganges is considered pure and sacred which may dispel the evil spirit

Meaning “Wherever stays the highest gods of the yogis (Shiva), wherever stays the winner of wealth (Arjun), wherever Mashan stays holding the cudgel/club on shoulder, there will be victory all the time”.

7.(c) Mantra

জলস্থলেনির্জনেভয়স্থানেশ্মশানেমশানেবিরাজিত
[ʒolɔʃtʰɔlenirʒɔnebʰɔyɔʃtʰaneʃʃanemoʃanebirajito]
শ্যামকান্তিশিববর্ণবিরাটবজ্রকায়ভীমগদাহস্তেধৃত
[ʃæmkantʃʃibbɔrnobiratboʒrokayabʰimɡɔd̪ahɔʃt̪ed̪h̪ita]
শালমৎস্যবাবরাহরুঢ়াভক্তবৎসলমঙ্গলমূর্তি
[ʃalmɔʃobabɔrahɔruʃabʰɔkt̪obɔʃɔlmɔŋɡolmurti]
দেবঃইতিশ্রীশ্রীমাশানবাবায়নমোহন্ততে।
[d̪eboit̪iʃriʃrimaʃanbabaenɔmohɔʃt̪ote]

Meaning

It stays in the water bodies, lands, desolate areas, crematory grounds and other deadly places. It is black or blue in color, complexion like god Shiva, a gigantic body like Bhima, holding a cudgel/club in hand. The vehicles are big headed snake fish, pig and it does bless the devotees— These are the traits of the Mashan god, lets pray the god in folded hands.”

To drive away the evil spirit, the exorcist makes use of different types of mantras. Before he comes to afflicted person’s house, he may use some [bɔnd̪ʰonermɔnt̪ro] বন্ধনেরমন্ত্র incantation to protect his body and his house premise as the following;

7.(d) বনকরংবনকরোংকরোংড্যারারপার
[bɔnkɔrɔŋbɔnkɔrɔŋkɔrɔŋd̪ɛrar par]

“Through the incantations of mantras, I protect myself from the evil spirit, I give protection to the hut premise”

ষোলমাশানরয়বিতকরিউদাংকরংঘর
[ʃolomaʃanrɔɐʃit̪ k̪oriud̪aŋkɔrɔŋɡʰɔr]

“There are sixteen types of Mashan remain silent and my house is completely open”

প্যাটমুচিপোয়াতিহবু

“You will become pregnant and give birth”

[pɛt̪mucipoat̪ihɔbu]

সউগঠাকুরেরদৃষ্টিকাটিবু

“All the gods and goddesses will keep an eye on you”

[ʃɔugt̪ʰakurerd̪r̪iʃt̪ikaʃibu]

এইমন্ত্রহেলিবুপেলিবু

“If you don’t obey this mantra”

[ei mɔnt̪rohelibupelibu]

ঈশ্বরমহাদেবেরমাথাখাবু

“You will disrespect the Almighty Mahadev”.

[iʃʃormɔhaɔdebermat̪ʰakʰabu]

It can be said from the above mantras that the Mashan deity is subordinate to God Mahadev, and serve Him and obey him as a guardian.

After reaching the house of the affected person, the exorcist may sit in a wooden seat. He takes some mustard seeds in his hand and tells the story of the powerful mustard seeds and how it can drive away the evil spirits from all the directions. Here are the incantations;

| Rabanshi | IPA²⁸ | Meaning |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| 7.(e) বারোচাষদিলেগোঁসাইতেরোচাষমই ²⁹ | [baro caʃedilegoʃait̪erocaʃmɔi] | Gosai ³⁰ ploughed land twelve times and used ladder thirteen times |
| চাষেরাভুঁইধানকরিলধলধল | [caʃeabʰuĩ d̪ʰankɔril d̪ʰald̪ʰal] | The ploughed land became very smooth |
| ক্যান্নাদুর্গাবনফ্যালেয়াবেচিয়া | [kɛnnadubbabɔnpʰeleabecia] | All the weeds, garbages were removed |
| গোঁসাইবলেনারদশুনমোরকথা | [goʃaibɔlenarod̪ ʃun mor koʃʰa] | Gosai asked Narad to listen to him |
| এককাঠাসরিষাদেজমিনেফ্যালেয়া | [ɛkkaʈʰaʃoriʃad̪eʃɔminepʰlea] | And to scatter master seed on the land |

²⁸International Phonetic Alphabet

²⁹Mashaner Puja..Girija Sahnkar Roy, P. 315 and Sanyal, Charu Chandra. 1965. *The Rajbanshis of North Bengal*. The Asiatic Society. Kolkata-16.

³⁰ The Rajbanshi folks may address one another as Gosain. This is the trend of Vaishnavism noticeable in the community.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------|--|
| গোঁসাইয়েরকাঁথাতেনারদসরিষাফ্যালালো | [goʃaierkaṯṯat ʃɔriʃapʰɛlalo] | naroḍ | After listening to Gosain, Narad broadcasted the master seed on the land |
| কাটিয়ামারিয়াসরিষাগুনিয়ারহাততদিলো | [kaṭia maria ʃɔriʃaguniarhaṭoṭ ḍilo] | | Once the master seeds were ripened, it were threshed out and were given to the exorcist |
| হাততকরিয়াসরিষাফ্যান্নারমাথাতধরিল | [haṯṯoṭ kɔriaʃɔriʃapʰennarmaṯṯat ḍḥɔril] | | He held the mustard seeds in his hand and kept his hand in the head of the affected person |
| গুনিয়াসরিষাচালেবারধরিল | [guniaʃɔriʃacalebardḥɔril] | | The exorcist threw the mustard seeds in all directions |
| একক্যানাসরিষাদিলপুবকনাগিয়া | [ɛk kana ʃɔriʃaḍilpuboknagia] | | A portion of mustard seeds were thrown in east direction |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| পুৰেৰদোষদুৰিৰাওবাতাসআনিলধৰিয়া | [puber d̪oʃd̪uʃibaɔbaʈaʃ anil d̪ʱɔria] | All the bad spirits of east were caught and brought to the exorcist |
| একক্যানাসৰিষাদিলউত্তরোকনাগিয়া | [ɛkkɛnaʃɔriʃaḍiluttoroknagia] | A portion of mustard seeds were thrown to north direction |
| উত্তরেৰদোষদুৰিৰাওবাতাসআনিলধৰিয়া | [uttorerd̪oʃd̪uʃibaɔbaʈaʃ anil d̪ʱɔria] | All the bad spirits of North were caught and brought to the exorcist |
| এককোনাসৰিষাদিলপশ্চিমনাগিয়া | [ɛkkonaʃɔriʃaḍilpɔʃcimnagia] | A portion of mustard seeds were thrown in west direction |
| পশ্চিমেৰদোষদুৰিৰাওবাতাসআনিলধৰিয়া | [pɔʃcimerd̪oʃd̪uʃibaɔbaʈaʃ anil d̪ʱɔria] | All the bad spirits of West were caught and brought to the exorcist |
| এককোনাসৰিষাদিলদক্ষিণনাগিয়া | [ɛkkonaʃɔriʃaḍild̪akkʰinnagia] | A portion of mustard seeds were thrown in South direction |
| দক্ষিণেৰদোষদুৰিৰাওবাতাসআনিলধৰিয়া | [d̪akkʰinerd̪oʃd̪uʃibaɔbaʈaʃ anil d̪ʱɔria] | All the bad spirits of West were caught and |

brought to
the exorcist

The exorcist rebukes the Mashan and asks him to leave the body of the affected person. The exorcist may perform various incantations as the following;

| | | | |
|-------|--|--|---|
| 7.(f) | ছুচছুচছুচিয়াতিওরজাতি | [c ^h ucc ^h ucc ^h ucia ^{ti} or ^{ja} ti] | “You cunning Masna, you belong to the fisherman community |
| | কুণ্ঠেছুচিয়াতোরউধোপতি | [kun ^t hec ^h ucia ^{ti} or ^u dh ^o p ^{ti}] | Do you know how and where you were born? |
| | বাপতোরধরমমাওতোরকালী | [bap tor dh ^o romma ^o tor kali] | Your father is Dharam and mother is Kali |
| | তারগর্ভেহইলেকমাসনা | [ta ^r gor ^b he ^h oilekma ^s na] | You are born out of them |
| | শুনতোরজন্মেরশিলুক | [jun tor jon mer si lu k] | You listen to the story of your birth |
| | শুনেককানপাতিয়া | [jun ek kan pa ti ya] | You listen to it attentively |
| | ফ্যান্না ³¹ রঅস্টাংদেহাছাড়িয়া | [p ^h enna ^r o st a ng de ha cha di ya] | Just leave off the body of the affected person |
| | যাতুইকৈলাসনাগিয়া | [ja tu ik o ila s na gi ya] | You go to Kailash (Abode of Mahadev) |

It is understood from the following mantra that Mashan deity is subordinate to the God Krishna, and serves Him and obeys him as a guardian.

| | | |
|-------|--|---|
| 7.(g) | জালসুধাতালসুধাআরসুধাকায় | [jal su d ha ta la su d ha aa ru d ha kaya] |
| | সোলারমাশানশুদ্ধকৃষ্ণআজ্ঞাপায়া | [so la ma sa na su d dh ok ru sa no agga paya] |
| | “Water, soil and other corporeal body are purified. After getting permission from lord Krishna, Mashan made of cord is also purified or became pure” | |

Mashan deity is also subordinate to the Shiva-Shankar, and serves Him and obeys him as a guardian as in the following mantra;

| | | |
|-------|-------------------------|--|
| 7.(h) | উঠমাশানশরমাশান | [u ^t ma sa na sha rma sa na] |
| | ছাড়িদেয়শ্মশানঘাট | [c ^h a di de ya sha ma na gha t] |
| | তুইযাভাটিঘাট | [tu i ya ba ti gha t] |
| | ভাটিঘাটথাকিআসিবুঘুরিয়া | [ba ti gha t tha ki a sa bi bu ghu ri ya] |
| | | [bi bu ghu ri ya tha ki a sa bi bu ghu ri ya] |

³¹ It is to indirectly refer to someone without mentioning the name. The variants of [p^henna] ফেন্না is [p^holla] ফল্লা or [taija] তাইসস। However, at the time of incantations, the exorcist takes the name of the afflicted person.

শিবাশঙ্করেরদোহাইনাগিবে

“Get up Mashan, leave from this place Mashan; go away from this cremation ground, you go to another place, if you return Lord Shiv-Shankar will curse thee.”

Mashan deity is also subordinate to the Shiva-Shankar and Dharm (God-Sun), and serves Them and obey Them as guardians as expressed in the following mantra;

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| আকাশেশমাশানপাতালেমাশান | [akaʃemaʃanpaʈalemaʃan] |
| 7.(i) হাওয়াউঠেদুয়া | [haguaʊtʰeɖua] |
| হালুদিয়াআন্ধাসুলাকাঙ্কুকি | [holuɖdiaandʱaʃulakankukiri] |
| পিয়াপানিনেইকহাসতেকরিয়া | [pia paninei haʃte koria] |
| পিয়াপানিয়াতুষ্টকরিয়া | [pia paniʃaʈuʃʈokoria] |
| শরীরছাড়িয়াযাতুই | [ʃorirʰariaʃaʈui] |
| কৈলাশোকলইয়া | [ʃibʃonkorermatʰaʈ muʃibuɖuipaɔ] |
| শিবশঙ্করেরমাথাতমুশিবুদুইপাও | [ɖohaiɖʱormermatʰaʈ muʃibuɖuipaɔ] |
| দোহাইধর্মেরমাথাতমুশিবুদুইপাও | |

“Mashan lives everywhere, Mashan lives sky, Mashan lives in underground, Mashan lives in earth; Because of you Mashan people are possessed, they are suffering in many diseases: dysentery, pain, stomachache, earache, vertigo, weaknesses; Why don’t you Mashan take offerings and satisfy themselves. Please leave the body of the victims and go back to thy abode in Kailash. If thy won’t go back, your head will be crashed, the god Shibshankar and Dharam will curse you”.

The exorcist rebukes the Mashan spirit and threatens him to kick him if it does not leave the body of the afflicted person as in the following mantra;

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| কুচিয়ারমাথাকাঁকড়ারডাবু | [kuciar matʰakakʈardabu] |
| 7.(j) মোরকীর্তনিয়ারনগতআসিবু | [mor kirtʰoniarnogotʰaʃibu] |
| আসামতঠেলাখাবু | [aʃamotʰelakʰabu] |
| দৌড়ীআসিয়াফিরিয়াযাবু | [ɖouriaʃiapʰirijaʃabu] |
| চান্দিয়াবাড়ায়গুতাখাবু | [candʱiabaʈaegutakʰabu] |

“The head of the eel fish and hands of crab; you come to me (Kirtaniya), if you come to me, you will be punished; even if you come quickly for a moment you will be kicked and thrashed.”

8. Articles for worshipping Mashan deity

Mashan is not worshipped daily. Though in some places where a concrete temple or shrine is established, the local priest or the householder worships it everyday. In some places twice in a week in Tuesday and Saturday, it is worshipped. In the month of Baishakh, an annual celebration to worship Mashan is organized and devotees from distant places also visit the shrine. In many places of Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduyar, Uttar Dinajpur on the occasion of Mahsan Puja a yearly [mela] 'fare' is organized. Recently, Pushna Utsav and Mashan worship are celebrated together at Mashan Path, Cengmari, Alipurduyar.³²

The articles for worship also differ. In many shrines pure indigenous articles are offered to the Mashan deity and in other places Brahmanical influences are noticeable. As Mashan is considered an insider of the Rajbanshi religious folklore sphere, it is an integral part of the social and religious life of the people. The articles for worships are curd, flattened rice, rice fry (bhurbhura), half burned fish (Chang mach), banana (Atiya kola), flowers and fruits.³³ In many places, half burned pigeon, duck egg and pig are offered to the deity. An idol of pig is gifted and some places he-goat or pigeon is sacrificed by the devotees. After Arynization, the articles for worship have changed.³⁴ The brahmin priests have almost replaced the local priests of the Rajbanshis. One of the informants Mr. Dipak Barman informs, the ingredients and articles for worship are- "big seeded banana, five plates of curd and flattened rice, Drum, Sahanai, flowers, basil leaves, incense and incense sticks, four banana saplings, five coconuts, betel and nut, a worshipping plate, a packet of vermilion, a red napkin, wood apple leaves, white thread, and he-goat, pigeon. A Brahmin has to be called for to worship the Mashan deity."³⁵

9. Finding and conclusion

Mashan is a powerful male deity worshipped by the Rajbanshis. It is very popular and widespread in North Bengal, lower Assam and in Rangpur of Bangladesh. After the Aryanization, Mashan god is not only restricted to the Rajbanshis or Koch Rajbanshis of North Bengal and Assam, it also became a powerful cultural symbol of transformation for the community and some non-Rajbanshis also started taking part in the much wider community celebration. The Rabha, Hajong and other non-Rajbanshi folks also take part in the worship. It is also noticed that if a person belongs to Muslim community and if s/he is possessed by the powerful Mashan deity, though s/he may not directly worship the deity but someone from the Rajbanshi community will

³²Appendix 5 (q) Mashan and community celebration, Shyamal Roy, 13th November 2019 in Mashan Association

³³Dipak Barman: Pujat nage -aatiya kla, pach dhongol doichira r nage dhak, sanai, ful, tulsi, dhupdhuna ,4ta maroya, ghat pachta, guyapan, chailon, sendurrer puriya, saluk, mala belpat, sadasuta, r deoya khay pata, koitor(See Appendix 2. (i))

³⁴Appendix 5 (o) Articles for worship, Subhas Ray, Facebook page 2nd April 2021

³⁵Appendix 2 (i) Comments of Dipak Barman, Facebook Page Hari Madhab Ray, 9th September 2018
<https://www.facebook.com/harimadhab.ray/>

do the puja on his/her behalf. It is also been found that some people from Muslim community know the powerful incantations to drive away the evil spirit and perform the job of an exorcist.

It is believed that the Mashan god has power that assist people in hardships and the Mashan deity will protect the fellow Rajbanshis from the impending cultural annihilation in the age of globalization. In many places, the Rajbanshi folks realized the significance of their indigenous culture and cultural symbol, and in order to save and protect it, they built concrete temples of Mashan god in various places of North Bengal, and they started worshipping it which widely became a matter of much needed community celebration.³⁶

Village priests or Brahmins are not the religious authorities who control the Mashan deity and the rituals about them. Anyone can worship the deity. There is no gender discrimination in worship; a male or a female member can worship it any days of the week. In many places, the local Rajbanshi priest *odhikary*, *deuri*, *deusi*, *deodha* completes the Puja. After the Kshatriyaisation of the Rajbanshi community, the Brahmins of undivided Bengal, Assam and Bihar have taken the place of the Rajbanshi local priests and there are Sanskrit and Bengali influences on the rituals, articles for worship and also in the mantras and incantations. Mashan deity is also been accommodated in the pantheon of Hindu gods and Mashan deity is projected as the follower or subordinate to Krishna, Mahadev, Shiva or Shivashankar.

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³⁶See Appendix 5 (q) Mashan and community celebration

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Research Methodology

নমস্কার,দণ্ডবৎ!

মুইউত্তরবঙ্গ,পশ্চিমআসামআরবাংলাদেশেররংপুরজেলারমাশান/মাসনা/মাশানঠাকুরনিয়াএকেনাভালকরিজানিচাং/চাসু।তোমরাযদিমোকতোমারএলাকারমাশানঠাকুরেরছবি,মাশানেরনামআরপূজারধরনআরমন্ত্র-তন্ত্র,পূজারধরনইত্যাদি-এমনকিছুকাথাকাহিনীতথ্যমোকনেথিয়াপাঠনতাহইলেখুবউপকারহইলহয়।মোরইমেইলআরহোয়াটস্যাপনাস্বারনীচো তদিলুং!

Email id- harimadhabray@gmail.com, WhatsApp No. 9873634502

ধইন্যবাদ! ডঃহরিমাধবরায়

(Greetings of the day! I would like to know the Mashan god of North Bengal, West Assam, Rangpur of Bangladesh in detail. If you could send me some pictures of Mashan god, the way it is worshipped, different types of mantras, and any other stories associated with it, that would be really fruitful. My email id and WhatsApp number are given below; Email id- harimadhabray@gmail.com, WhatsApp No. 9873634502. Thank you! Dr. Hari Madhab Ray

Appendix 2 Data and Comments from Facebook page_Hari Madhab Ray

Appendix 2 (i)

[Dipak Barman](#)

Mui kaytaMashanthakurernamjanong-ketaoramashan,galakatamashan,jaleyamashan,muriyamashan,garkata. Mashan,uttarbangernamkramashangosanimarirjhanjhanimashan,Pujatnage - aatiyakla,pachdhongoldoichira r nagedhak,sanai,ful,tulsi,dhupdhuna ,4ta maroya,ghatpachta,guyapan,chailon,sendurrerpuriya,saluk,mala,belpatsadasuta,rdeoyakhaypata,koitor R bamonaani puja khay...

(I know some names of the Mashan God; kyataoraMashan, GalakataMashan, JaleyaMashan, MuriyaMashan, GarkataMashan. The very popular and strongest among them is the JhanjhaniMashan of Gosanimari. It is very famous in North Bengal. The ingredients and articles for worship are- are big seeded banana, five plates of curd and flattened rice, Drum, Sahanai,flowers, basil leaves, incense and incense

sticks, four banana saplings, five coconuts, beetel and nut, a worshipping plate, a packet of vermilion, a red napkin, wood apple leaves, white thread, and he-goat, pigeon. A Brahmin has to be called for to worship the Mashan deity.)



Dipak Barman

Chaul vaja diya Soilmach ba chyangmach poraO
psad hisabe anekjhane dey,
R hamrato pujar samay dim deina,kang kang dim
dibaro pare,hamra hayto janina...

Like · Reply · 3 y

Many people give roasted rice along with half burnt Jogar fish (big headed snake fish) or small headed black snake fish as offerings to Mashan god. We do not offer egg during the Puja. Some people may offer it but it is not known to us.

Dipak Barman

Asole amra je masan Babar puja Kori seita hoil amr
century purana traditional,aro religious nanan custom
gulak tuli dhorar jainne akta symbol. Aro val Kori koile
agot koya neng je aji thaki 70/80 bocor agot amar aila
jagat average 180 din/year bristi hoicilo, ta baissali
dhan Abad ta important factor acilo,mansi agot ak
choru jol ot o bolon gariche,abong vailla jol ot kaj kora
ta khub porisrom r seijainne mansi gula sokale khub
Kori doi r atiya kola diya chira khaicilo jate vater Chaya
khanek besi Dom paoya jay, aijainne bises Kori doi chira
khaya je domdar poriarom korar tradition, seitake tuli
dhorir jainne masan Babar puja,jar jainne masan Babar
pujat doi chira must,acca koya Deng aita nanan masan
pujar akta,Amon aro ace, seijanne bivinno masan
thakur, jemon buk ot choku ala, gor kata, mundiya ...

Like · Reply · 3 y



The Mashan god, we worship, it is actually old traditional and century old . It is a medium to promote religious and other symbols of the Rajbanshis. To say it clearly, seventy to eighty years ago, it rained more 180 days in average in a year at our place. The cultivation of rice in the monsoon season is one of the main factors. People used to plant paddy sapling in the knee high watery land. To work in the field full of knee high water, one needs much energy. People used to eat flattened rice, big seeded plantain and curd so that they get more energy. It is better than eating rice. Eating flattened rice, big seeded plantain and curd is associated with energy, strength and much power. That is why to continue and sustain the energetic tradition Mashan god is worshipped. It is mandatory to offer curd and flattened rice to the Mashan deity at the time of worship. Let me say, it is one of the ingredients and there are different articles to offer to various Mashan deity. There are different types of Mashan as for example a Mashan which has eyes on his chest, gor kata, mundiya (bald headed)...

Appendix 2 (ii) Comments of M.C. Roy, Facebook Page Hari Madhab Ray, 9th September 2018,
<https://www.facebook.com/harimadhab.ray/>

[M.C. Roy](#) Mui jetajanongHaserdimaokintumasanpujorekenamulupadan.

(What I know, even duck egg is one of the main ingredients of Mashan worship)—M.C. Roy

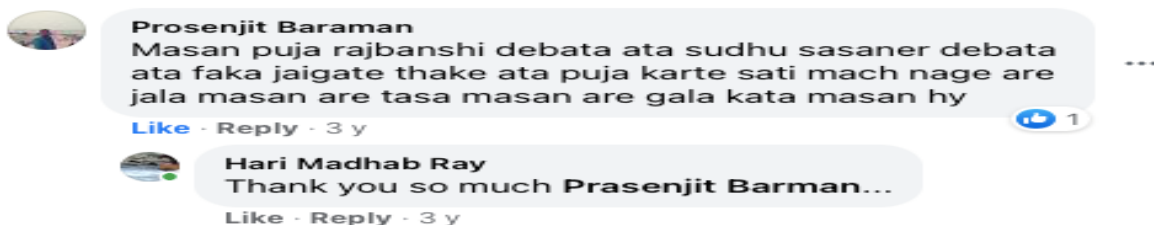
Appendix 2 (iii) Comments of Hemanta Roy, Facebook page Hari Madhab Ray, 9th September 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/harimadhab.ray/>

[Hemanta](#)

[Roy](#) মশান অনেকটা অপদেবতা মশানের স্থান ফাঁকা জাগাত কুরার পারত অনেক জাগাত অনেক নামের মশান আছে। তবে মোর বাড়ির বগলোত যে মশান আছে উয়ার নাম টশা মশান। একবার হামার বাড়িত কাজ করা কাকাটাক ধরি ছিল কাকাটাক খনকিছুই শুনে না। তখন বৈদ্য ও বাধরিয়া জানিলো কাকাক কুরার পারের মশান ধরিছে। তা বৈদ্য ও বাক পুছিলো এলাকিক রাখাইবে। ও বাকই লেক মশানোক মানত করিয়া পূজা দিবার নাগিবে। হামরা পুছিলো পূজাত কি কি নাগিবে, ও বাকই লেক দই চিড়া আটিকলা দিয়া পূজা দিবার নাগিবে, আর একটা শুয়র বলি দিবার নাগিবে। ঐ ভাবেই পূজা দিলো এটা তাও ত্রিশ বত্রিশ বছর আগেকার কথা। এলাকা কাকালে আছে, এলা প্রত্যেক বছর বছর টশা মশানের পূজা হয়। কিন্তু শুয়র বলি হয় না কাং মানত করিলে সেই বার শুয়র বলি হয়। নাহিলে দই চিড়া মিঠাই আটিকলা দিয়া প্রত্যেক বছর বছর টশা মশানের পূজা হয়।

(Mashan is an evil God. Mashan stays in a desolate place, in water body stream, deep lake (KuRa). Different types of Mashanis found. But near my place, a Mashan named Tasha Mashan (mute) is there. Once, Tasha Mashan possessed one of our uncles who used to work at our home. The uncle could not hear anything. Then we consulted the ojha (Tantrik) who told us that the Mashan near the whole has possessed our uncle. When we asked Ojha what shall we do for his treatment, the ojha told us we need to pray and worship the Mashan. We asked him, what are the ingredients for puja (worship)? The ojha replied, the ingredients are; curd, flattened rice, palantain and a pig has to be sacrificed. Following the Ojha, we did it as it is advised by him. Thirty or thirty years have passed by since it happened. Now, our uncle is doing well. In every year, Tasha Mashan is worshiped in pomp and grandeur but pig sacrifice is not done. In special occasion, if someone promises Mashan, then a pig sacrificed. Otherwise, curd, flattened rice, plantain are given at the worship of Tasha Mashan)—Hemanta Roy

Appendix 2 (iv) Comments of Prosenjit Barman, Facebook page Hari Madhab Ray, 9th September 2018 <https://www.facebook.com/harimadhab.ray/>



The Rajbanshis worship Mashan. It is a god of cemetery. It dwells in a desolate place. To worship Mashan god one needs [ʃaʈimacʰ] শাটিমাছ 'a medium snake headed fish'. There are

different types of Mashan as for example [ɔlamaʃan]জলামাশান, [tɔʃamaʃan]টসামাশান, [gala kaʃamaʃan]গালাকাটামাশান.

Appendix-5: Types of Mashan, pictures and sources

| Mashan types | Pictures | Source |
|----------------------|--|--|
| (a) MachuyaMashan |  | DibyenduAd hikary, Mashan Association, 4 th February, 2015, ToshiKata Power house |
| (b) Garh Kata Mashan |  | DilipBarma, Alokjhari, Dinhata, 5 th November, 2017 |
| (c) GodeyaMashan |  | Rajen Barman, Mashan Association, 10 th August 2015 |
| (d) MuriyaMashan |  | Mahesh Roy, Mashan Association, 4 th May 2012, Tufanganj |



Muriyamasha
n,
Datuyamasha
n, Subhash
Ray, 31st
March, 2021

(d)
MuriyaMa
shan



Sankar Koch
Rajbanshi, 7th
February
2019 in
Mashan
Association

Kamakhyagu
ri, Nayarhat
ChiranjitDak
ua, 27th June
2017

(e)Sadharo
nMashan;
DhaolaMas
han



Mahesh Roy,
Mashan
Association,
11th May
2012

(f) Mashan
worshippe
d in house
premise



Pritam Roy,
Gorufela,
Gossaingaon,
Kokrajhar,
Assam, 1st
July 2017

**(g)
Mashan
and
Coconut
(ghot)**



Rajen
Barman,
12th May,
2017 in
Mashan
Association



Rajen
Barman,
12th May,
2017 in
Mashan
Association

**(h)
GhaterMas
han**



Subhas Ray,
Facebook
page 1st April
2021

**(i)Hatti
mashan**



Subhas Ray,
Facebook
page 1st April
2021

**(j)
Ghoramas
han**



Subhas Ray,
Facebook
page 1st April
2021

**(k)
Chuciyama
shan**



Subhas Ray,
Facebook
page 2nd
April 2021

**(l)
BhulaMash
an**



Subhas Ray,
Facebook
page 2nd
April 2021

**(m)
DyamsaMa
shan**



Subhas Ray,
Facebook
page 1st April
2021

**(n)Joldama
shan,
Khutamar
armashan**



Subhas Ray,
Facebook
page 2nd
April 2021

**(o) Articles
for worship**

Subhas Ray,
Facebook
page 2nd
April 2021

**(p)
JakhaMas
han and
Jakhinimas
han**



Subhas Ray,
Facebook
page 2nd
April 2021

(q) Mashan
and
Communit
y
celebration



Shyamal
Roy, 13th
November
2019 in
Mashan
Association

Reconstructing the Lost Past of the Nagas through a Discourse on the *Tenyimia* Way of Life

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Abstract

Located in the Northeastern part of India, Nagaland is a land endowed with rich heritage of cultural diversity. The multitude of tribes with its own distinct language and belief system makes up this rich and vibrant cultural fabric. Cultural beliefs and customs are unique to each tribe and are highly revered as they act as value systems governing and regulating the lives of the Naga people. However, the wave of urbanization and modernization ushered in misrepresentations, as the Western Scholars attempted to understand and portray this multifaceted society with limited understanding. This resulted in adverse projection of the Nagas in many cultural discourses. The Naga Society was often described as a disorganized society with no form of law or order, hence, the Nagas were represented as barbaric and savagery. In such light, this paper contests against such misrepresentations and misconceptions to reconstruct the cultural identity of the Nagas through the study of “*Kenyü*” to show that the Nagas did have an organized value system that regulated their lives.

Keywords: misrepresentation, cultural beliefs, value system, *Kenyü*, identity reconstruction

Introduction

Situated in the North-Eastern part of India and home to a sizeable number of tribes, Nagaland has been characterized as a treasure trove of culture. Among the many tribes in Nagaland, there are 16 recognized tribes. Some of them are Ao, Angami, Chakhesang, Lotha, Sema, and Rengma. Each of these tribal groups has their own distinct language and cultural practices making diversity the essence of the Naga people. However, beneath the magnitude and immensity of diversity the Nagas are bounded together by several factors one of which would be the rich oral literature in the form of folklores, folksongs and legends. For centuries, these oral traditions have been the primary and only source for the Nagas to preserve and transmit their values and culture from generation to generation. Even today oral tradition is looked upon as an indispensable vehicle for gathering data on the past glories and traditions of the Naga people. The

oral folktales, folksongs and legends of the Nagas reveal the rich cultural heritage of the Nagas. However, over the years, owing to the advent of Christianity, education and modernization there has been an undeniable corroding away of the rich cultural past. This paper then situates itself as an endeavor to reconstruct the lost past of the Nagas through a discourse on the value systems that governed and regulated the lives and conduct of people.

The Misconceptions regarding Naga Identity

As already established above, it may be stated that the Nagas are a community with a rich cultural past. Evident through the countless oral sources, it is clear that Nagas though isolated from the rest of the world had their own organized way of living. There existed no formal or written codes of conduct nor were there any established form of law and order but there existed a strong value system which governed and regulated the lives and conduct of the people which suggests that Naga society was not disorganized and that Nagas were not “savage beings” as represented by most early writers and historians.

Regarding the true ethnic identity of the Nagas, there are many misrepresentations. The most recurrent image of the Nagas as represented and seen from outside is that Nagas had a savage past and attached to this misconception is the practice of ‘*head-hunting*’ which has been most often described as a “*distinctive feature of Naga identity*”. However, Imsong (2011) retaliates to this misrepresentation and states that head-hunting existed simply as a defense mechanism for survival and that “*Naga ancestors never went to war as a head hunting trip*”. He argues that head hunting may be considered as a practice signifying a culture of bravery and courage. Misconceptions such as this have greatly distorted the true identity of the Nagas and a number of scholars have raised the issue that such misconceptions are a colonial and political construct.

Secondly, early writers like Hutton and Mills (as cited in Oppitz, 2008) represented the indigenous Naga religion as merely consisting of systems and rituals. According to them, the old religion did not have any moral code and therefore had no scope for theological speculation. However, it may be stated here that this is a misconception because Nagas had a strong sense of belief in a supreme being and this belief regulated their lives. This perspective on the old religion is very narrowly restricted to the superficial phenomena that could easily be discerned by an outside observer. It may also be stated that such limited observations are a result of the unwillingness to view the Nagas and their way of life from the insider’s point of view.

In the light of the above, Oppitz (2008), in the preface to “*Naga Identities*” stated that “three powerful waves have washed over the mountain regions of the Nagas, the wave of British Colonial rule, the wave of the Christian Mission and the wave of the Indian state” and each of this wave have left the Nagas with a challenge and an urgency which demands a total redefinition of the Naga identity. The British colonial rule painted a picture of the Nagas “as cruel and savage” and painted themselves as benevolent agents who have been entrusted with the responsibility of

“civilizing the savages”. The American Missionaries also looked down on the Naga culture and in much the same way envisaged a new kind of Christian identity for the Nagas. The attitude of the American Missionaries towards the Nagas can clearly be seen in the introductory poem of Mary Mead Clark’s book, *A Corner in India* (as cited in Oppitz) in which the Nagas are described as ‘savage’ and the hills as regions “where darkness broods and tempests rest without one ray of light”. On the other hand, the Naga encounter with the Indian state has brought about huge tension and strife among the once united Naga tribal unity. The Naga tribal identity is faced with the fear of disintegration as there are increased inter-tribal conflicts.

The speculation thus far has been driven with the objective of pointing out the colonial and political constructs that have wrongly defined the Naga Identity both within and outside the region. Having stated thus, it may be argued that the Nagas were not savages and brutish nor were they disorganized without any moral code or law and order. In support of the chief claim of the paper, the following sections are devoted to presenting “*Kenyü*” (forbidden or taboo), a value system that was an integral part of the old religion and way of life of the “*Tenyimia*” (a major Naga tribal community) people.

Understanding *Kenyü*

Kenyü is a tenyidie word that is closely similar with the English word *forbidden, prohibited or taboo*. Its literal understanding conveys the idea that *Kenyü* refers to certain acts or conduct that are forbidden or prohibited. For the *Tenyimia* people *kenyü* among other things such as *menga* (embarrassment or shame) and *michie* (fear) served as very strong value systems that regulated and controlled their lives. *Kenyü* may be defined as a value system which was an integral part of the old religion and way of life among the *Tenyimia* people.

Zetsuvi (2014) defined *Kenyü* as labeled for certain days on which something must not be done. However, this perspective on *kenyü* is very narrow and limited which makes *Kenyü* appear to be ritual based. Contrary to this view, *Kenyü* essentially embodies a set of rules and commandments that enabled people to inculcate and abide by the moral and ethical ways of living in the society. According to Lohe (2011), *Kenyü* acted as a control system that enabled people to *avoid all evil works*. He goes on to state that the consequence of breaking *Kenyü* was unnatural death, disease, being crippled and so on. It was believed that breaking any *Kenyü* leads to the wrath of the spirits and brings bad luck on several generations.

There were many things which were considered as *Kenyü* and they served as a powerful force in keeping the society harmonious and organized. For instance, it is *Kenyü* to offend God, spirits, cut sacred trees, kill innocent people, to beget illegitimate children, to ill-treat weak people and children, to engage in incest, stealing, lying, insulting and so on. There is a *kenyü* on almost every aspect of life and which were reverently practiced by the people for fear of being damned.

According to Hutton(1968), the term, *Kenyü* is used in reference not only to the breach of the strict rule of a magico-religious observance or to the breach of a social law but also to the most trivial

matter of pure utility. This observation of Hutton suggests that *Kenyü* encompasses a vast aspect of life from religious to secular and from personal to social. In other words, it may be stated that *kenyü* has both sacred and secular connotations. To further highlight the all-encompassing nature of *kenyü*, the next section attempts at a classification of the different types of *kenyü*.

Classification of *Kenyü*

As argued above, the term *Kenyü* covers a broad aspect of life. It has connotations with a variety of aspects in life. There are those that pertain to how an individual should conduct himself in the way he eats to the way he abides as a good citizen. There are those that direct the way an individual should conduct himself in relation with his kins and even his enemies. Then there are those that have religious implications and direct the way an individual should revere God, spirits and even nature. *Kenyü* as a value system may be classified under three categories as presented in the figure below;

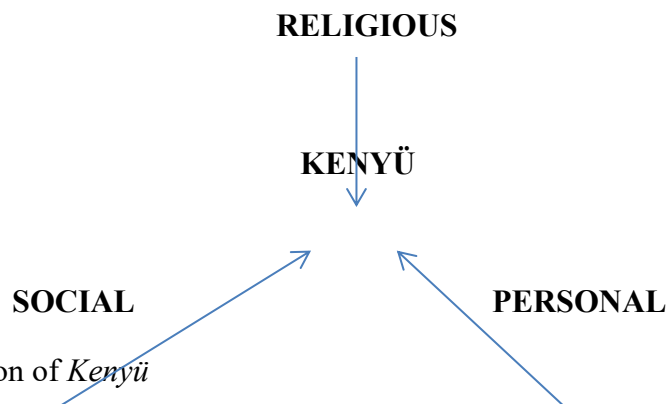


Figure 1: Classification of *Kenyü*

1. Personal: The *Kenyü* under the personal domain are identified and listed as under;

- a) It is forbidden to take bribes (*Thesoliecükenyü*)
- b) It is forbidden to cut wages (*Mia zhachütsomotakenyü*)
- a) c) It is forbidden to cheat people by taking the full amount for a lesser quantity (*Seer/zhatsomo di puoma lie tseikenyü*)
- c) It is forbidden to steal from the allotted share of others (*Themo rozougeinu la cükenyü*)
- d) It is forbidden to eat directly from the dish (*Galipemoucükenyü*)
- e) It is forbidden to eat with the dish-spoon (*Livü pie kenyü*)

2. Social: The *kenyü*'s pertaining to the family and the community have been categorised under social.

- a) It is forbidden for a man to partake in the hunted animal alone (*Mia puoenhachügeilieropuorübeicüliekenyü*)
- b) It is forbidden to assault parents (*U krünuotsieivükenyü*)

- c) It is forbidden to assault aunts and in-laws (*U nia u meimianeikemochükenyüthor*)
- d) It is forbidden for siblings to marry (*Prüüüpfükereikenyü*)
- e) It is forbidden for children to eat first (*Nhicumiabumhamethariikenyü*)
- f) h) It is forbidden to touch an enemy from somebody's household (*U ngumvümiapuo ta miakinuvotaromiakinunupuobiekenyü*)
- g) It is forbidden to eat from an enemy's table (*U ngumvümia vie cükenyü*)
- h) j) It is forbidden to encroach the boundaries of other people (*Mia se miariegekenyü*)
- i) k) It is forbidden to obstruct public paths (*Chaü kha kenyü*)

3. Religious: The kenyü's associated with God, nature and other superstitious phenomena are categorised under religious.

- a) It is forbidden to provoke the supreme spirit (*U Rhuo-u keyiechükenyü*)
- b) It is forbidden to curse the heavens (*Teirüpfhürüsekenyüthor*)
- c) It is forbidden to close or cover holes (*Keciekikhawakenyü*)
- d) It is forbidden to block the streams (*Dzümhidzürükhakenyü*)
- f) It is forbidden to swear falsely (*Meda di rüsekenyü*)

(The list of Kenyü provided here have been collected from a variety of Tenyidie literature sources retrieved from Ura Academy repertory)

Conclusion

The classification and categorization presented above reveals that Kenyü was not restricted to some certain events or days. It was rather more like a law or commandment that directed and regulated the lives of the people in almost all aspects of life. It may be reiterated that the Naga society was not disorganized and the Nagas were not savages without any law and order as represented in the works of early and outside writers. Quite the contrary, the Nagas had their own established form of law and order that was strictly followed by the people. Values like honesty, respect, generosity and bravery were upheld and revered by the people and such cultural traits are the true characteristics of Naga identity.

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Tribal Paintings of Odisha

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Abstract

It is a known fact that there is very little research on tribal paintings of Odisha in comparison to other states of India, even though, there are 62 tribes (including 13 PVTGs) residing in this state. During last forty years, after V. Elwin (1951) Dr Dinanath Pathy and few other scholars have tried to do research on tribal paintings. But data shows these researches are mostly confined to Saura Paintings (Idital) and to some extent on Gond and Santhals. We find Saura, Gond and Santhal Paintings in state capital. Saura& Gond Paintings have spread up to district headquarters at best, even though several other tribes reside in those districts. So, our research and publicity are very limited. But it is wrong to conclude that other tribes are not doing their traditional paintings. Rather we are careless enough not to collect and document them properly through research work. As an administrator, I had the opportunity to work in tribal districts of Odisha like Sundergarh, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Kandhamal and Rayagada for nearly 24 years. Besides my administrative work, I had the opportunity to organize cultural festivals and workshops at block, subdivision and district levels on different occasions. This had generated my interest in tribal art and crafts of several tribes. So, the present article is a humble product of those interactions and analysis. I have kept the target to document tribal paintings of at least forty tribes of Odisha.

Keywords: tribal paintings, Saura, Gond, Santal, cultural festival

Introduction

Painting has been used as a powerful medium of expression since time immemorial. From the first ‘cry’ of newborn baby, human being begins the process of expressions that have led to never ending journey of visual art, language, literature, music, dance that culminate in culture and civilization in multiple forms, as per uniqueness of geographical area, society and man’s struggle for existence and happiness etc. Human being, consciously or unconsciously, observes the happenings in nature, reasons out its origin and process and learns it to develop social institutions, traditions and culture with march of time. Actions and reactions in mind have found expressions in gestures, sound, word and developed into various art forms. Nobody can say as to how and when

this process of expressing feelings and emotions began in a formal way. It is evident that each human being wants to “Exist-Create-Enjoy” along with others. This very nature of “Sat-Chit-Anand” has added meaning, momentum and process of change to explore life and living. In this background, tribal painting of Odisha deserves lot of importance from the standpoint of anthropology and art. Study of tribal paintings is very challenging. But if one accepts the challenge of exploration and documentation, he comes across a large (but unrecognised) museum of visual art of tribals painted on wall, floor, human body, stone//wooden materials etc. In facts, tribal life and society is a gallery of imaginations, expressions and reflections of perennial search for happiness in lap of nature.

It may be noted that Dr. K.P. Jaiswal, an eminent archaeologist of India, took the lead in bringing those natural art galleries of human being carved on rock. In the year, 1933, he brought the cave rock art of Bikramkhola (now in Jharsuguda district) to limelight. Since then, Sri Satya Narayan Rajguru, Sri Jitendra Prasad Singhdeo, Dr. Baba Mishra, Dr. Sadasiva Pradhan have thrown light on rock art of Gudahandi (Kalahandi Dist.), Yogimath (Nuapara Dist.), Ulalpgad and Ushakothi (both in undivided Sambalpur) etc. Those rock arts point out one important aspect of human being that “urge to express the feelings” is inborn and prevails over all difficulties to carve out a picture of the same even on hard rock. Eminent anthropologist Verrier Elwin has meticulously studied the tribal past of Odisha, collected those imprints of tribal art in-between 1936-51 and recorded them in his famous book “The Tribal Art of Middle India: A Personal Record (Published in the year 1951 by Oxford University Press). In nineteen eighties, eminent artist-cum-art historian, Dr. Dinanath Pathy made the path-finding research on Saora painting (Idital) of present Rayagada and Gajapati districts. It was followed by researchers like Dr. Sitakanta Mohapatra, Prof. Jagannath Das, Dr. Damayanti Besra, Dr. A.C. Sahoo, Dr. Naku Hansda, Dr. Chitrasen Pasayat, Kalamani Sri Rabindranath Sahoo and several others. But these researches have been limited to Saoras, Kandhas, Santhal and Gondas. Rest others are almost untouched. So, this article is an humble attempt to throw light on 12 tribals of Odisha (out of 62), in order of population.

1. Kandha Painting (Manjigunda, Tikangkuda, Banaikimu, Beran)

Khondha or Kandhs is the largest tribal community among 62 tribals of Odisha as per 2011 census. They drew the attention of British Govt. in 19th century for human sacrifice (Meria) and violent resistance against British misrule. Time changed the tide. Towards the end part of 19th century, it drew the attention of a slew of researchers of sociology, anthropology and literature, in and outside of India. More and more researches revealed numerous unknown facts of their nature based life style, podu cultivation, step cultivation, socio-religious institutions, songs and dances. Even some researchers like to spend vital part of their life there to study in-depth.

Kondhs mainly reside in undivided Koraput, Kandhamal and Kalahandi districts. They also live in stray villages of Bolangir, Ganjam, and Gajapati districts. Mother Earth (Dharani Penu), sky, curly mountains, murmuring ripples of rivers and rivulets, dense forest, blowing wind and animals etc.

influence their life and living, customs and traditions, concepts and cultures. They are very hard-working, loving and lyrical. After day's hard work, they plunge into dance and song in evening. They worship nature which is the teacher of their life. Nature has initiated them into song, dance and painting. Kandh women are born-painters. Kandh painting is called "Manjigunda", Tikangkuda, Banakimu and Beran in different districts and habitations. It differs from place to place.

The words "Manjigunda" and "Tikangkuda" are used by DongriaKandh area of Rayagada district and Lanjigada Block of Kalahandi district and "KutiaKandh areas of Belghar(Khandhamal district). The words "Banaikimu" and "Beran" are used in DesiaKandha areas of Rayagada, Koraput and some parts of Kandhamal district nearer to Kutiakandha areas. Besides this, a word Boma is used by Dongria Kandhas of Niyamgiri area(Rayagada district) for idol makers. In Dongria Kandha language "manji" means "rice grains" and "gunda" means "powder". So, 'manjigunda' means "pictures out of rice powder". "Tikangkuda" means "pictures out of "coloured powder". "Banakimu" means to picturise, "Beran" means to picturise with colours. (A field study since 2007 to 2015. Kandha pictures on wall/floor are based on socio-religious traditions of the community. There is no picture anywhere in Kandha community without a picture of Mother Earth in form of a Dharani Khunta (a pillar symbol). It may be followed by other Gods and Goddesses like Bhima Devata, Dongar Devata, vata, Mauli etc. (There are more than fifty such gods and goddesses worshiped by Kandhas). Besides this, as per situation Kandh women picturise rivers, plants of paddy, maize, ragi etc. trees like Mahul (Sago-palm), plantain, coconut, date palm, animals like cow, goat, sheep, birds like peacock and pigeon. Since last 7-8 years, they are painting walls with Goddess Laxmi, elephant, lotus, Durga, Saraswathi, swan particularly in Kutia Kandha villages of Lanjigarh and T.Rampur of Kalahandi district. As per tradition, they use rice powder (dry or mixed in water), powder of flowers and leaves, turmeric powder, vermilion, charcoal or burnt straw powder. For colour mixture, they use either water for floor painting or castor oil for wall painting. Kandhas believe natural colour is pure. But, now-a-days tribal boys are using readymade colour from the market. Dotted painting is a special feature of Kandha painting. But now, at least for 7-8 years, they have adapted line painting also. Dots of square, triangle, circle, parallel lines, diamond, club and heart create a panorama of wall beautification. Figures in Kandha painting are not as perfect as of modern painters. But they are very natural, symbolic and beautiful. Kandhas paint their body and cloth, Paintings of Kandhas especially of Dongrias in Niyamgiri mountain is a delightful scene. For this, they use natural white, yellow and red colour. This cloth painting is called Kapada gunda (Kapada means cloth and "Gunda" means with powder). Painting over body is known as "Banakuda" (etching or tattoing). Kutia kandhas call tattoing as "Tikang Uppa".

Kandh women prepares colours much before the day of painting. They collect red soil, flowers, leaves, turmeric, rice, coconut cover etc. dry them, powder them. 3-4 days before the day of painting, they prepare the wall or floor as per requirement by washing it by a dilution of cow dung and water. They apply it several times till it becomes smooth. After it is dried up, it is coated with

solution of red soil or rice powder to prepare the background for painting Kandha artists begin their painting first by drawing a pillar of mother Earth Goddess (Dharani Khunti in Kandh language). They proceed with other pictures thereafter. Tattooing is done by elderly women specialist or “Ghugian” women specialist of other community). For tattooing, specialist use needle, black colour and turmeric paste. It is done over face, hands, leg, feet as a matter of social and religious customs. Pictures of gods/goddesses, birds, pitchers, triangle, scorpion etc. are etched on their body. It is seen Kandh males are used to this also.

(2) Gond Painting (Bana, Chita)

This second largest tribal community of Odisha have extended their habitations to Odisha by coming from Central India (Gondwana). They are known as Maria Gond in Madhya Pradesh. Raj Gond in Maharastra and Gond or Desia in Odisha respectively. They mainly reside in Nawarangpur, Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Kalahandi and Kandhamal districts of Odisha. This community is known for its fighting spirit. Normally they prefer to carve out a habitation in plain area or bottom part of a mountain where water is available. They meet their livelihood needs through agriculture, animal husbandry, collection of forest produces and cottage industry. As per Gond myth Mahadev has created the earth and taught them agriculture. So, they worship Mahadev along with mother Earth besides Janga, Bhima and Nagbacha. They have adopted Hindu customs and festivals like Chaitra Nagabachha worship, Nuakhai and Kesharpur Yatra.

Their paintings are known as Bana, Chita or Murujachita in Nawarangpur” Jhotichita” in Sundergarh, Jhoti / Muruj in Kalahandi, Chaulachita in Bolangir. Wall paintings of Gonds are done over grey or red or black background with white coloured pictures. For floor paintings, background is of cowdung colour or white. For floor painting’ they use rice powder or its solution, turmeric, green leaves powder. Rarely they use red colour except a red on the forehead of gods/goddess. Their paintings are full of gods/goddesses, deer, peacock, fish, pitcher, palanquin, snake(auspicious), scorpion etc. They use finger, straw, bunch, dried or wet clothes as their brushes. They paint a fish or a pitcher to complete the painting.

They love paintings over their body. They paint their earthen pots. mats and bamboo products also..

(3) Santhal Painting (Chita, Chihita Rakulchiitor, Chittor)

Santals are third largest community of Odisha residing mainly in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore districts. They are outstanding in agriculture, house building, weaving, bamboo craft and sawai grass products. Their Inve paintings are known as Rabul Chittar (Dr Naku Hansda – “Kantha Kala O Santala” Page-2, Banaja, 2014). Their overall paintings are called “chihita” – Kalamani Rabindranath Sahoo” Odisha r Adibasi chitrakala:-2012 published by ATLC, Odisha .Their wall painting is known as “Patawa”, floor painting as “Jerel”. Their art of tattooing of women is known as “Khada” and men as “Shikha”.

Santhals built their house and decorate it in a very artistic way that points out their taste and attitude towards beauty. As per Prof Naku Hansda, a Santhal believes that if a visitor could not distinguish a Santhali house from others, that is not a Santali house. They mainly use red and calcarea soil to draw and paint outer walls. Santhals follow three types of preparation of background for each painting. They are as follows:

a) Arsi Pattau (Smearing of colour like mirror)

In this, a mirror like background is prepared using red or ochre soil.

b) Polo Duar Pattau – This background looks like either a circle or semi-circle.

c) Pikone Pattau – This background is like that of a triangle. In this background, small trees and creepers are painted.

In quadrangle or triangle, Santhals paint their gods/goddesses, departed soul (Pilchu halam and Pilchu budhi), birds, places of worships, haunting, marriage processions etc.

Tattooing has a special place in Santhal aesthetics .By tattooing over the body, a Santhal upkeeps his/her dignity and purity of community. In the words of Dr.DamayantiBesra“ As thread ceremony is indispensable in Brahmin family, Baptism is mandatory for Christians and “Sunnat is religious necessity for Muslims, for Santhali male and female. Sikha and Khada respectively are indispensable (Page-49, para-1, BanaJa of ATLC, Govt. of Odisha).

Almost all artefacts, in Santhal families, hold a panorama of figures and colours to show their rich taste.

(4) Kolha Painting (Chitra):

This fourth largest tribal community reside mainly in Mayurbhanj,Keonjhar and Baleswar districts of Odisha. They are known as Kol, Kolha, Ho, Munda, Mundari and LarkaKolha in different places. (Tribes of Odisha-Page-295 by researcher Binod Nayak).Kolhas are good in housekeeping, cleanliness and agriculture. They are better exposed to modern education than other tribes. As per my field study in Mayurbhanj, they call their paintings “chitra”. But it is doubtful whether this is the original and traditional word for painting. It needs a study in interior pockets of tribal habitation of kolhas. Kolhas residing in sub-urban or nearby area seem to have been influenced by modernity. They use white and red soil, and indigo colour for their painting. Background is mostly ochre colour. They paint “Lukluka”(original man of kolha community), sun, birds and animals, local flowers, creepers on wall. Painting on floor is gradually becoming less except on the days of religious festivals. They paint with traditional symbols of kul. (forefathers), gods/ goddesses, religion etc. It is observed that their trained youths are very good with readymade colour and paper.

5. Saora Painting – (Idital)

This fifth largest community of Odisha is at the top of art of tribal painting among rest other tribals. This painting mostly represents the tribal paintings of Odisha in different national / international

festivals, art galleries and tribal museums. Saoras claim themselves to be successors of (Puranic) Jara Sabar of the era of Lord Krishna of the Mahabharat.

In Saora language “Idi” means painting and “Tal” means wall. So, “Idital” means it is wall painting by Saora. This word is mostly used by Saoras of Rayagada district. In adjacent district of Gajapati, Saoras call it “Anital”. In his book, “The Tribal Art of Middle India: A Personal record – 1951, Page 187, published by Exfont university, V. Elwin has mentioned it to be “Ital). He had mentioned Saoras were doing their painting for respecting the departed souls, redressing and preventing epidemic, maintaining fertility of soil. This painting was earlier done by “Ital maran”(Saora Painter’s family members). Now it is not limited to this traditional painter’s family but expanded to many Saora youths. Sri Laxman Sabar, the famous living artist of this tribe opines that Dr.Dinanath Pathy came first to research on their painting tradition and Dr.Jagannath Das of Utkal University was coming to their areas very often for research work. Laxman Sabar is a living legend of Saora art who has produced number of tribal and non-tribal painters of Saora painting.

In fact, Saora painting was limited to walls of “kudang” (chief priest of Saora village) where Italaraman were painting on inner and outer walls of kudang family’s place of worship in his house. As per artist Sri Laxman Sabar a kothi(background) of idital painting is divided into 10 sections, in normal time or particularly when there is outbreak or apprehension of epidemic. These sections are (a) Welcome and prayer by kudang to traditional gods/goddesses for help in better protection from evil spirit or prevention of epidemic. (2) Discussion by kudang with good or evil spirits. (3) Kudang reveals this message to villagers after this discussions. (4) Paintings of gods and goddesses including Mother Earth. (5) Tracing the evil soul. (6) Production of the evil spirit before gods/goddesses. (7) Adjudication (8) order to leave village (9) Domestic animals like dogs to chase the evil spirit till outskirts of village . (10) Merrymaking and prayer before gods/goddesses.

As per Sri Laxman Sabar, this is the base of all Saora painting. They stick to traditional forms and designs of Saora to distinguish them from other tribal paintings. They paint Mandiasum (village goddess), Raudasum (family god), Lakasum(Mother Earth), Gadasum(Jungle Goddess), Dangarbasum(goddess to protect roads) etc.

Saoras follow a tradition before painting. “Kudum” informs “Italaraman” when he has a word from “above”. On the day of painting, Kudang, his wife and Italaraman observe a fast and assemble at the spot of kudang family. Kudang observes a puja, enters a trance and offers an animal or bird as sacrifice to gods/goddess. Italaraman or his wife also enters into trance and in that stage calls for items to be painted. Interestingly Italaraman goes on painting as long as there is space for painting on designated wall. In Idital, pictures or typical saora man and women, peacock, horse, money, goats, cocks, snake, scorpion, haunting scene, musical instruments, dance etc. find place. These paintings are simple, symbolic and typical as per Saura concepts. Christianity has already influenced their paintings now-a-days. They use red soil and rice powder(, dry or solution).Bamboo brushes are still in use but trained artists in Saora area or town area use readymade market colour.



A Saora woman painted the Id Tal painting in Rayagada district

(6) Juang Painting (Chitar, Alia Chitar, Laka Chitar and Iriali Chitar)

This tribal community mainly reside in Keonjhar and Dhenkanal districts of Odisha. Juangs of Keonjhar call themselves Thaniya (local or original) and call those of Dhenkanal as “Bhagodiaya” (migrated). As per myths, AdiDevata (First God of Universe) created them in mountain of Gonasika in Keonjhar district. Juangs are good in wall and floor painting using white (calcareous soil) and ochre (red soil) colour. They use bamboo or guava brush to draw and paint. Like others, they have no social or religious framework for painting. All are free to paint as per their concepts and ideas. Rice powder or its solution in water or oil are used for pictures and bordering. Their pictures include their gods/goddesses, birds, dances peacock, tortoise, bear etc.), musical instruments like “changu”, dhol, flute etc. Women are main painters of the community.

(7) Pahadi Bhuiyan painting (Jhanjra, Jhunti)

Pahadi Bhuiyan means Bhuiyan of Hills. As per this tribe, “Bhuiyan means” born out of earth”. They reside mainly in Rugudipadar (Deogarh), Jamardihi (Angul) and adjacent areas of Sundargarh districts. Dharma Devata (sun God) and Basumati (mother Earth) are their main god and goddess. Too much attachment to mother Earth have kept Bhuiyans alienate from outer world. Their life and living is connected to earth, sky and their community decision (Durbar). In their language,

painting is called “Jhanjara” or “chitar”. They paint their walls and floor in Akhaya Tritiya, Garvana Sankarti, Laxmi Puja, marriage and on closing day of harvesting. They are very conscious about sanctity of their body, mind and painting. Some say that they paint to invoke gods/goddesses and remove bad spirit and do not erase it from one festival day to their other. They use white, black, red/ochre colour. They paint I contrasting background and pictures. Their pictures are symbolic. For example a “triangle” sybmolises a cow and a line with circles over it symbolises gods and goddesses .Durga, Laxmi, Saraswari, agricultural equipment, their musical instruments, local birds, paddy plants find place in their painting. Bhuyan women love tattooing for their dignity and beauty.

(8) Gaddba Paintng (Bana/Bunai/Ganda/Banachuna/Gadani)

As per Gaddaba folk tales, word “Gaddba” originates out of 2 words namely “Gada” and “Ba”. Gada symbolises the river Godavari and “ba” means “originates from that”. So, “Gadaba claims to be residents from the river Godavari area. In their language, they use two words, “Bana” and Bunai for painting. They wall painting is called “Gada” floor painting is called “Banachuna” and tattooing is called Gadni”. Colouring of picture is called “Ritang”. They use Rang (red), Nili(Blue), Idieya (Black), Aladi(Yellow), Kachapataria (Green) very appropriately .They do paintings during Chaita Parab, Asadha Parav, Bandapana, Jamnua, rituals of birth and marriage. Sun, snake, Hantala (king cobra), Bag (tiger), Ili (Bear), Kira (Parrot), bows/arrows, spear, trees/reapers, seasonal fruits, stylish house, place of worship(Dharanai ghar) find place in their paintings. In their painting, purification of body, mind and soul and beautification go hand in hand as a compliment to each other. Women like tattooing for purification and dignity.

(9) Paraja Painting (Bana)

The word “Paraja” has come from the word “Prajā meaning “ryots” or beneficiaries of king. Goddess Duarsuni is the most benevolent among all gods/goddesses of their community. They reside mainly in undivided Koraput and present Kalahandi district. Agriculture, animal husbandry and collection /sale of forest produces are the main sources of their livelihood. Dance and singing are the main sources of entertainment. Dances like Dhemsā, Dungadinga and Laga have given them a national level fame.

Paraja women are very good in wall and floor painting. Besides, painting traditional icons, now-a-day. they include Hindu gods and goddess like Jagannath, Balabhadra, Samalei, Mauli, Giran Devi etc. in their paintings. They paint their earthen pots and wooden pots also. Soil, charcoal, dried/powdered leaves and flowers are the main source of colours for Paraja painters. They try to paint in detail. Their subject matters are comparatively few in comparison to other tribal communities of the district. Their women love tattooing.

10. Kisan Painting (Chitra)

Kisan tribe, residing mainly in Sundargarh, Sambalpur and Jharsuguda district of Odisha is one of the developed tribes of the state. They bear the sur name of Mirdha, Kolha, Moraba, Koda, Kora that vary from place to place. They worship Bhima Devata, Baghia Devi, Ma Samalei and Jagannath. In most of Kisan painting, imprint of agriculture and forest (flora, fauna and animals) are clearly visible. They paint ploughing farmer, transplanting scene, cottage (Kudi), peacock, pigeon, musical instruments etc. They paint paddy plants, elephant, feet of Goddess Laxmi during their main festival Ganga Ustav. All paintings (wall or floor) are done in a spirit of surrender, expiation and forgiveness from gods, goddesses and hermits. When any kisan painter fails to paint, he/she does it through symbols like Durga with demi-goddesses with help of 7 white circles and for forgiveness 7 lines are drawn. They use white, ochre, blue and green colour. Now-a-days tattooing is replaced by mehendi which is more decorative than representative of their society and culture as it was done 10-15 years back.

15) Bhatara, Bhattoda or Dhatoda painting(Kutabana,,Katikbana and Godana (tattooing)

As per observations of anthropologists, this tribe, known in different names as above, has migrated from Bastar district of Chhatisgarh and expanded to Nawarangpur, Koraput, Malkangiri and Kalahandi districts. Pronunciation of this word Bhatara varies from district to district. They worship Buddhi Thakurani (mother earth),Bharavi Buddhi, Bana Durga and Basumati. Their painting has no definite procedure of painting. They mostly do their painting during traditional puja and socio-religions festivals. They use rice powder, red soil, dried green leaves and turmeric. In recent time, they use readymade colour from market. Now a days rangoli painting has become a fashion for them and they have excelled. Older women of the tribe still believe in purity of rice powder, turmeric, red soil meant for gods/goddesses. Besides main gods/ goddesses they paint creepers, trees, peacock, monkey, snake and coconut tree etc.

12. Munda Painting (Ginil Ranga, Athe Bah' Kada)

As per anthropologists, Kalhan region of Bihar is the original birth place of "Munda tribe. From that place, they have migrated to Odisha, undivided Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. They are known as Kolha and Ho in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar. They have expanded to Sundargarh and Sambalpur district They use "Mundari" language. Dharama Devata, Basulimata, Desauli, Marang bonga and Goddess Laxmi are their main deities. Their wall painting is called Giril Ranga, Floor painting is called Ateh Bah, Tottooing is called kada. Their painting centres round religion and tradition. The background of their painting is either quadrangle or trapezium or triangle. Their figures and background are contrasting to each other. Besides, pictures of deities, they paint creepers, nuts, mountains, pandals of worship, pitcher, fruits and flowers etc. In tattooing, they include Sun, Mother Earth, Flowers, Creepers as per choice of customer.



Main features of tribal paintings

1. Tribal paintings are mostly influenced by their myths, belief, tradition, magic, departed souls.
2. Influence of mother earth is distinct in all tribal paintings.
3. Form of figures and presentation of tribal painting vary from tribe to tribe, even within same community..
4. After introduction of Indira Awas and use of cement mortar constructions of tribal houses, traditional wall painting and floor painting have undergone sea-change.
5. Trained youths of different tribe like to use readymade colours from market. Sometimes, they paint but are unable to explain as to why they have painted so-and-so pictures which their mothers were doing at least ten years back.
6. Figures like aeroplane, jeep, train, buildings have been introduced to tribal paintings.
7. Tribal youths have adopted paper painting besides wall and floor painting.
8. “Mehndi” of recent time is nothing but a developed form of tattooing of tribes.
9. Realistic painting by trained tribal youths is now competing with traditional paintings of tribe.
10. Acculturation and conversion have influenced many tribal paintings.

Features of Tattooing

1. Tattooing adds dignity and religiosity to tribal identity, especially of women. In some tribes like Kandhas and Santhal, tattooing is indispensable before marriage. It is a good omen for both female and male. (Didayi and Paraja tribes also)
2. Santhals believe tattooing can stop further miscarriage of women who is prone to it.

3. As Kandh, Saora, Paraja and Santals, women having no tattoo will suffer after death.
4. Tattooing in different parts of the body can connote different meanings.

14. Tribal Painting on Cloth, Earthen pot and Wood

Dongria kandhas of Niyamgiri Hill are expert in painting their own clothes. Similarly, Santhals of Mayurbhanj and Koya of Malkangiri are very good in production of painted clothes with natural colours. Kandha, Santhals, Gonds, Didayi and Paraja paint their pots and wood products.

15. Paper Painting

Tribal Paintings on paper, by tribal youths, is a recent addition in evolution of tribal paintings of Odisha. Trained tribal youths from recognised art institutions, have adapted it very fast. After painting on paper, tribal youths paint more like realistic painters rather than traditional painters. Figures on paper painting are more realistic than traditional or symbolic. Future will say whether it is tribal painting or not as it is understood for years together, or it will be called “paintings by tribal”.

Conclusion

There is no “theory” of “ism” or famous “Guru” or “Artist” among tribal, painters. It at all, any enlightened soul or spirit is there it is Mother Earth that inspires and urges a tribal to paint and dedicate it to Her to get fulfilment and happiness of life. These paintings are natural and spontaneous. Tribal life and society are museum of art. Nobody can say definitely, whether a tribal will lead a life as natural as nature or shed all his traditional beliefs and customs to lead a so called modern and scientific life in process of acculturation. Tribals have proved that they can adapt themselves to all changes of modern life. Nobody can stop adaptation when a tribal accepts change to modernity So we will lose the naturalness and spontaneity of tribal painting and concepts behind it. Process has started already. So, this is high time to collect, document, preserve and promote the artistry of tribal painting.



Saora Painting



Pre Historic Cave paintings of Gudahandi , Kalahandi Odisha



Dongrial Kondh sacred ceneter



Santali wall Painting of Mayurbhanj

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Folklore and Film: 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 behaviours 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 ethno-documentary to provide information about the culture. Ethno-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 ethnodocumentary 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 *primaeval* 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 TullaKumhar 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 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 an 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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The Saas-bahu Paradigm: Portrayal of Mother-in-law in Bhojpuri Folk Songs

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Abstract

This paper attempts to understand the everyday lives of the women of the rural Bhojpuri community. It decodes the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law (*saas-bahu*) relationship within the kinship organization through folk songs. Folk songs are an essential medium of women's expressions. They weave their own songs and describe their relationships at their conjugal or natal homes. The folk songs suggest that context-based analysis of women's lives is required to understand the complexities of social relations. In order to understand the role of a mother-in-law, we first have to see her position as a mother. This paper also attempts to deconstruct the idea of motherhood as an institution that endows women with power. Simultaneously it makes her more vulnerable within patriarchy. Why is the mother-in-law harsh towards her daughter-in-law? Why is the daughter-in-law always treated as an 'other'? In this paper, I will also share the informal conversations with rural women during the ethnographic work I conducted in the villages of Buxar, Bihar and Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh, from 2019-2020 and analyze the folk songs which depicts the different shades of a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationships.

Keywords: patriarchy, culture, kinship, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law

Saas gaari deve

devar ji samjha leve

Sasural Gendaphool

sainya Ji chhed deve

nanad chutki leve

Sasural Genda Phool

Mother in law reproaches me

Brother in law understands me

Sasural is a marigold flower

Husband teases me

Sister in law derides me

Sasural is a marigold flower

We have all come across this Chhattisgarhi folk song written by Gangaram Share . Bollywood improvised this folk song in the movie Delhi 6 (2009). It became an instant hit in A.R Rehman's voice. This song depicts an Indian *sasural* i.e. the in-law's household. The song describes the fragile relationships of the daughter in law at her *sasural*. In the song, *sasural* is compared to a marigold flower. As the marigold flower changes its color in its life span, the members of the in-law's house also change their behavior. When a bride enters the in law's house for the first time, members of the house are cordial. Gradually, the nicety fades out. In the song, mother-in-law (saas) is harsh on her daughter-in-law (bahu). The brother in law (devar) understands her but the sister in law (nanad) find ways to mock her. We see how the women of the in-laws' house are mean towards her. In any Indian household, marriage indicates a new phase in a girl's life. She has to leave her natal family behind and embark on a journey that is unknown. She has to embrace the husband's family as her own. This is a cause of great anxiety to her. The in-laws are also apprehensive as they have to create space for the new bride. Often this results in household conflicts. The mother in law is hypercritical. The sisters-in-law try to vilify her. The daughter-in-law struggles to create space for herself in the new family. Clashes between a mother in law and daughter in law are part of everyday struggles that can sometimes take violent turns.

"...Two handsome women, gripped in argument

each proud, acute, subtle, I hear scream

across the cut glass and majolica

like Furies cornered from their prey ..." (Rich, 2016)

The above lines from the poem Snapshots of a daughter-in-law echo the dissatisfaction of the daughter in law in her domestic life. It also reveals the arch rivalry between a mother-in-law and a daughter in law. They both fail to identify that they are victims of the vicious cyclic oppression of the patriarchal world. They both want to gain the affection of the same man, i.e. the son/husband. To appease him, they clash with each other. Similarly, in the Bhojpuri community, the relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is unpleasant. The mother-in-law exerts power on the daughter-in-law so that the daughter-in-law conforms to the structured world. She wants her to go through the hardships as she had gone in her early days. There is a proverb in the Bhojpuri language that says, "the praised bahu goes to Dom's house "(Indra dev, 139) which means that if you praise and honour the daughter-in-law, she becomes spoilt. This paper attempts to study the

power dynamics in the rural Bhojpuri household through Bhojpuri wedding songs. Why is the mother-in-law harsh towards her daughter-in-law? Why is the daughter-in-law always treated as an 'other' within the Bhojpuri community? The Bhojpuri community is found in the areas of Western Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh and parts of Jharkhand. Largely agrarian, the Bhojpuri community is patriarchal with a joint family setting. In a structured community, voices of the women are repressed, so songs become a medium of expression for them.

In attempting to understand a society's structure and culture, folk songs are considered as the expression of people's spirit (Nettl, 1962). Also, the folk songs contain the rich cultural tapestry of a region (Lal, Paul, 2016). Folk songs are an essential medium of expression for rural Bhojpuri women. The songs depict the vivid form of familial ties. Usha Nillson states that women's songs are concerned mainly with "her work and household duties, her awareness of her position in society, marriage, child-birth, interpersonal relationships, and religious beliefs..." (Nillson, 1984, pg 117). The songs are composed by women, sung by women, so they are a gateway inside the women's world. The different aspects of a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship are analyzed through folk songs. In the first part of the paper, I attempt to study the position of a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in the kinship structure of the Bhojpuri community. To understand the working of power, we have to look at the organization of a family, which is the smallest unit within the kinship structure. I will also share the informal conversations I had with folk singers and other rural women during the ethnographic work I conducted in the villages of Buxar, Bihar and Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh. In the second part of the paper, I analyze the folk songs which I have collected from the field. In this paper, I will also share the informal conversations with folk singers and other rural women during the ethnographic work. I already mentioned why I would use folk songs to understand the under workings of the familial relationships. I have used textual songs to give a worldview of the women, but primarily, the songs I will use here for analysis have been collected by me. At Bhadwar, my field informant Amrita has been a source of constant help to me. She has helped me in transcribing the folk songs that I will use in the paper. The portrayal of the relations of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is bitter in the Bhojpuri folk songs. One of the common motifs that occur is of *daruniya*. The mother-in-law is often called Daruniya (one who gives pain) in folk songs. (Upadhyay, 1991, pg 61) She turns hostile towards her daughter-in-law after her son takes on the role of a spouse. I want to understand why does she turn evil towards her daughter-in-law? I attempt to deconstruct the idea of motherhood as an institution that endows women with power but at the same time makes them more vulnerable inside the system.

Kinship structure: Position of a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law

Before a woman takes on the role of a mother-in-law, she becomes a mother. In rural communities, the purpose of marriage is to beget sons. If the woman is successful in giving birth to a son, her social status improves automatically. The sohar or the birth songs of the Bhojpuri community of India portrays the vital position of a son in the woman's life. If a woman is unable to give birth to a son and instead gives birth to a daughter, she is ostracized from the community. The son is crucial

for the social status of the mother. "For a mother, her son is the delight giver, the eyeballs and the heart. (Upadhyay,1960, pg 260) In one of my field interviews at Bhadwar, a village community in Buxar, an elderly woman, whom everyone calls Mai, tells me that "*she is closest to her eldest son. Even when her husband was alive, he was dearer to her than her husband. She wants to maintain that closeness after her husband's death. She is a widow and maintains how the son gives all his earnings to her, and she decides how to divide it between the other family members*". She takes pride that the daughter-in-law's of the house are terrified of her, and they fulfil all her demands. Only through her son's presence she can exert her power in the house. Every kinship is a cultural system. The term 'kinship' has already been explained in the above segment. To understand the north Indian Kinship structure, we first need to look at the construction of a family. Largely agrarian, family is the crux of the social institution of the Bhojpuri community. The most common features are that a family consist of a large number of members, headed by the male patriarch of the house and the position of women is subordinate. (Indra dev, 1989). 'A Bhojpuri family is patrilocal, patriarchal, and patrilineal" (Upadhyay,1970,pg 116). There is a clear division of labour where men work outside the house and women work inside the house. The eldest male member is the patriarch, who makes all the major decisions outside the house. The mother of the eldest male is the authoritative figure inside the house who commands all the respect. After her death, the power shifts to the wife of the eldest male. The youngest bride is in a subservient position and is answerable to all the older women in her house. The male members of the family are connected by blood, i.e. father-son, brother-brother, grandfather-grandson, but the female members are wives (*bahus*), who come from other families or unmarried daughters (*beti*) who will go to another house. The term *beti*(daughter) and *bahu* (bride) are two categories that come with different sets of responsibilities and morality.

"This custom of local exogamy divides the women of a local group into two sharp divisions: the 'daughters' of the village and 'brides' of the village ...Folk literature singles out certain pairs of relations as natural enemies. Nanad-bhojai, i.e. a woman and her husband's sister in one such pair. Sas-bahu, i.e. a woman and her husband's mother is another..." (Karve,2003, pg57) .The status of the bride givers is inferior to the bribe-takers, so automatically, the beti has more freedom than the bahu. it reflects the structural inequality that engulfs the women of the house. One of the striking points is that the women are the primary linkage in the kinship system and thus the cause of tension within the household because the male members are part of the same family, but women come from different families and cultural and material backgrounds. Their relationship is asymmetrical. If we look at the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, it is they both are female-female bonds; they both are inter-generational and asymmetrical relationships; and they both are bounded and defined by kinship networks. These similarities illuminate the major difference between these relationships" (Fischer, 1983, pg187). Since the women folks are confined within the house, the kitchen becomes a site of the contest. It is a space within which the most intense struggles take place. Sometimes the mother in law beats her daughter in law, and the son reluctantly watches. Several women narrate their ordeals. In my fieldwork, some of the common images women used

to describe the texture of their lives as being an outsider, with compromise, troubles and hardships. In one of the songs, the bride complains to her mother,

Sasumaarehuduka, nanadiya pare gaari ho na

E chadariya k olatwa ,dewarwahumrona (Upadhyay, 1991, 61)

Mother-in-law hits me, sister –in law abuses me.

Behind the sheets, brother-in-law is also not mine

Laate hum marbo, paraatedebogaari,

Kaanch hi nidiye, hum jagaibo put bahuari(Upadhyay, 1991, 62)

I will kick her, abuse her all day

I will wake my bahu from half sleep

In both the songs, the daughter-in-law is tormented in the in-law's house. In the first song, she describes the cruelty of the mother-in-law, harshness of the sister-in-law and wickedness of the brother-in-law. In the second song, the mother in law describes the cruelty she commits on her daughter in law. One of the women in my fieldwork, Mundeshwari (name changed), requested anonymity while she talked about her family. Mundeshwari used to sing at weddings, sohars but now she has stopped. I asked if her in-laws supported her when she first started singing? She denied it, her mother-in-law was against her working outside and staying late for weddings. Though her mother-in-law was literate, still she vilified her. The mother-in-law was entitled to the services of the daughter-in-law. She felt that she had bought a servant who should cook, clean and serve the family. If she tried complaining about this to her husband, the mother-in-law would intimidate her. She usually kept quiet to maintain peace.

Purabkelogwanirmohiya e baba ,

Ulti ,pultidukhdeyi

Ratiyapisawejow, gehua e baba

Dinwakatawejhinsut(Upadhyay, 1991, 62)

O Father ! People from eastern Uttar Pradesh are cruel

The in-laws rebuff me in every possible way

O, Father! At night I grind wheat grains

At daytime, I spin the wheel for yarn

The above song shows how a daughter complains to her father about the atrocities she faces inside her in-law's house. The youngest bahu has to work day and night, failing to gain affection. One

female from Buxar tells me that separation of the kitchen forms an enduring cultural image of conflict within the community and is seen as a division or irrevocable break within the family. I asked her if she ever retaliated. She tells me *"this is the norm, so I am not in a position to say anything. I have to wait for my turn. Mother-in-law has given the house thirty years so she can rule, and she had no option. Naihar wouldn't accept her because now she was married, friends would make fun of her, so ultimately she conforms to the setting"*. In the first year of her marriage, she wanted to live separately but gradually she understood that this is not an option for her. In the next segment, I will write the Bhojpuri folk songs I have collected from the field, translate them and analyze the songs that describe the familial relationships and depict the relationships between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

Bhojpuri Folk Songs: An analysis

1. Machiya baithali tuhusaa susar begun weaagar ho

E saasu ek re akeli yabatla wahu

Ulat k piya wataakey palatke piya wataakey

Panwa katrisejiyadasiha fulwa chhitaraiha e bahu wabairi

Kaatdhari hasirhan waulat k babu atakihe

Panwa katrisejiyadasila fulwa chhitaraila e saasubairikaatdhaini

Sirahanwaulat k piyawana take palatkepiyawanataakey

Machiyabaithalituhunanadsar begunweaagar ho

E nanad ek re akeliyabatlawahu

Ulat k piyawataakey palatkepiyawataakey

Panwa katrisejiyadasihafulwachhitaraiha e bahuwabairi

Kaatdharihasirhanwaulat k bhaiwatakihe

Panwa katrisejiyadasilafulwachhitaraila e saasubairikaatdhaini

Sirahanwaulat k piyawana take palatkepiyawanataakey

You are bestowed with great qualities

O mother in law will you please give an idea?

How can I make my husband look at me with love?

Keep cut betel leaves, throw dry flowers in the bed

Keep thorns of berries near his head; my son will adore you.

O mother in law, I unfolded betel leaves, threw dry flowers, Kept thorns of berries
 Near his head, but my husband does not look at me with love
 You are bestowed with great qualities
 O Sister in law, please give me an idea
 When will my husband look at me with love?
 Keep cut betel leaves, spread dry flowers, in the bed
 Keep thorns of berries near his head, my brother will look at you
 O sister in law, I unfolded betel leaves, threw dry flowers, Kept thorns of berries
 Near his head, but my husband does not look at me.

This song has been collected by me from the village Bhadwar. Amrita has helped in the translation. In the rural Bhojpuri community, a son is close to his mother. *Matribhakt*, *Sojiyabeta* are some of the common terms to describe a *saput*, i.e. the good son. The good son worships the mother and follows her advice blindly. In the above song, we see the daughter in law is new to her sasural and she is unable to understand why is the husband so distant from her. She yearns for his love and touch but the husband avoids her. There is clear frustration in her mind. In one of my field interviews, an elderly woman who is called badkiamma tells me that "*in her family, the men slept outside. The women folks slept together with chhotinanads. Her husband would enter the room once a year to beget kids that too with permission from his mother. The mother in law would stand outside the gate and knock after ten minutes*" There was no privacy or tender love between the husband and wife. Here we see the same situation. The daughter in law goes to seek advice from the mother-in-law. The mother-in-law does not want the daughter in law and the son to get closer, so she gives her wrong ideas. She asks her to cut betel leaves and spread them in the bed; instead of decorating the bed with fresh flowers, she advises her to use dried flowers and keep thorns near his head. The son will be angered, and she will be successful in her task to keep the son away from her daughter in law. The daughter in law is young, and she takes the advice of her mother-in-law. The husband gets even more distant. She goes to her sister in law for advice; she also manipulates her. The song shows the internal rivalry between the daughter in law and the mother in law. The tv soap opera *Kyunkisaasbhi bahu thi* broke all TRP records and ran for more than ten years. It was an instant hit because people could relate to the power struggle, which can be seen in almost every Indian household. As the name of the soap opera suggests, it depicts the power struggle of three generations of women; grand-mother-in-law (baa), mother-in-law (Savita) and daughter-in-law (Tulsi) in a joint family setting. The mother-in-law tortures the daughter-in-law. Tulsi being the ideal daughter-in-law, takes all the pain and strives to be the ideal bahu of the Viraani house. In the Bhojpuri community, there is a ritual of *dudhlautawa*, when a son goes to get married. *Dudhlautawa* means repaying the price of the milk. The mother gives birth to a son, feeds her. When he goes to marry, she asks to repay the price. This ritual can be seen as a ritual of separation

from the mother. The dudhlautawa ritual is applicable only for the son. The mother also feeds her daughter with the same milk, but there is no ritual for her. Even in Bengal, before the groom leaves his house, there is a ritual, where the son says "*ma tomar Jonno dasi ante jacchi*". It means mother; I am going to bring a maidservant for you. An ideal son is someone who respects his mother. Urquhart says he can forsake his wife, but he cannot question his mother. It is considered a sin. Even if the mother torments his wife, he is not supposed to question her.

2. Saasunandiya milikaileyhaijha garwa

Aho ram kahiley e jhagarwa

Piyalekealgeyrahob

Tutalimayabahumar

Piyalekealgeyrahob

Kothaataari man hi nabhaavey

Piyalekealgeyrahob

Saasunandiyamilikaileyhaijhagarwa

Aho ram kahiley e jhagarwa

Piyalekealgeyrahob

Mother in law and sister in law fight with me

O Rama! They fight with me

I will stay alone with my husband

In a dilapidated hut,

I don't find peace in the bungalow

Mother in law and sister in law fight with me

O Rama! They fight with me

I will stay alone with my husband

The song has been collected from village Bhadwar. Amrita took me to a woman named Lali (name changed) who sang the song for me while narrating the ordeals at her house. Her husband works in the city and sends all the money to his mother. The wife feels helpless as she has no economic security. She is dependent on her mother-in-law. She has to work all day without any respite. This song expresses her angst and her desire to break away from the comforts of the

big house. She says even if it is a dilapidated hut, she just wants to stay with her husband as the mother in law and her husband's sister fight with her. In the rural areas, the joint family settings result in misery. In such cases, the family becomes a site of triple oppression (Jain, Bannerjee, 411). The older women control the younger women, especially the bahu. In one of my interviews, Malti Devi tells me she wanted to go and stay with her husband, but that is not the norm in the village. People would laugh at her, so she decided to stay back and raise the kids in the village".

In a rural setting, a girl is bought to be subservient. Her entire existence revolves around the family. In an urban setting, the joint family setups are being replaced by nuclear families that consist of the husband, wife and their children. There might be a tussle between the husband and wife but in the joint family settings husband is generally not the enemy. The mother-in-law (saas) and the sister-in-law (nanad) torture her. Once when she has to migrate to her Sasural, which is permanent, and the second time, when the husband migrates to some new place to work. She faces alienation. With age, women gain power and control. The eldest woman will have the second most control over the family after the male patriarch. It becomes oppressive for the younger women in this arrangement. The younger women are politicized and kept in control. In this way, they continuously reaffirm the patriarchal norms. In a household, the same daughter in law when she becomes a mother-in-law exerts her power and reaffirms the vicious cycle of patriarchy that devours women of each generation. One of the primary reasons is that before the son was married, the mother in law had control over him and his money. He acts as her social and economic support. The daughter-in-law thwarts this position, so there is a sense of insecurity that surrounds her, so she tries to get even stricter to maintain her position.

Conclusion

An analysis of the Bhojpuri songs suggest that the most intense power struggles are seen within the family. We need to broaden our awareness of the multiple sites within which women express themselves and the complexities that they grapple with. The family can be an extremely coercive institution for women. The continued existence of abuse, poverty suggests the complexities of interconnected systems of coercion and control. Women's social locations are a repository of age class gender. The biggest struggles are against their own people. The mother in law is cruel as, without any economic security, she is dependent first on her husband and then on her son. The daughter in law faces control from her mother in law and all the older women. Thus, the mother in law and daughter in law are both victims of the patriarchy.

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Oral Narratives and the Cultural Identity of Fisher folk from Emic Perspective

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Abstract

Oral literary forms are simple, spontaneous products originating in the spoken language as opposed to complex, consciously created literary forms. Oral literature is the repository of knowledge and wisdom of non-literate societies. Through tales, songs, poems, proverbs and rituals it gives us an insight about the life of a society at that particular point of time and the changes and challenges they have faced. Oral literature is also known as expressive literature or verbal art. They focus closely on disclosing the secrets of origin, dissemination and variation of the various narrative forms. Utmost quality of oral narrative is its appealing affect. They have redemption power and consists psychologically driven force that makes them recreate according to the situations. Oral narrators are traditional bearers at times they act as creators and care takers of the particular community they belong to. East Godavari has a diverse population of fishermen communities. The fishermen are locally referred as Palli, Vada Palli, Marakkadu. Their culture is completely embedded with rich oral traditions and customs. Less work has been done in bringing out the oral tradition of the community. The study has focused on collecting oral lore of fishermen communities. Oral narratives of the fishermen depict diverse themes. They focus on the aspects of identity, gender, hierarchy and they represent their aspirations, beliefs and customs. A part of the study will focus on how narratives represent them and acts as a mirror image of their culture. The primary source of the present paper is field data collected from the informants in the field from Amalapuram and Kakinada Constituencies in East Godavari District.

Keywords: Oral Literature, Narratives, Culture, Community, tradition, Fishermen and Identity

Introduction

Folk Culture is the organizational core of the group identity. It reflects the aims, interests, standards, and activities of the group. In contrast to more academic forms of culture, it is learned by interaction and participation within the group rather than through formal channels. Culture can be defined in terms of the learned patterns of behaviour, beliefs, art, rituals, institutions, and

expressions characteristic of a particular group and how these elements are expressed. This pattern of learning and transmission is not limited to strictly oral or strictly written forms of transmission: Either or both may be employed in the learning process. Folklore, also known as popular knowledge, is the culmination of all that humanity has encountered, discovered, and employed over the years. Folklore can be considered as an integral part of an individual's life. We grow up listening to lullabies, stories, riddles, proverbs, and so on. We can understand and analyze our relationships without a structural study. We inherit occupational skills through word of mouth. We practice rituals, customs, and traditions by observation. All the above said things are transmitted orally. Oral tradition plays a major role in folklore studies. Jolles mentions that "oral literary forms as simple, spontaneous products originating in the spoken language as opposed to complex, consciously created literary forms" (53).

Oral literature is the repository of knowledge and wisdom of non-literate societies. Through tales, songs, poems, proverbs, and rituals it gives us an insight into the life of a society at that point of time and the changes and challenges they have faced. Oral literature withholds traditional knowledge and sets the norms for moral conduct in the society and tries to establish an individual's relationship with the society around him. It also serves as the artistic expression of a society. Its beauty stretches across cultural frontiers. Oral literature is a response to the universal human instinct to find balance, harmony, and beauty in the world and the need to understand pain, suffering, and evil. It explains the causes of human suffering, justifies them, and suggests ways of mediation and the healing of suffering. Oral literature also functions to fulfil the need for religious belief and spiritual fulfilment necessary for human existence. This universal human realm, peopled by spiritual beings and their personalities, is revealed through stories, tales, songs, myths, legends, prayers, and ritual texts. Oral literature serves to communicate ideas, emotions, beliefs, and appreciation of life. This literature defines, interprets, and elaborates on the society's vision of reality and the dangers in the world. It deals with the human adventure and achievements against the odds. Through the texts of the society's rituals and ceremonies, the ecological elements that are critical to the society's livelihood are portrayed and their functions are sanctified.

Owing to the oral existence, narrative genres have unlimited variants with limited number of plots. Folk narratives are adaptable and modified according to the culture of the people. They have the trait of auto-correction according to the situation. Inconsistency of a narrative increases with the popularity. So in folklore 'text' is given a very prominent role. The concept of genre is created by creating the concept of any folklore form, and then by considering of such folk forms based on similarity. Here the abstract is created from the concrete, and from many such abstracts yet another abstract is created. For example, if we observe genres like tales, songs, myths, legends, and so on. The above genres have many subgenres in them. In tales, we have folktales, fairy tales, animal tales, comic tales, and so on. The same is the case with songs in songs we have ballads, epic songs, war songs, heroic songs, and so on. These genres are classified based on their structure and function.

However, function helps a folklorist to understand how a community function and retains its identity. By focusing on the oral literature of a particular community or a society we get a

holistic idea of the norms on which the society is set up and gives us a brief outlook of their customs and traditions. Some of the genres of folklore are myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, songs, folk dance, folk games, and so on. The distinction between genres of folklore is very minute what may be a legend for one community may be a folk tale for another proverb for one community can be a fable for another community. So, the context in which lore is brought plays a vital role in analyzing the meaning of the genre. From time immemorial several communities are preserving their cultures through their rich oral traditions. They are passed down to generations through a group of narrators. The narrator here plays the role of a custodian of that particular community. The narrators can be mothers, grandparents, teachers, or elders of that particular community.

Oral literature is often referred to as expressive literature or vocal art. They put a lot of emphasis on revealing the methods used in the creation, spread, and variation of the many narrative forms. The most compelling aspect of oral storytelling is its effect. They possess the ability to change and contain psychological forces that cause them to remake themselves in response to circumstances. Oral narrators are sometimes both tradition-bearers and the creators and custodians of the community to which they belong. More people are drawn to singing than speaking. Redundancy and adaptability make it a mass-friendly trait, and it can involve many individuals at once. Due to this characteristic, prehistoric societies have employed it as a means of knowledge transmission. An oral narrative's primary purpose is to advance social cohesion and to represent the culture of that particular community. They serve as a means of cultural expression through the arts. It captures the socio-political climate of a community at a specific moment.

Andhra Pradesh hosts a diverse population of fishermen communities. Some of the major subcastes of the fishermen community in Andhra Pradesh are Agni Kula Kshatriya, Bestha, Bastar, Gangaputra, Gangavar, Gondla, Jalari, Koracha, Nayyala, Pattapa, Palli, Vadavalija, Vaddi, Jala Kshatriya, Vanyekula Kshatriya (VanneKapu, Vanne Reddy, PalleKapu, Palle Reddy). Among these sub-castes, we find mostly Agni Kula Kshatriyas, Jalari, and Palli communities in coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh. But in government records, we find all these subcastes referred to as one single community Agnikula Kshatriya is under the Puducherry decree 1929³⁷. This decree mentions that all the fishermen communities of the Madras Presidency are to be referred as Agnikula Kshatriyas.

H. A. Stuart mentions that the name vanniyan or Agnikula is derived from the Sanskrit Vahni(fire) in connection with the following legend. In ancient days two gaints named vatapi and Mahi worshipped Brahma with such devotion that they obtained from him immunity from death from every natural element except fire. After getting such powerful boons they started torturing Gods and every natural element. Vatapi went to the extent of swallowing vayu (the God of Winds)

³⁷ B. Subhramanyeswara, Sharma. "Konaseema Jalari Paatalu Oka Pariseelana." Thesis. Telugu University, 1990. Print.

and Mahi devoured the Sun. With the still surroundings and darkness everywhere the devatas appealed to Brahma and he directed Jambava Mahamuni to perform a sacrifice by fire. Armed horsemen sprung from the flames and they took twelve expeditions against Vatapi and Mahi and destroyed them and later released Vayu and Sun.³⁸ The soldiers who are born out of fire are named as Agni Kula and some people say as they are born out of the fire (*Pallavinchina*) they are termed as Pallis. As Agni was the original ancestor of all kings his descendants are referred to by his son's name Sambhu.³⁹ Owing to this legend most of the fishermen communities have Sambhu Muni as their totem.

As the name of the district conveys, East Godavari District is closely associated with the river Godavari, occupying a major portion of the delta area. It is a coastal district in the Andhra Pradesh state with Kakinada as the headquarters and it is surrounded by the Bay of Bengal in the East and South, Khammam district in the West and Visakhapatnam district in the North directions. East Godavari district occupies an area of 12,607 square kilometers. The district has 7 revenue divisions namely, Amalapuram, Etapaka, Kakinada, Peddapuram, Rajahmundry, Ramachandrapuram, and Rampachodavaram with 65 mandals. The district is well known for its abundance of natural resources. Agriculture and related activities contribute a lot to the economy of the district. Next coming is fishing and its related activities. The presence of abundant water bodies and widespread coastal length has made it a home for many fishing communities. Most of the fishermen communities are settled in the Amalapuram and Kakinada revenue divisions. Amalapuram in total has 42 villages and Kakinada has 48 almost all the villages among them are populated by Pallis or Agnikula Kshatriyas. East Godavari is also known as the cultural capital of Andhra Pradesh. Almost forty folk art forms were in existence at that point. Being an agriculturally based area, the people here practise a lot of customs and traditions and have their own lore to signify those particular occasions. Fishermen Community have their own unique traditions and customs which differs them from the mainstream population. Their culture is completely embedded with rich oral traditions and customs. Less work has been done in bringing out the oral tradition of the community. The study has focused on collecting the oral lore of fishermen communities. Folk tales, songs, and proverbs were collected as a part of the study. The primary source of the present paper is field data collected from the informants in the field from Amalapuram and Kakinada Constituencies in East Godavari District. The oral lore of the fishermen depicts diverse themes. They focus on the aspects of identity, gender, occupational status and they represent their aspirations, beliefs and customs. Apart from the study will focus on how oral lore acts as a mirror image of their culture.

³⁸Thurston, Edgar. "Palli or vanniyan." *Castes And Tribes of Southern India*. Vol. VI. New Delhi: Cosmos, 2009. 4-5. Print.

³⁹ Thurston, Palli or Vanniyan, 8.

By the nature of their profession, most of the fishermen localities are located very close to the water bodies. There is a clear marked distinction between the mainstream population of the village and the fisher folk. They have their own set of customs and traditions which differentiate them from the others of the village. Their life is completely entwined with a set of customs and rituals that are celebrated periodically to bring collectiveness among the community members. Songs and tales were told denoting the importance of that particular situation. The songs can be classified majorly into Work Songs, Devotional songs, Ritual songs, Leisure Songs, and Ideological songs. The context in which the song is sung plays a vital role in analyzing the meaning of the song. Tales and proverbs told by them reflect their worldly knowledge. The tales are usually constructed in and around their culture and reflect their myths, customs, traditions, relationships, aspirations, and their fun-loving nature.

Fishermen invest a lot of effort in doing various menial jobs. Most of the works done by them are very hectic, time-consuming, and tiresome. In order to forget the strain and to cheer up each other, they have used folksongs as a medium. Work songs are highly energetic and a group of words are repeated rhythmically. The words are taken from their day-to-day life and every member of the group contributes to the song. Reliability and adaptability are the two major things seen in work songs. They do not follow any meter while composing the song some songs just come from the situation itself.

Eg: *Hailesa*

GangammaGaurammaHailesa

DandaluTallulakuHailessa

KolupulaTallulakuHailesa

KondalloTallulakuHailesa

Digi randiTalluluHailesa

DandaluivigonuHailesa

DandalugangammaHailesa

DandaluGourammaHailesa

KalluKanipettandiHailesa

Maa KannathalluluHailesa

(The above song is sung when the fishermen are about to leave for fishing. They offer *Kolupulu* a type of offering made to the river Goddess before setting out for fishing. The fishermen are asking the Goddesses to accept their prayers and to safeguard them on their mission.)

DulaparavalaDulaparavala

Dulupudulupugavarayyadulaparavala

KatteChepalannikaripothunnay

BediseParugulubediripothunnay

CheduParigelannichediripothunnay

MattagidesallanniKottukuntunnay

(The above song is sung while emptying the fishing nets. It gives us information about various kinds of fish).

Being an agriculturally based district the people all over the district celebrate Sankranthi with great festivity. All people irrespective of their community participate in the festive celebrations. One month before the festival unmarried girls assemble at a place and make small mounds of cow dung and decorate it with flowers and they sing songs praising the goddesses.

GangammaGaurammaappachellendrulluGobbiyallo

Oka thalli biddalakuvairamuleduGobbiyallo

ManchiManchiPooleriokaraasiposiriGobbiyallo

KanaraniKaluvaleriokarasiposiriGobbiyallo

ManchimanchipoolerimamayyakampeGobbiyallo

KanaranipoolerigaurammakampeGobbiyallo

AkkanichelliniokkarikiichiGobbiyallo

A child is always a welcome asset for the fisherman family. lots of rituals are involved with childbirth. The below song deals with various stages of birth pollution. After childbirth the umbilical cord is cut and the child is given a hot water bath he is placed in a winnowing pan and the evil eye is ward off using little mud and it's thrown in the direction where the midwife stands and later the child is placed next to mother. On the fourth day evening of the childbirth near the entrance of the house, two dung statues are placed as the security of the house, and old chappals are tied at the entrance of the house. One after the other sings *the yennamma* song continuously to prevent any evil eye and harm from befalling the newborn and the mother.

Rave Rave Yennamma Neevupove Pove Yennamma

Neekucheredatha Yennammaninnupoojisthayennamma

Okkanaduyennammaneevuoppuganuntiviyennamma

Rendavanaaduyennammaneevulogillanuntiviyennamma

Moodonaduyennammaneevumulugachuntiveyennamma

Naalugonaaduyennammaneevunavvuchanuntiviyennamma

Aidovanaduyennammaneevuangillanuntiviyennamma

Aaronaaduyennammaneevuarusthanuntiviyennamma

Edavanaaduyennammaneevuedusthavuntiviyennamma

Enimadavanaaduyennammaneevuyerdaatipothiviyennamma

Thommidonaduyennammathoranalugadithimiyennamma

Padonaduyennammaneevuparigettipothiviyennamma

Padakondonaaduyennammamemubaarasalachesithimiyennamma

The song shows various stages of childbirth pollution and how the pain left the home gradually. It also hints to us that the birth pollution lasts for 11 days and ends with the naming ceremony of the newborn.

Some songs sung by the fishermen present their identity in the society and how they were treated by the other caste people. The song presents very carefully presents the hierarchical status that was prevalent in the society in a very satirical and funny manner. The song also reflects how they were looked down by other class people.

*Nenu Pallolakuranni babu
Nannu kottadduthittaddu babu
Nenu dosedi burra sandadi babu
Nenu esediisuruvala babu
Naanu puttindipulapillipuntha
Naanu perigindipedapudisantha
Naa babu perujellakonku babu
Naaamma perumattagidisa
Na achelliperucheduparige
Naathamudiperukorramenu
Naapellamperuisukadond
Naaperubommidaybommiday*

Among other themes which were represented in fishermen's songs, the aspect of gender plays a key role. Gender struggle is presented on a very simple and lighter note. The song presents the helplessness of a woman and the responsibilities that were waiting for her to fulfill. It also focuses on her anxieties and fears.

*OoJalarannaororijalaranna
Nenathikachakkanidannijalaranna
Yerumedayeruvachejalaranna
Nannerudaatinchavoyjaalaranna
Chantibiddachaddikoodujalaranna
Chaalaproddekkindijalaranna
Oochinnelagauruninnerudaatiya
Neeventhachakkanidanivechinnelagauru
Nee mugamunelabaludechinnelagauru
Nee maataluteenelathegalechinnelagauru
Nee meedanaamanasuchinnelagauru
Nilavakundavunnadichinnelagauru*

In the above song, the fisherman wants to marry a young lady who was already married and had a kid. He tries to convince her saying that he will be providing her with every sort of ornament and providing her the utmost comfort. The lady feels furious on hearing the fisherman's desire and tries to convince him to marry her sister. She tries to invoke a sense of responsibility in him by addressing him as her brother. But in the desire to marry he refuses to hear the righteous words. The lady then tries to threaten him by saying some ill will befall on him for thinking wrong but he refuses to listen to her in front of her beauty. Finally, she convinces him saying that her family will kill her if she goes with someone else with this he changes his mind. The lady very tactically handled the fishermen and got her work done.

The tales of fishermen focus on various aspects. One such tale depicts their origin and explains why the community has focused on fishing. The tale also throws light on why the Yadava lady is given a vital role during the marriage ceremonies. The below story is narrated when I asked

why they chose fishing as an occupation. The same story was narrated by three people from different villages. One of the narrators is Samudrudu aged 86 years from Odalarevu. He got retired as a teacher. He worked extensively on fisherman and wrote a book on fishermen. Another narrator is from Vasalathippa. His name is Govindulu aged 45 years. He has his own cultural troop and works extensively on spreading the Hindu tradition through his plays and songs. Another narrator is a village head of Gatchakayalapora. His name is Satyanarayana aged 56 years. All the narrators narrated the same version of the legend. This legend is usually told at the time of including a new member to the family.

In a legend, it says that the Kanchipuram Kingdom was divided between two brothers Ballana Raja and Mitha Varma. Their kingdoms were separated by a river. One elderly lady from the Yadava community used to carry milk and curd from Mithavarma's kingdom and used to sell them in Ballana Raja's Kingdom. As there were very less boats in those days she used to cross the river by walking on the water. People believed that it was her chastity that made her cross the river. One day Mithavarma's friend Pallava Raja approached him and expressed his desire to visit Ballana Raja's Kingdom. The king then advised him to follow the footsteps of the Yadava lady. The lady then advised Pallava Raja not to speak any lies while crossing the river as it might drown both of them. After reaching the bank of the river the lady warned him not to do any sinful things and advised him to behave well with the people. She also informed him that she will meet him near the gates of the kingdom in the evening. Later Pallava Raja went inside the Kingdom and met Ballana Raja and informed him about his friendship with Mitha Varma. The king treated him specially and while they were talking Pallava Raja took his sword and beheaded Ballana Raja. Within no time he wrapped the head of Ballana Raja in a cloth and tied it around his waist and left the Kingdom. The Yadava lady was surprised to notice a bundle around Pallava Raja's waist and repeatedly questioned him. The king kept on lying to her. As the lies were increasing they started drowning and finally when they were almost near the bank of the river they completely got drowned. Pallava Raja somehow with the help of a log crossed the river and helped the lady. By the time they reached the bank of the river, it was almost late night. So they decided to stay on the bank of the river. The lady then collected leaves of screw pine (*Mogali Rekulu*) and kept them in between both of them and asked the king to say the truth. The king then confessed his purpose of visiting Ballana Raja's Kingdom. He also said that he did it for the betterment of the people. The lady then got too much angry with the deceiving nature of the king and cursed him that he and his descendants will no longer be able to rule the kingdom. Owing to the curse the king was defeated in no time and he and his fellow people fled to the nearby villages for their lives. Most of them settled in river and seaside villages. Gradually for their livelihood, they started fishing and in due time it became their main occupation.

Another tale focuses on relationships. The story focuses on the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. The story also throws light on how much importance the community attributes to the Mother Goddess. A part of the tale also focuses on the death rituals of the community. This story was narrated by Kollu Mangamma from Bodaskurru. She is aged 63. She is living with her three sons and her daughter-in-law feeds her periodically. She got married when

she was 12 years. She didn't even attain puberty when she was married. She was married to a distant cousin of hers. Initially, when she came to Bodaskurru she was made to do all household work and her mother-in-law used to go to the village for selling the catch. She was hardly allowed to talk to her husband in the initial days of the marriage.

Once upon a time, there was a widowed old lady in Bodaskurru. She used to live with her son and daughter-in-law. She used to ill-treat her daughter-in-law a lot and always used to taunt her. The son who is too naïve believed all his mother's whole words and used to neglect his wife. The old lady used to buy fish from her fellow community people and used to sell them in the Amalapuram market. One Sunday after the sale of the fish she saw one farmer selling various types of seeds. The farmer guaranteed good crop for all his seeds. She bought bitter guard seeds and planted them in front of her hut. She strictly ordered her daughter-in-law to take good care of the crop. The creeper started yielding crop. The old lady and her son always used to feast on the crop. They never left ample amount of curry for the daughter-in-law. The old lady even used to sell it to her neighbors. They all used to praise the taste of the bitter guard a lot. With all these happenings the daughter-in-law developed a huge craving for the bitter guard curry. One day she devised a plan and informed the old lady that while she was carrying water from the well, she heard some people talking that her sister-in-law fell sick all of a sudden. On hearing that the old lady grieved a lot and thought that her daughter must be in a very serious condition. So, she thought of assisting her daughter for some days. Before leaving the house, she gave a lot of instructions to the daughter-in-law and asked her always to keep an eye on the creeper. Before leaving the house, she kept on repeating take care of the creeper. After the old lady left the house daughter-in-law wasted no time and picked a handful of the chosen bitter guard. She immediately prepared a wonderful *pulusu* adding a lot of tamarind soup, jaggery, and oil. Meanwhile, the old lady reached Bodaskurrurevu and was about to get into the boat to cross the river. There she met a relative from her daughter's village and inquired about her daughter's health. To that the relative laughed loudly and said, 'she is as stable as a stone' (*GundrayilaVundi*). Hearing this the old lady got relieved and returned to her hut. The daughter-in-law noticed her mother-in-law coming back, and she immediately took the vessel containing the curry and hid it in a pot.

After the mother-in-law reached home, she informed her that she was going to well and carried the pot along with her. With the pot she went to the mahankalamma temple and entered the inner sanctuary and bolted the door from inside. Then she started feasting on the *pulusu* with great passion, seeing the voraciousness of her eating the Goddess kept her finger on her nose. After finishing the feasting, the daughter-in-law left the temple and went as usual to the home carrying water.

Meanwhile, the news of Mahankalamma keeping her finger on the nose spread like a fire in the village. Village elders assembled and discussed various means that caused disturbance to the Goddess. Fairs and sacrifices were conducted to appease the Goddess. Lots of river water mixed with vermilion was offered to the goddess. But nothing could change the position of the Goddess. Then the village elders announced that whoever can remove the finger from Mahankalamma's mouth will get a handsome reward. Hearing the news, the daughter-in-law

informed the mother-in-law she will try her hand to appease the Goddess. Then she entered the inner sanctum of the temple and closed the door from behind. After that, she prostrated in front of the Goddess and prayed, 'Ma can't you digest the mistake of your child? I ate the Pulusu out of greediness. I just satisfied my craving. Will a mother ever cast an evil eye and wonder how much her child eats? Please forgive my mistake and retain to your position.' With that Mahankalamma retained to her original position. Everyone started praising the devotion of the daughter-in-law rumors were even spread saying that she was blessed with some supernatural powers.

This news reached her husband and her mother-in-law. They both felt afraid of her and thought that she might harm them because of the ill-treatment she received. They thought when she can control the great goddess Mahankalamma she might take no time in harming them. Then the mother-in-law advised her son that they should kill her and devised a plan. When she was sleeping, they started carrying the wooden cot to the burial ground near the bank of Godavari. While they were carrying the cot daughter-in-law woke up and observed what both her husband and mother-in-law were doing to her. After reaching the burial ground both of them started setting a funeral pyre when they were about to light it they realized they don't have a matchbox with them. So, the son advised his mother to stay back and keep a watch on his wife and went to bring the fire. The old lady started feeling afraid because of fox howls and owls chirping and left the burial ground. The daughter-in-law realized this and wasted no time she immediately kept a big log in the funeral pyre. When she was about to run away from the burial ground, she heard some voices and climbed the banyan tree. A group of robbers gathered under the banyan tree and started sharing the wealth they have looted. The daughter-in-law who was observing all this from the top of the tree was awestruck at the massive wealth and fainted. She fell right in between the group. The robbers thought she must be a devil and ran away with all their strength leaving the wealth behind. Then she collected all the wealth and kept it behind the banyan tree. Meanwhile, both her husband and mother-in-law returned and lit the funeral pyre. The mother-in-law thought she got rid of her daughter-in-law and felt happy.

After they left the burial ground the daughter-in-law collected all the wealth and reached her maternal home. Then she informed her mother about the things that happened and instructed her how to react. After two days *Sammidi*⁴⁰ reached the maternal home of the daughter-in-law and broke the news of her death. As the mother was already instructed, she grieved a lot and many people tried to console her grief. Then she along with some other elders went to the home of her daughter carrying sweets and all the things which her daughter liked. On the eleventh day when the husband finished all the rituals and was about to cut the waist thread, she rose from his beneath in the river wearing a white sari and lots of gold. Everyone thought she was revived by Gangamma and praised the deeds of the Goddess. The mother-in-law was left with no words after seeing her daughter-in-law alive. Then she told her husband and mother-in-law how she was taken by the angels to heaven and the different wonderful things she met on the way. She also told them she met her father-in-law in heaven and explained to them how he was grieving for his wife. The mother-in-law felt bad about her husband. Then the daughter-in-law said that her father-in-law

⁴⁰Official announcer of fishermen community

gifted her a lot of gold and money and expressed his wish to meet his wife immediately. With this message, he took her to Gangamma and requested her to take his daughter-in-law to earth.

Both her husband and mother-in-law believed so much in the story and the old lady expressed her wish to meet her husband. So, her son and daughter-in-law wasted no time and set a funeral pyre. The clever daughter-in-law this time made no mistake and carried fire with her. Soon the pyre was lit by her son. After that, the wife and husband reached home. After some days he started asking his wife when his mother will be back. To that she replied as she was daughter-in-law, she was sent immediately but they are wife and husband and maybe they wanted to stay a little long time together. So, he started believing that his mother will return one day or the other. Later he started treating his wife well because of all the happenings and the young lady can have bitter guard *pulusu* whenever she likes.

The narrator cleverly presents a part of her past to the audience. She revealed how she was ill-treated by her mother-in-law and how even small wishes of her remained unfulfilled.

On the whole oral literature of the fishermen, the community focuses on various aspects of their living. They rightly fulfill the four functions mentioned by William Bascom. Through oral literature, they educate, entertain, validate and bring solidarity in the community. The oral literature is reinforced even in this era because of the urge of the community to maintain its uniqueness and uphold its cultural norms.

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Unearthing Voices: A Study of the Miscellaneous Social Customs and Marriage Practices of the Rajbanshis of Bengal

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Abstract

The Rajbanshi community of Bengal happens to be a part of a multi-ethnic society with multi-cultural dimensions. As one of the largest ethnic communities of the region, this indigenous group of people has spent many decades settling in the northeastern area of India, mainly in the western part of Assam (lower Assam) and the northern section of West Bengal. They follow a distinct set of religious and social norms that diverge in some way from those of the majority of the prevalent Brahminical traditions. This paper intends to show how the social customs and marriage practices of the Rajbanshis of Bengal influence the memories of that indigenous community and how their collective identity is formed when they interact with the customs through their hymns, songs, dances, rituals etc. In order to trace the development of human society, one needs to look at the prevailing means of communication system based on the cultural forms throughout a given epoch. Such cultural forms are basically cultures of memory in which the articulation of generationally transmitted memories occurs through the foregrounding of the body; various kinds of performances are the exposition of generational memories as they propagate memories through speech, gestural, and performative compositions. This paper also attempts to investigate the enduring vitality of the significantly lesser-acknowledged performative traditions of the Rajbanshis of Bengal in the era of the digital revolution, and it contends that how the irresistible force of memory plays a critical role in the survival of these performance narratives.

Keywords: Rajbanshi, memory, customs, practices, rituals and cultural traditions

Introduction

The authentic mnemonic culture of the ancient civilisation of yore is veiled in rural India beneath the relentless bombardment of ‘modernity’. However, the very ‘culture’ which is manifestly intangible by its fundamental nature lends credence to ample research scope— the

sphere in which this study operates. Few places in the rural interior of India have as much allure and hidden richness as West Bengal, and even within that state, there is no place like mystical North Bengal, which has been lavishly blessed with a rich cultural legacy distinguished by a plethora of intangible and mnemonic features.

There is no particular location that can be pinpointed as North Bengal throughout the rural hinterlands of the culturally vibrant state West Bengal. North Bengal is a common name for a cluster of eight districts in the Indian state of West Bengal – these districts include Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, and Malda. Numerous ethnic groups, such as the *Bodo*, *Koch*, *Rava*, *Dhimal*, *Toto*, *Mech*, Rajbanshi, etc., have been honoured in the region of North Bengal. The Rajbanshi community is just one example of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural civilisation. The North-Eastern region of India pays homage to this group, specifically the western half of Assam (lower Assam), the northern part of West Bengal, the Tripura, lower Bhutan, Bihar, a bit of Nepal, and Bangladesh. According to Swaraj Basu, “The Rajbanshi constituted the most predominant section of the Local Hindu population in the Northern districts of Bengal. Numerically they were the third Largest Hindu Caste in Bengal as a whole.....” (Basu, 2003, p. 15) So, it can be stated that the Rajbanshis constitute the bulk of the population of North Bengal.

The Rajbanshis have their own language, culture, cuisine, religion, customs, traditions, and so forth. While they share the same religious belief as upper-caste Hindus, their social practises and rituals are noticeably different. However, historians have long argued about whether the Rajbanshis are Arian or not, and this dispute has sparked other unresolved discussions about the origins and ethnological identities of them. This discussion was started by that of the British rulers in 1870 when they began the census process. At first, the Rajbanshis and the *Koches* were categorised together in the government's official census. It is important to note that the *Koches* were a tribal people while having an Indo-Mongoloid ancestry. People who were not of the Aryan race were classified as “*Dasa*,” “*Dasyu*,” “*Kirata*,” and “*Nisada*” in Aryan society. The elite classes of so-called traditional Hindus or Aryans saw the non-Aryan people as unworthy of respect because of their lack of Aryan ancestry. The Rajbanshis objected to the census report because they were classified as *Koches*, a group that is not part of the Aryan race. A social movement, known as the *Kshatriya* Movement, sprang out of this protest. Thakur Panchanan Barma revitalised the *Kshatriya* movement and spread it across North Bengal and Assam. Their efforts paid off, as distinct listings for the Rajbanshis and *Koches* appeared in the 1911 census report.

Through their long historical transformation from the ancient days of *Pargjyotishpur*⁴¹ to the current day, the Rajbanshi community has absorbed the historical, topographical, demographic,

⁴¹ Historically known as *Pragjyotishpur*, this princely state spans a section of present-day North Bengal, Assam, and Bhutan.

and technical change that has shaped the cultural terrain of the region. Indigenous dance, songs, religious rituals, marriage customs, puppet dance, sports, etc. are all examples of the intangible performative traditions that have a profound impact on the lives of the people who practise them. However, the unquantifiable performative traditions, especially the prehistoric religious rituals and traditions of the Rajbanshis, are having undergone constant changes with the evolution of time and especially today, in the vibrant period of rapid globalisation, which has a ripple effect on not just the current generation of the Rajbanshis and but also their future generations.

Cultures of Memory

The evolution of human communication systems from oral to scribal to print to audiovisual to modern digital media provides a useful framework for understanding the course of human history. Despite the fact that each new method of communication has come with its own advantages and disadvantages, none of them have ever completely replaced the older methods. Speech and gesture, the oldest form of human communication are still in use today and will never be superseded because of the fundamental power they exert. The irresistible power of speech and the orality of language has been stressed by Walter J. Ong (2013), who writes,—“Oral expression can exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all, writing never without orality” and “the basic orality of language is permanent.” (Ong, 2013, p. 6-8)

Mnemo culture refers to the cultures of memory, which reveal the unscripted passing on of cultural traditions from each generation to the next. To the Rajbanshis of North Bengal, the very act of remembering and talking about the past is a way to perpetuate and spread their cultural heritage. When we move our bodies, we recall experiences and express ourselves. The physical body is always being put to use in whatever way is necessary. When a group of individuals use a certain term and explain its significance during such a ritual, they will always remember it and use it whenever that exact ritual is performed again. The physical body is a repository and transmitter of cultural traditions. Rajbanshis place a high value on the body because it is impossible to study cultural articulations without it. In his book *Cultures of Memory in South Asia: Orality, Literacy, and the Problem of Inheritance*, Dr. Venkat Rao analyses cultures that preserve their traditions via embodied cultural memories. He sometimes alludes them as "memory cultures" as well as "mnemocultures." According to his assertions,

“Cultures of memory or what is configured as mnemocultures in this work, emerge and disseminate memories through the media of speech and gestural, or song and performative compositions.”

(Rao, 2016, p. 8)

Additionally, mnemocultural cues can be observed in digital communication systems. As a consequence of this mnemo cultural trend, numerous performances and festivities are videotaped and distributed on social networking sites. Despite the evolution and expansion of communication technology from verbal to digital, mnemocultural urges remain extremely pervasive. Since mnemo

cultural communications, including such speech and gesture, can indeed be replaced, it occurs alongside other communication methods and technology. Indian culture is predominantly mnemo cultural despite the prevalence of modern communication technologies, with speech and gesture dominant and, thus influencing other communications technology. In the framework of the cultural history of North Bengal and India as a whole, it is possible to assert that almost no digital communication would exist without mnemocultural effects.

However, it is now usual to speak about just sequential progression from oral culture to textual of a culture, then to digital and print communication. Within this framework, spoken communication is depicted as an inherently earlier human development stage. Literacy is the outcome of subsequent growth, and, according to Walter J. Ong, “writing restructures our awareness.” (Ong, 2013, p. 77-113) Consequently, if somehow the “oral mind” is distinct, writing presents a formidable obstacle to oral communication. Once the essence of a bodily performance has been extracted and conveyed to a text, it becomes redundant in archive cultures. The book serves as a substitute body that moves through time and space in lieu of a physical performance. The social customs and marriage practices of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal are vibrant examples of such memory articulations that will be addressed and analysed throughout this investigation. The majority of performative traditions, including song, dance, festivals, and rituals, are part of mnemo culture, which does not require surrogate bodies because the organic body is pushed to work and becomes the centre of attention.

These performers are not trained institutionally but enriched through observation and experience. Traditional wisdom is only accessible and communicated through the use of body-based procedures. Indeed, the body is a living, breathing resource for them. We began to understand the crucial role the body plays in these cultures. True humans are the ones that preserve the past for future generations, and they try to keep the tradition alive and also transmit it on to the next generation. Kinesthetic and embodied learning go hand in hand. In the West, however, the written word acts as a substitute for the physical body and is the primary vehicle for the preservation and transmission of cultural traditions and historical knowledge. For this paper interviews and structured observations have been utilised to collect data, with questions designed in advance.

Marriage practices of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal

In her book *Oral poetry: Its Nature, Significance, and Social Context*, Ruth Finnegan differentiates between “creative” and “non-creative” recollections. Various performances where the performer has memorised the lyrics of a song written by someone else are examples of noncreative memorization since they lack originality and creativity. However, the Rajbanshis of Bengal have a creative memory for their oral traditions because their marriage rituals and social norms are composed on the spot.

It is a wild speculation that the written and archaeological materials primarily represent the lives of the ruling class of society. Colonial historiography has relied primarily on traditional sources due to the lack of an authentic written record. Song cultures are now being recorded as vital sources of history. These anecdotes are immensely important, especially with regard to the historical texts mostly on life and culture of the intellectually challenged masses belonging to numerous *Jatis*. These tales have been written off as unpleasant myths and legends in the past. Much of the ancient literature was passed down orally from one generation to the next, and this method of transmission has recently been deemed less important by modern scholars. In addition to the Sanskrit classics like the Vedas as well as other *Puranas*, we also encounter many types of oral tradition that are still actively practised across many ethnic and religious groups of India. There is a wealth of information about the past and the present waiting to be uncovered, researched, and evaluated if only these sources are given the scholarly attention they deserve. Analysis of such stories reveals the unschooled *jatis*' awareness of the past in terms of how they portray respective cultures and maintain their identities.

The Rajbanshi people of North Bengal have a number of rituals that centering marriage. The Rajbanshis sing several sorts of songs throughout the wedding ceremony. They have a different song for each stage of their marriage ceremony. However, modern times have brought about certain modifications to their wedding traditions. When the groom first arrives at the bride's house for the wedding, there is a spectacular dance with song for that ritual commonly known as '*Bairati song/dance*'. A part of the song is:

"Hostedoierbatichailonbati – chailonbati

Boron kore ae mor muchkihasi I

Boron bore chailonchay,

Nakersonadhulkhelay,

O ki ore bhatardulaliaiche ae mor

Accha boron koriyanao re I"

(Personal Archive: collected from Nirobala Barman, Sitai, Dist.: Cooch Behar on November 25th2021 at 11.25 am)

(The female members of the family of the bride are ready to welcome the groom with a bowl full of curd and all the necessary elements in a *calunbati*⁴². While the ritual of welcoming is going on

⁴² Chalunbati is a plate like container made with the bamboo skin which is used in almost every ritual of the Rajbanshis to keep and organize all the necessary elements of the rites.

the groom smiles slightly. The bride is also seems to be very happy for the arrival of the groom in her house.)

However, this paper intends to discuss some of the primitive marriage customs of the Rajbanshis of Bengal – *PhulBiaow*, *Gha Jiya Biaow*, *Pani or jalchhita or pani-sorponbiaow*, *Mitra Dhara or MistorDhara*, *Mangaler Bharetc.* which are very unique in their own style and somehow different from the predominant Hindu culture.

***PhulBiaow*:** In the culture of the Rajbanshi people, this style of wedding is rather widespread and generally acknowledged. There is no difference between the words “*Phul*” (flower) and

“*Mukut*”(crown). During this specific type of wedding ceremony, the “*Mukut*” is a piece of headgear that serves as a badge of honour that is worn by both the bride and the groom. At this marriage, the *Ghatak*⁴³, also known as the middle man and the guardian of either the bride or the groom will be present, and with the consent of the *Adhikary* Brahmin the main rituals of the marriage take place. In the Rajbanshi society, the marriage of two families that are both of the same caste and the same socioeconomic standing is considered to be a typical arranged marriage.

***Ghar Jiya Biaow*:** The significance of *Ghar Jiya Biaow* can be recognised and experienced at a very early age within the Rajbanshi tradition. This is the case even for children. ‘*Ghar Jiya*’ references to *Ghar-jamai*⁴⁴. If a person only has one daughter or none at all, then the person can arrange for his daughter to marry a boy who is willing to be the “*Ghor-jamai*” and take on all of the responsibilities of the household. This is a good sign for them. This is a marriage that the Rajbanshi society recognises as being compatible with societal norms and values.

***Pani or jalchhita or pani-sorponbiaow*:** Although this form of marriage is not commonly supported by society, it is recognised and tolerated in extraordinary circumstances. This practise of postponing marriage, known as *pani-sorpon*, still be observed in some parts of the DabgramMouja (Jalpaiguri), Tarai (Darjeeling), and Cheko districts (Alipurduar). When a young man does not have enough money to pay the bride price, the man, with the consent of the elders, asks the guardian of the girl to sprinkle some water with the twig of a mango tree on the head of both the girl and the boy. As a result, the girl and the man are allowed to live together as husband and wife, and the young man is considered to have paid the bride price. The ‘*PaniChita*’ is traditionally performed by the guardian of the bride, who is heard stating, “*MorChoarLaazSorom Sob tokSopidinu*” (I hand over to you the honour and prestige of my child). This also applies to the

⁴³ The middleman between both the families of bride and groom is called *Ghatak*.

⁴⁴ After marriage when the groom stays at his in-law’s house then he is considered as ‘ghar-jamai’.

family of the bride; in the event that the bride's father is unable to provide a dowry, the bride's guardian will sprinkle water on the head of the groom and then give his daughter to the groom.

Mitra Dhara or MistorDhara: This ceremony has been practised in the Rajbanshi civilization of North Bengal since ancient times. It is connected to marriage that has been going on for a very long time. It is referred to as “*Mitra Abhishek*” in the scriptures concerning the reformation of marriage. During this portion of the ceremony, the father of the bride and a friend of the groom have a dialogue while chanting mantras. During this time, the friend of the groom wears new clothes, and the conversation takes place. After this ceremony, two friends have become relatives for the rest of their lives. This means that if one of them passes away in the future, the other friend is obligated to participate in all of the appropriate rituals that are performed after a person's death just like a member of the family would. They may also refer to one another as ‘*Mistor*’ or ‘*Mitra*’ (friend), and ‘*Mistorini*’ or ‘*Mitani*’ (wife of friend) is the name given to *Mistor*’s wife. This ‘*Mitra Dhara*’ rite may have taken place prior to the wedding, and at the wedding itself, *Mitra* may have acted as a witness. Dr. Charu Chandra Sannyal made the observation that a significant contributor to *Phul-biaow* is the boy's closest friend, *Mistor*.

Bat-pakribiaow: Tree worship, including "marriage to the tree," is common throughout India. There are two distinct varieties of this union – man with tree and tree with tree. In Mumbai, a widow by tying the knot with a tree, and once the ceremony is complete; she can remarry a man and start a new life. In contrast, in Rajbanshi culture, it is common for two trees to wed. It is because of this union that the “*Bat-PakrirBiaow*” (marriage of Banyan tree and Pakur⁴⁵tree) tradition has taken root in the Rajbanshi culture of northern Bengal. In the Rajbanshi culture, this kind of marriage is passed down the generations as folklore. In the past, this ritual was often considered as one of the best options for childless couples. The 'Banian Tree,' the "Groom," and the 'Pakri,' the "Bride," are both trees. Traditionally, the groom's family and the bride's family must choose sides. The priest (*Adhikary* or Brahmin) and musical instrument serve as a metaphor for the human marriage ceremony.

Mangaler Bhar: The word ‘*Mangal*’ translates to “Good Luck” and the word ‘*Bhar*’ means ‘Some stuff’. During the Rajbanshi wedding ritual, the tradition known as ‘*Mangaler Bhar*’ plays an important role. This custom was very significant to the ‘*PhulBiaow*,’ in which it played a vital role. They take the “*Mangaler Bhar*” as a symbol of good wishes, with the hope that the lives of the bride and groom will be happy in the years to come. When it comes down to it, the younger

⁴⁵*Pakur* or White fig (*Ficus virens*, family: Moraceae) is a huge and magnificent tree with a spreading crown belonging to the Fig family. The tree's height and form closely resemble those of its relatives – Ashoth and Bot.

brother of the groom is the one who travels to the home of the bride and brings the ‘*MangalerBhar*’ before the marriage. He also brings with him a pair of ‘*putimachh*’ (one sort of little fish) and a branch of ‘*Manuya kala*’ (one type of banana), among other things.

While discussing the marriage customs it has been observed that even in societies that rely heavily on long-term memory, the physical body is still of great value. When a person puts their body to work, all of their implicit cultural knowledge comes out into the open. As opposed to using books or even other external help, memory-based traditions like telling stories or conducting rituals are preferred. A culture that sets a priority on literature can do away with the necessity for both shows and performers. We were down to just the book in the end. Nothing similar has occurred in societies whose history is not recorded in the physical world. It seems that in communities built on long-term memory, both written texts and oral performances can coexist. Those who have grown up throughout the performing arts are socialised to loathe writing. Therefore, new types of performance and performance artists emerge in civilizations that place a premium on the preservation of memories.

Roland Barthes makes the point in *Image-Music-Text* that texts should really be able to accommodate a variety of readings. The same holds true for the interpretations one may place on all these cultural practices or performance narratives. These “mnemotexts”, or performance texts, employ a wide variety of symbols, including body paint, gestures, and facial expressions, to convey a wide range of emotions, interpret and transform a theme in a variety of ways, and transmit it to an audience in an effort to arouse their dormant emotions. It is important to note that perhaps the memory in all of these cultural practises is a created memory. Performers of such rites frequently prefer to recollect songs rather than depending on writing technologies for their presentations, although if song culture have included written technology into their activities. As Dr. Shaktipada Kumar mentions,

“Being a singer and performer, I have experienced that if the lyric of a song is not remembered fully and if you depend on a written paper, then the performance loses its excellence and spontaneity”. (Kumar, 2018, p. 139)

Customs of the Everyday Social Life

Since each performance is unique, the performing traditions rely heavily on the performer's ability to recall details from memory and transform them into something new. When performers pass down stories from generation to generation through gestures and chants, they infuse the rituals with their own unique flavour and make their mark on the history they are carrying on. Because of this, India as a whole and North Bengal in particular have produced and will continue to develop a wide variety of cultural forms despite the advent of the digital revolution. As to why this is so, consider:

“...the orthotic literacy cannot be said to have exhausted the forces of gesture and

speech of mnemocultures. Their articulations are not always under the shadow of writing cultures. Speech and gesture can disseminate themselves outside and in the archives of literacy even after centuries of exposure to literacy...Scribal culture and its subsequent avatars attempt to reduce them for the purposes of externalized articulation in tangible forms. Yet the persistence of these forces of the sign indicates that they can escape the reductions of the scribal power; they survive in the intimacy of the body—blurring the border between the enacted, embodied and externalized, objectified memories... mnemocultures circulate and disseminate themselves performatively, acoustically through embodied enactments.”

(Rao, 2016, p. 72-73)

This predominantly rural civilization depends heavily on agriculture, and the region's abundant forest resources are a priceless gift from Mother Nature. Since the Rajbanshis are a native people, they have developed their own distinct set of norms with regards to language, culture, diet, and religion. The Rajbanshis are often claimed to be devout Hindus, yet there are some areas in which their religious beliefs diverge from those of the so-called higher caste of Hinduism. In the agrarian Rajbanshi community, the majority of the Gods and Goddesses being revered largely for such prosperity of their harvesting, and some of them are worshipped for the benefit of family and society. The Rajbanshi cultural norm is the strong sense of community because the family is so central to their way of life. In their family, the oldest member was the one who had the most influence. Farmers make up a sizable portion of Rajbanshi society; they have a number of distinctive traditions that they uphold in their agricultural endeavours, as well as in other aspects of life.

Bhadormashi Khaowa or Bhaduri Bhat: The Bengali word for the months of August and September is *Bhadra*, ‘*Mashi*’ means Month, and *Khaowa* means eating. This is a big deal in Rajbanshi culture, and it is usually celebrated by paying a visit to the homes of the loved ones and relatives. Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, and Alipurduar in particular stand out as places where this tradition is particularly very common in North Bengal. Due to the largely agricultural nature of Rajbanshi culture, the month of *Sravan* (July–August) is dedicated to getting all of the harvesting, planting, and harvesting done so that the next month, *Bhadra Mash* (August–September), can be spent relaxing and having fun. One such activity is going to see the grandparents. The people of Rajbanshi believe that if their nephew (son or daughter of a sister) eats rice at their maternal uncle's house during this month, provided by their maternal aunty, then both the nephew and the aunty would have a happy future.

Sakha Pata and Sakhi Pata: In the Rajbanshi culture of North Bengal, a common basic family tradition is the ‘*Sakha Pata*’ or ‘*Sakhipata*’. Making friends is the meaning of the term *sakhapata*. The famous Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata feature a friendship between Ramchandra-Bivishana and Krishna-Arjun, which seems to have served as an inspiration for the Rajbanshi people of North Bengal. Thanks to the *Sakha Pata* ritual, families in Rajbanshi society are able to maintain their pristine relationships with one another. Two sets of raw betel-nuts (*kachagua*) and a betel leaf are needed for the ceremony (*pan*). There is no caste discrimination in Rajbanshi

culture; on the contrary, the people of this civilization are extremely antagonistic to all others. *Sakha Pata* is not limited to the Hindu Rajbanshi; in fact, it is not uncommon for the rite to involve a Hindu and a Muslim family, with both groups carrying out the appropriate aftercare.

Sakha Pata, often spelled as *SakhiPata*, which is a ceremony performed in rural and remote parts of North Bengal at fairs set up beside rivers. *Adhikary* Brahmins are responsible for carrying out all rituals and ceremonies. Following this rite of passage, the *Sakha* parents are legally obligated to refer to each other as "*Songra*" and "*Sungri*," making the two families blood relatives.

Gua- pan Deowa: Raw betel nuts and their accompanying betel leaf play an integral role in Rajbanshi social life, since no celebration, ceremony, or other special event would be complete without them. The Rajbanshis are avid consumers of *Gua-pan* and regularly enjoy its benefits in their social and domestic activities. *Gua-Pan* is the first sign of hospitality extended to visitors, whether they are known to the host or not. The Rajbanshi follow this custom out of a well ingrained sense of cultural identity. *Gua-pan* is significant components of the wedding ceremony. There is a minor ceremony called a "*Mukhbara*" that takes place before weddings in their culture. This "*Mukhbara*" ceremony, in which the *Gua-pan* is exchanged between families, takes place after a marriage has been arranged.

Chauni: *Chauni is one of the demons that the Rajbanshi people of North Bengal worship. During a woman's pregnancy, the deity Chauni is worshipped to ward off evil spirits and protect the unborn child.*

Chan: Women of the Rajbanshi community observe this practise, which consists of sprinkling cow dung and water that has been mixed together every morning both inside and outside of the home. They have the belief that doing so will cleanse the home and drive away any evil spirits that may be present.

Gao- Bhari or Gao Haowa: In the culture of the Rajbanshis, a woman's pregnancy is referred to as her "*Gao-Bhari*" or "*Gao-Haowa*" phase. They think that the evil spirit will assault the foetus in the womb if the pregnant woman leaves the house unaccompanied on Tuesdays and Saturdays, especially at night.

Gigar Sathe Soi: "*Giga*" is a tree that the Rajbanshis of North Bengal perceive to be a positive symbol, and there is a rite in Rajbanshi society in which childless women form a connection with this tree in the hopes of conceiving a child.

Bhat Chowaani: This first feeding ceremony is called "*Bhat Chhaowani*" in Rajbanshi culture and "*Sivpuja*" in Hindu culture. Around the time a baby is five or six months old, a special ceremony is performed. A child's first official serving of rice is traditionally administered by the maternal uncle (the mother's brother). Either a boy or a girl can have this ritual performed on them. On that particular day, a Brahmin *Adhikary* (a Rajbanshi priest) is consulted for the task at hand. Rice husked from sun-dried paddy, curd, milk, honey, a ripe banana, and a flower are all required for the *Narayan puja* he organises at the Thakur Bari. Before the maternal uncle feeds

the baby rice, the child's parents make an offering to the household deities.

Every civilization has the potential to grow and shrink as it encounters new environments, and no culture has ever been able to keep itself entirely confined to a single location. In other words, it can cross international boundaries. Cultures travel with people when they move from one area to another. Stories of people from all walks of life migrating to North Bengal can be heard in its folklore. It's a gesture of respect for the people you share a home with, even if they are substantially different from you, in some other culture. As a result of its openness to and willingness to adapt to new cultural influences, it has flourished and advanced considerably over the years. The failure to take into account Indian customs has led to this misinterpretation of cultural contact. Our long and illustrious history as a civilised people does not include any attempts at proselytising to other cultures. To rephrase, there is no intent to hide or conceal any information. The Indian culture values diversity and opposes homogenization.

Conclusion

Since every culture responds uniquely to and interprets an outside stimulus, a wide variety of cultural expressions develop. When it comes to cultural expression, Indians don't just take in what they're given; instead, they participate in and help shape the tradition they're exposed to. As a result of this receptive reception practise, there can be an infinite number of cultural manifestations. The reciprocal nature of Indian culture's attentive reception is exemplified by the connection between what has been heard and what is retained, or *Shruti* and *Smriti*. It is from this transformation process and transmission in reaction to external stimuli that India's vast cultural forms arise.

However, the marriage practices and social customs of the Rajbanshis are currently experiencing constant changes with the passage of time, and especially now, in the complex and dynamic period of accelerated globalisation, which has a compounding effect on not only the current generation of the Rajbanshis and yet also their future generations. Since the previous the *Kshatriya* movement failed to achieve the equitable purpose of social transformation, it left burning embers in the souls of every marginalised Rajbanshis, which later burst in and out of Greater Cooch Behar Movement during the last decade but whose solutions has still not been found. The cultural exchange of the eighteenth century occurred in numerous modifications, and as a consequence, new cultural structures and formation have emerged; the Rajbanshi civilization will be no exception; several unique cults and rituals have emerged. This study endeavors to attempt an investigation on why and how these social customs and marriage rituals being a part of the intangible cultural legacies of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal have been evolving to the path of attenuation, and to demonstrate the detrimental affect of this transubstantiation on their cultural legacy. As Dr. Venkat Rao suggests,

“If there is to be a future, mnemocultural practices seem to suggest, beyond all affirmations of immanences and identities, the infinite play of being-in-common, living with difference, the iterable bond of sharing and sheltering must be actively performed. The other within, the guest-*para* in the host-*sharira* (body) must find hospitality. If we

must rethink the futures of our pasts beyond the limiting mechanisms of desire, discipline, institution and expertise, and above all some vicious national-cultural-unities, our beings in common with mnemocultural communities, must be radically rearticulated.” (Rao, 2014, p. 326).

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Wu Tso (Charmstone): Credence of Khezha Naga

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Abstract

Mankind has always been fascinated by stones since time immemorial. It is observed that some indigenous communities have a supernatural belief that stones contain charm that can ward off evil spirits and bring prosperity. The Naga tribes also had a strong connection towards charmstones. They believe that spirits reside in some selected stones that makes it to perform supernatural activities. The Khezhas of Phek district, Nagaland, mentions about the different types of charmstones found in their region. These charmstones were used in religious ceremonies. Sacrifices were offered or rituals performed on the stones to attain blessings. Charmstones were also used to predict the future. Some are said to even have the ability to control nature. It is also interesting to note that before the arrival of Christianity, charmstones were revered as sacred. It also signified the social status of an individual. Unfortunately, with the coming of modern thoughts and western religion, the usage of charmstones has disappeared. However, it still cannot be ignored that the belief on charmstones was a part of Khezha Naga culture. Furthermore, since cultures reflect values, beliefs and aspirations of these tribal and helps in defining their identity, the study on Naga charmstones becomes an important issue. It will also help understand the possible cultural affinities the Khezha Naga might have with other communities.

Keynote: Charmstone, KhezhasNagas , Migration, Naga Culture, Village Formation

Introduction

Stone culture in human history started during the Stone Age period. During pre-historic times, stones remained the main object of usage for various tool making (Kumar, 2018). Subsequently religion took its form and one of the first objects of worship was stones and rocks. In the later years apart from the usage of unwrought stones, stone images were carved out and used in religious ceremonies. Example, a brown coloured with conical shaped stone called *Needle of*

Cybele was worshipped in Rome as an image of a goddess (Larsen, 2009). The idea of god and spirit residing in stones is common not only in one region but is popularly known worldwide. Some of these stones are believed to have charms that can either bring a blessing or disaster.

Yourdictionary define charmstone as, “A mineral specimen used in various cultural and spiritual traditions for its supposed mystical energies”. John Sharp in his article, *Charmstone: A Summary of the Ethnographic Record*, describe charmstone as a stone artifact shaped through manufacturing process, having cylindrical or elongate form. The size of the charmstone is generally between 7 and 20 cm in length. Charmstones found in California are called by different names. They are believed to bestow good luck to the finder. Some use it as hunting amulets. California natives consider that the most potent luck stones were small white prismatic rocks, generally of quartz (Hector et al., 2007). As per the narrations, charmstones found in Khezha area are naturally formed and comes in different shapes and sizes. These stones are assumed to be possessed by some supernatural being and have mystical power that can bring either good or back luck.

Khezhas belong to the Chakhesang tribe and are the inhabitants of Phek district, Nagaland, India. Their language, Khuzhale is spoken in Khezhakeno, Pfutsero and Chizami region. Under Chizami circle, the natives of Sumi village speaks two tribal language viz., Sumi (Sema) and Khezha language. The village is considered to be an old village in the region. Selected Khezha villages based on study relevance were undertaken for this research work. First hand data were collected from the Khezha villages of Kami, Khezhakeno, Lekromi, Sumi and Zapami villages. This research will study the cultural affinities among the Khezha Nagas. It will try to understand the influence of *Wu Tso* (Charmstone) in shaping the early society and religion of the Khezhas. The paper will also compare the similar beliefs in charmstone among the Nagas with that of the other indigenous cultures.

Wu Tso:

Apart from the tradition of erecting monoliths, Nagas have a mystical belief that spirits reside in stones and offer sacrifices/offerings to these stones with the hope that the spirits are not offended. These stones can be in the form of a very large rock to a small pebble shaped or flat shape rocks. One such stone is commonly called *Wu Tso*. This stone is believed to produce or give birth to smaller stones. The smaller stones will detach itself from the mother stone at one point of time. In due course, the smaller ones will grow into adult size and repeat the same cycle again.

Wu in Khezha language means *Charm* and *Tso* means *Stone*. Thus, *Wu Tso* basically means *Charmstone*. Based on their shapes, charmstone found in this region can be categorized into oval-shaped stone and drop-shaped stone. These stones are naturally occurring and don't require grinding, pecking and polishing process unlike the California charmstone. They are believed to have a wide range of supernatural powers with the ability to influence natural or social phenomenon like drought, heavy rainfall, prosperity, war, sickness or influence human behavior.

The functions of these stones are more aligned to cultural beliefs and ceremonies rather than utilitarian uses. It is interesting to note that the early uses of charmstone is associated with the migration of the Khezhas. For instances, Lekromi village is said to have brought an Iron Plate (*ZhiKhu* and inside of which contains oval-shaped stones (charmstones) at the time of migration and the same is said have been followed by Zapami villages.

Oval Shaped Stone:

Oval-shaped stones are believed to exist or have existed in the villages of Lekromi, Kami, Khezhakeno and Zapami village. These stones are said to produce smaller stones which will gradually reach the size of the mother stone. These oval shaped stones are commonly believed to be jet black with glossy appearance. It has a rough surface and can be very light or heavy in weight. In terms of its size and shape, the description given for bigger stones are somewhat similar to that of an egg. Smaller stones that come out from mother stones will also have the same physical features. The Spirits are believed to reside in these stones. The elders of the village, in the past claimed to have seen the supposed stone- flying in the sky at midnight.

The Oval shaped stones are further categorized into two i.e. the blessed stone and the cursed stone. One can make out whether the stone is blessed or cursed from their movements. Blessed stones leave some type of wet trails along the way. The cursed stone on the other hand hops and does not leave any trails. Locals believe that the charmstone shows itself to those people with whom it wants to stay. In other words, the stone chooses its owner. The owner can be of any age or gender. The blessed stone is found mostly by those people who have good moral character and the cursed stone will shows itself to the unfortunate ones. This narration helps us realize that the forefathers made a clear distinction between morally good and immoral actions. One narrator stated that, when she was still very young, her mother would often tell her about the charmstone. Anytime on their way to and from the field, the narrator and her siblings were specifically told not to pick any stones which are jet black, round in shape and hops, even if they see one. On unfortunate days, one may come across such stones and her mother is warning them to be wary of such stones. The influence of these stones can be noticed even in present times especially when one goes to the river side, we are always reminded of the good and bad luck stones. One also notices that the Naga belief on magical stones like *Wu Tso* have influenced the traditional attitude of the common people.

Those individuals owning the blessed stones keep it with them as a prized possession. But they will try to dispose the cursed stones at the earliest. In the disposal of cursed stone, two contradictory theories were proposed. One theory stated that the stone has to be thrown into the river so that it will be drifted to faraway place through the force of the moving water. This group doesn't agree to the idea of throwing the cursed stone into the fire because they believe that if the stone is thrown into the fire, it does not cause any damage to the stone and the stone will go back

to its previous owner. Another theory recommended that the cursed stone can be disposed using fire. In the process of disposing, firstly, the cursed stone would be pounded into small pieces and thrown into the fire. They believed that if the stone chunks were not thrown into the fire it would re-grow and obtain its adult size. Before the coming of Christianity many of such charmstones were reared and kept inside their house by the native Khezhas. However, later, as Christian religion opposed idol worshipping and keeping of animistic relics, many charmstones were either destroyed or disposed off.

Though the physical appearances of oval shaped charmstones appear to be similar, their functions would differ. To understand the types of charmstones that were believed to have existed in the Khezha area based on its functions these charmstones can be categorized into different groups:

1. **Rhi Wu:** *Rhi* in Khezha language means *War* and *Wu* means *Charm*. It is said that the Kamis brought this stone to the village at the time of its formation. The stone is believed to possess mystical powers which helps the village in winning any wars and for this reason it has been passed down from generation to generation. Unfortunately, the house where the stone was kept caught fire at one point of time and all the stones disappeared amidst the chaos.
2. **Kewu Wu:** *Kewu* in Khezha means *Thief* and *Wu* means *Charm*. If a person holds possession of this charmstone, he will have an uncontrollable urge to steal. The owner becomes possessed by this stone and becomes addicted to it. The stone will become his most prized possession and would not part with it even if tortured physically or emotionally. It is believed that he would always be successful at the time of stealing however eventually he would be caught by the people. The person owning *Kewu Wu* is thought to gain some supernatural power which gave him/her the capability to see through walls. He can easily locate any hidden money or valuable items. An incident occurred few years ago in one Khezha area and the accused is believed to have possessed *Kewu Wu* charmstone. The accused was a teenage girl who was caught after stealing. The public started interrogating her on the whereabouts of *Kewu Wu* however, even after continuous questioning, she never revealed the hiding place of the stone and so the stone was never found. This incident clearly tells us that even after the coming of Christianity and education, the people continued to have strong belief on charmstones.
3. **Kenei Wu:** *Kenei* in Khezha mean *Shame* and *Wu* means *Charm*. The stone comes under the category of a cursed stone. One weird thing about this stone is that, the stone owner feels delighted whenever anyone curses him. The owner of the stone likes to stir up troubles and does things that would disgust others. The narrator has given an example to better understand the nature of this charmstone: the person who owes *Kenei Wu* would poop on the road side where someone upon seeing it will definitely curse the person for his action.

It is said that the disgust behavior and cursed words used by others give immense pleasure to the one possessing the stone.

4. **Tekhro Wu:** This stone is related to physical attraction from the opposite sex. This charmstone is believed to be owned only by men folk. The stone works like a love charm and the owner will have the ability to charm and marry as many women as he wants. Like Kewu Wu, the owner of Tekhro Wu will try to hide the stone from others and deny any claims of possession. Usually, if a man is very ugly and he still managed to marry three or more wives, people will joke that he would have *Tekhro Wu* and for this he can charm many women.
5. **Kinyie Wu:** *Kinyie* in Khezha means *Rich* and *Wu* means *Charm*. This charmstone is considered as a blessed stone as it brings prosperity to the owner. The stone is said to be kept in an individual's house and passed down from one generation to another. However they prefer to keep it well hidden and away from public view. The charmstone of this kind is passed down from one male family member to another. Women were not supposed to own this type of charmstones.

It is believed that the forefathers of Lekromi village, while migrating from China and Makhel to the present settlement site, they brought along with them an Iron Plate (*ZhiKhu*). Inside the Iron Plate were many smaller stones. The narrator stated that when he first saw the stones there were only five to six of them. After some years, he was also surprised when he checked the stones on the plate which increased to nine or ten. These charmstones were not only increasing in numbers but they were also assumed to have some supernatural control over nature. Long time ago, in the same village, when a renowned man died, Lekromis buried the Iron Plate and the charmstones alongside the dead man. However right after the act the village started experiencing continuous heavy rainfall and windy weather. The harsh weather lasted for seven years and the villagers started to starve. They consulted a soothsayer who informed them that all these are occurring because they have buried the *ZhiKhu*. The villager removed *ZhiKhu* with the charmstones in it and brought it back to the village. As soon as the item was brought back and left untouched in the village, the occurrences of heavy rainfall and windy season stopped. At present, *ZhiKhu* and the charmstones are placed in one of the former *Mowo*'s (Priest) house. They still believe that if anyone touches the relic, the village will face heavy rainfall and windy weather. For this reason, they don't display it anymore and is kept locked in the former priest house.

In Khezhakeno village, during the pre Christian era, charmstones were reared and lived in the house of a *Mowo* (Priest). At present the *Mowo* house is kept locked and all the charmstones were left inside. In early times, these charmstones appeared in front of *Mowo*'s house by itself and started producing more stones. So *Mowo* took it and kept it inside his house. Apart from him if anyone touches the stone, they will have symptoms like itching (skin irritation). The priest also performed rituals using this charmstones. During animism period, the *Mowo* had to maintain a

strict diet and if he consumes anything that was not supposed to be in his diet, the stone will disappear but once he goes back to his routine diet the stone will reappear in his house. The kind of charm the stone possessed is unknown however they were utilized during religious rituals by *Mowo* of the village. A narrator claimed that he have seen the stones which were lying in one of the dark corners of *Mowo* house, some years back.

Another charmstones called *MheTo Pu* in Khezha language are found in Zapami village. These stones were believed to possess some supernatural power of granting prosperity to the village as a whole or to an individual. The village at present owns eighty five *Mhe To Pu* stones of which, sixty one are located in the house of a person named Bulechu and twenty four stones can be found at Lt. ZhieloPutse's house. The stones are said to have been brought by two great grandfathers named, Ketsu and Wukhu from Makhael. These stones are oval in shape and dark in color but heavier in weight. In olden times, the *Mowo* uses these stones to perform rituals to bring prosperity for the village. Apart from *Mowo* if anyone touches these stones they get skin irritation all over their body.

Drop Shaped Stone:

This type of charmstone is found in Sumi village under Phek district, Nagaland. Locally they are called as *Akumughatu* or *Atu Kirhe* and these stones are much bigger in size and weight. In Sumi language, *Akumugha* means *Blessing* and *Atu* means *Stone*. In the site, there are two stones; one appears like an anvil and the other is rectangular in shape on ground surface. It is stated that the bigger portions of these stones are buried underground and in it, many smaller stones are attached. The village believes that these two stones are male and female while the attached smaller stones are their children. These stones were brought to the village by their forefather who found it in one of their headhunting expedition. They were believed to have some supernatural power and when touched heavy rainfall would occur and strong winds would blow. Folktale narrates that to invoke rain in times of drought they would touch the stone so that they get rainfall. The villagers also consulted the stones before they ventured into any head hunting expeditions. They wait for signs which are shown on the supposed neck of the stone; yellow indicates victory while red indicate failure or defeat.

Beliefs of stone producing smaller stones are common not only in Khezhaarea but folktales of such type are found even among other Naga tribes. Similar phenomenon related to stones giving birth to smaller ones are noticed in other regions. The *PedrasParideras* of Arouca Geopark in Portugal and the Egg Laying Rock Face of Guizhou, China are some such attention-grabbing phenomenon where rocks produce smaller rocks. The famous *PedrasParideras*(Rock Delivering Stones) is made of a huge block of granite and dates back to over 280 million years (Primeirapedra, 2016). The mother rock measures roughly 1000 by 600 meters and ejects smaller rocks that are shaped like biconvex disc. The baby rocks differ in sizes wherein smaller rocks measures around two centimeters while larger ones can be as big as twelve centimeters. Geologists believe that the

cause for such occurrence can be due to the effects of environmental change formulating the smaller rocks to detach itself from the mother rock and scatter around the area. Owing to its extraordinary phenomenon, locals believe that the rock symbolizes fertility and if one takes the smaller rocks and place it under their pillow, women who want to get pregnant will have a better chance (Patowary, 2018). The Egg-Laying Rock Face is part of Mount Gandeng and found in Qiannan Buyei and Miao Autonomous Region, South-Western Guizhou, China. This is another interesting geological phenomenon where an odd cliff produces Egg Shaped Stones, in every thirty years. The cliff measures 19 feet in height and 65 feet in length. (Parkinson, 2017). This unevenly cliff is made of calcareous rock and was formed around 500 million years ago during the Cambrian period. It has been observed for years that stone eggs incubate in the hollow overhang on the cliff and fall down on the ground naturally once the shape is formed. These small stone eggs measures between 20 to 40 centimeters. Scientists believe that the cause of such occurrence has something to do with erosion and different hardness of rock. Stone eggs on the other are made of tougher and heavier sediment deposits (Hale, 2017). Natives believe that the rock bring luck especially to pregnant women who is said to be able to give birth to baby boys if they take one of these stone eggs (Patowary, 2018).

Geologists have done detailed studies on these two regions using scientific technologies. They were able to come up with detailed information on the region and the causes for the occurrence of this strange geological phenomenon. Likewise if scientific interpretations can be done on the charmstones found in Khezha area or in Nagaland, it will bring to light many unexplained phenomenon. The reasons for producing smaller stones or the local belief in charmstones' control over nature and future prediction. There is also a possibility of Khezhas' old belief in charmstones having cultural affinities with some foreign cultures. At the same time, through better tools and more in-depth research, studying Naga charmstone may bring to limelight the old inhabiting sites of the Nagas located internationally. Another possibility is that, since all the Khezhas agree that they have stayed in Makhel, Manipur before moving to the present settlement site, possibilities are there that during the course of their migration to Makhel, they brought along with them the traditional believe of charmstone. In addition, as they dispersed from Makhel, few concepts were altered resulting from the change in environment and influence from neighboring villages.

Unfortunately, most of these charmstones are destroyed and disposed with the coming of Christianity. Christian religion opposes keeping any kind of good luck objects, idols and sacred stones in a believer's house. So when a person or a village is converted, naturally they will dispose these stones believing it to be evil. However one also has to understand that ancient beliefs and values have given shape to the ethnic cultural practices of these tribals. To better understand the society and religion of these people, it becomes important to preserve and safeguard their culture and traditional practices.

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Resisting Democracy:

Classical Art Forms as Sites of Socio-Cultural Hegemonies

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Abstract

‘Indian’ in Indian classical music is as ambiguous as the latter’s history and composition in the modern sense. It is a wide ranging amalgam of socio-cultural, political and historical paradigms and paradigm shifts and owes its character to the development in the field of musical pedagogy as well as century old traditions that are intimately and majorly connected to nationalist, cultural and religious sentiments. In order to examine the histories and development into modern art forms, it is imperative to assess them in the framework of a democracy and analyse the prevalent prejudices and dominant discourses that still exist in the artistic cultural communities and shared histories. This paper attempts the study of the vocal tradition of two major classical art forms, Hindustani classical music and Carnatic music, while also drawing certain instances from Bharatanatyam, and analyse their development by critically focusing on their histories, traditions and subsequent major cultural and historical changes throughout the 20th century. It shall focus on assessing the juxtaposition of the artistic representation and participation with the modern concepts of democracy, secularism and equality, which the Indian state promises its citizens while also exploring how the changes in the last century have formed the concerned art forms in how they are contemporarily perceived. The paper shall argue that the changing framework of classical music in decades proceeding India’s independence took form based on the changing notion of the public as listeners and performers while also the subsequent transformation of the artistic public sphere on the basis of religious (cultural and political), class, caste and ethnic biases which were at times systematic and institutionalized.

Keywords: Hindustani classical music, carnatic music, tradition, democracy, pedagogy, devadasi, hegemony

Introduction

When placed in the context of the 20th century, intertwined in a plethora of histories and cultures, music in the Indian subcontinent has been instrumental in forming multiplicities of public spheres. Containing the characteristics of various indigenous and popular forms of folk music, the

collective identity of music, hitherto only a practice in princely courts under their patronage, later on accumulated the character of being a classical form of art as an institutionalized medium of artistic representation. The very act of naming the music of the North as Indian classical music, otherwise called Hindustani classical music, is one of exercising the overpowering influence of the musical pedagogy of the North over everywhere else. As the name clearly suggests, classical music of the North has been made synonymous with being Hindu as well as Indian in nature, straightforwardly ignoring the contribution of other cultures and ethnicities. This domination of Hindu characteristics in classical music is even more prominent in the Hindi name for classical music, “Shastriya sangeet”, which literally means a form of music taught by someone with an impeccable knowledge of the shastras. On the contrary, other than being ignored in the naming of the genre, the contribution of Muslim artists and Islamic schools of music is very well established and in fact is the distinguishing feature between music of the North and South.

What is largely believed to be the seminal difference between Hindustani classical music and Carnatic music is that the former is a mixture of Islamic influence and traditional Indian musical culture while the latter has remained untarnished by foreign influence (Neuman, 1985, 99). Also, Hindustani classical music is seen as a form that has broken free from the stronghold of Brahmins and has provided much flexible participation to other sections of the society, as is seen in the gharana tradition of ‘Ustads’ and in the growing participation of the urban middle class, while Carnatic music has always remained a predominantly Brahmanical form (Neuman, 1985, 99). In that sense, the pedagogical/theory as well as performance based aspects of classical music, majorly of Carnatic music, were dominated by Brahmins, a practice which still continues owing to the fact that the two revolutionary modern pedagogies of classical music were also written by Brahmins (Pulaskar and Bhathkhande). Several reasons can be factored to justify this claim, some of the most obvious being that Brahmins held dominance in every conceivable sphere of the public life, were comparatively more economically stable than other castes, had representation in all major art forms due to better social and economic standing and were favored by royal patrons as custodians of culture and art forms. Moreover, Brahmins were also strongly associated with the religious aspect of music (Bhakti and Kirtan) which still holds prominence in both schools of classical music, Hindustani and Carnatic.

When dealing with the socio-cultural circumstances for the prominence of Brahmins in the musical sphere, one of the foremost reasons to keep in mind are that the theoretical or scholarly activity of preserving musical knowledge, a practice exclusively reserved for and by Brahmins, formed the hierarchy in music as a specialisation and profession. Scholarly texts were considered to be extremely prestigious and therefore gatekeeping of these traditional texts was almost considered sacred which were then passed on through generations as heirlooms. Daniel M. Neuman emphasises on the relevance of this hereditary practice by stating that “One inherited the theory as one inherited one's identity as a musician” (Neuman, 1985, 103). This practice permeated well into the 20th century even with non-Brahmin musicians who went to great lengths to trace their genealogy to any historically important musical figure, which elevated their standing in both

social and musical spheres. While for Muslim musicians, the lack of a substantial theoretical tradition can be traced to the popular notion of a performer in the 16th and 17th century, a time when the introduction of Islamic elements in Northern classical music reached its zenith, during which time a vast majority of Muslim musicians performed in royal courts and under other forms of patronage. Hence, however extraordinary, a musician was never an equal to a scholar since the emphasis on performance overshadowed the need for a theoretical tradition. It was only gradually that the musical culture after the 18th century saw the rise of different schools or styles of music called “gharanas” which took their current form during the 19th century and denoted yet another form of hierarchy in classical music as was noticed in the theoretical tradition of Brahmins (Neuman, 1985, 104).

The Pedagogical Revolution

The two dominant figures in the modern pedagogy of Indian classical music, Bhathkhande and Pulaskar, elaborated upon two dominant forces with which Indian classical music could be preserved and proliferated. Bhathkhande focused on a nationalist tradition of music without the intervention of religion while Pulaskar focused more on the Bhakti tradition of classical music (Bakhle, 2005, 7). Hence both nationalist sentiment and Bhakti tradition were major driving forces of establishing a framework for classical music which was by default associated with nationalism and Hinduism. Thus, the domination of Brahmins in the religious and Bhakti tradition became an even more prominent form of hegemony who were already regarded as being the custodians of Indian arts and culture especially Tamil brahmins who were often titled “great integrators” and “renewers of traditions” by British anthropologists (Soneji, 2004, 341). The musical pedagogy, predominantly Hindu in nature, didn’t fully account for the contribution of other ethnicities and when it finally did, the hierarchies were already rigidly constructed. It is in the tradition of developing and maintaining a pedagogy that James Kippen finds the main reason for communal coercion especially in the democratic structure, describing it as “one of the most contentious issues within Indian music studies” (Kippen, 2006, 181). On the other hand, classical music has also been one of the very rare spaces to witness a progressive construction of harmony through the intersection of traditions and cultures. Many scholars have noted the synchronising power of classical music and have suggested it to be highly effective in maintaining a sense of pluralism in a democratic sense even in the face of crude communal discord acknowledging it to be “a resilient island of communal harmony more or less impervious to the antagonisms polarizing society at large” (Manuel, 2008, 381). With the introduction of more rigid frameworks of social and political, public and private spheres, the communal identity in music also witnessed a drastic shift. The hitherto unorganized instances and practices of maintaining traditions and cultural purity transformed into institutionalized systems, the most prominent being education. Education in music carried the tradition of the, as discussed above, recently developed musical pedagogy normalising the notion of elitism. The prime example of this can be Bhathkhande College, established by Bhathkhande himself, which was constructed with the aim of providing knowledge of classical music through the newly established pedagogy. The college, founded with the aim of

nurturing a new generation of modern musicians free of religious constraints, hired professional Muslim musicians for nearly every area of expertise. Muslim representation in the early years of college witnessed a rise, even if marginal, in the efforts to create a socially progressive and inclusive space but in the next 50 years, the already marginal Muslim representation in the faculty plummeted with only one Muslim staff among a total of 28 members. As of 2012, only two Muslim instructors remain in the total of 175 faculty members (Katz, 2012, 288). A seemingly valid argument that can be given to accord for this marginalised participation of Muslims is that a college dedicated to an art form as disciplined and distinguished as classical music must include instructors who hold merit rather than hire people for the sake of representation. But it is important to note that the college itself is located in Lucknow, the cultural heart of Hindustani classical music, its Islamic traditions with an even more generous tradition of musical patronage by local Nizams and influential families. So, to ignore the very composition of the area in which the institution is set would be neglecting a major portion of the population from which the faculty of musicians was selected. Hence, the educational institutes themselves can act as systems of domination and furthermore as ideological state apparatuses functioning through socio-cultural paradigm shifts which are, more often than not, politicised.

Max Katz in his work *Institutional Communalism in North Indian Classical Music* refers to the creation of a distinct ideology in educational institutes by giving the example of Rai Umanath Bali, a member of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative assembly and the co-founder of Bhathkhande College, by reporting his appeal in 1925:

Culture is the foundation of nationalism. The achievement of our race in the past is the basis of our faith in our future and our spiritual heritage of art and science, philosophy and literature, is the true spring of our national self-consciousness. ((Katz, 2012, 289)

This provides a window to a major, but not the first, insistence of bringing back the Brahmanical tradition and of political intervention in music. Furthermore, Bali, in a progress report of Bhathkhande College from 1931 wrote, “In short this institution is meet-ing the keenly felt need of turning out properly and scientifically trained music teachers from amongst the respectable classes” (Katz, 2012, 290). This notion of respectable classes still finds its stronghold in the making of the audience as well as the performers. Classical music, held in such high regards by the “preservers” of tradition, holds a quasi-divine reverence which has even often been translated into nationalism. This quasi-divine artform, even after several decades following independence, was reserved to be practiced among people from respected social backgrounds which at large also formed the audience for it. Figures like Bali, with a high social standing and a keen interest in preserving the heritage of classical music, are merely extensions of the royal and Brahmin patrons during the earlier centuries with the aim to keep this esteemed art form confined to certain sections of society. Let us now focus on two major discourses associated with music that originated from these socio-political circumstances, a nationalist identity of music and casteism in music.

The discourse of connecting classical music to nationalism is indeed an important one. It can be traced back to the widespread effort to find a core cultural identity common to all the citizens that could be used to form a fraternity against the British. This the nationalists achieved by reinforcing the already established associations of music with religion and spirituality. Music is rooted so deeply in the notions of tradition and culture, local and national, that it is one of the very few art forms which, Janaki Bakhale states, “have successfully resisted colonial influence during the nineteenth century” (Bakhle, 2005, 3). Moreover, classical music was never a solitary entity of its own, that is, it is an accumulation of countless traditions of folk and indigenous music borrowed from varied cultures. For instance, the ‘Khayal’ form of singing which is most prominent in Hindustani classical music today was introduced by the Persian influence and culture, the Pahadi raag is a translation of popular folk tradition of present-day Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh even borrowing the distinct nuances of annunciation and style, Tappa is yet another example of a popular genre which holds its roots in Punjab. This collective contribution to classical music is what connects it with every local culture and tradition and hence provides it with a broad nationalist emotion. So, to say that classical music was an elite form in its very nature is false, it is rather an amalgam of multitudes of musical traditions that interacted with each other and were practiced by all sections of the society. The classist and elitist notion of classical music is a cultural construct reinforced by social hegemonies rather than one based on merit. It was only after the setting up of classical pedagogies by various gharanas which tended to be secretive about their art and traditions that a form of elitism was constructed. These practices thus hindered the progress of music even in the 20th century (Bakhle, 2005, 6).

Classical art forms of the 20th century thus created social and cultural hegemonies which permeated into the very structure of the society to construct a hierarchy of ‘worthy’ genres, meritorious performers and knowledgeable listeners/audience. People from lower castes were denied their right to explore these class-ical art forms but this subjugation wasn’t outright, it was subtly incorporated in the very conception of their elite status.

One of the short stories, *Rajesh, the Musician*, from K.V Raghupathi’s collection of short stories titled *The Untouchable Piglet* addresses the socially prevalent practice of excluding lower-castes from Carnatic music. The story follows the protagonist, a youth belonging to a lower caste, along with his struggle to get accepted as a student of Carnatic music. The protagonist is denied admission to learn the ‘divine music’ because of his low-caste status and is instead given incorrigible explanations in return of how a Brahmin possesses qualities such as dhrti (steadiness), dhairya (perseverance), Ksama (patience), Virya (energy) and Sraddha (faith) besides dedication which are essential for learning Carnatic music (Raghupathi, 2005, 97 98). A postgraduate in philosophy and financially more stable than the instructor, the man is discriminated against for being a Jangama. The short story emphasises upon the notion that despite breaking free of the class hierarchy, an individual seeking an art form still needs to belong to suitable castes. It is a profound point since not only is denying admission based on caste illegal, as pointed out in the constitution of India, it doesn’t really hold any practical merit. As described in the story, an impoverished

instructor of classical music would rather lose an earnest disciple than teach a lower-caste man. It is a plain demonstration of deep-rooted casteism in arts which is still, explicitly and implicitly, practiced in contemporary times. Not only that, the presence of such outright casteism is testament to the century old domination of Hindu traditions especially those from the Brahmin caste, the exploitation experienced by citizens of lower castes due to the notion that the quasi-divine classical art forms are reserved for people with high social and caste standing because of some inherent qualities. These arguments lack any merit and reasoning and it is the duty of the modern Indian state to preserve the rights of its citizens which have so blatantly been denied to them even in a working democracy.

Devadasis in Democracy

Extending the argument of prevalent casteism and classism to the realm of systematic social and cultural exclusion in classical arts are the contemporary discourses on devadasis in Bharatanatyam. Devadasis, a community of female dancers and performers once renowned as distinguished artists, saw a steep decline in their social status in the 20th century due to political subjugation and layered cultural shifts. The now prevalent social stigma surrounding devadasis is concerned with their background being often compulsorily associated with courtesans which was reinforced by the anti devadasi act, popularly known as Madras Devadasi Act, of 1947. Initially passed in the Madras province of British India, the act collectively recognised all devadasis as courtesans in order to curb prostitution especially of young girls but it merely created a social rupture following which, ironically, prostitution still continued in South India and the act itself acted as a catalyst in bringing down the flourishing artists of the devadasi community. The Act itself was quite ambiguous in its structure since it varied from state to state.

In Andhra Pradesh for instance, the act aimed at prohibiting the Telugu *bhogammelams*, which was the practice that was originally problematic since it was culturally connected to the “bhogam” tradition and devadasi being a Sanskritised umbrella term encapsulated various artistic professions under its identity. Members of the community still prefer being addressed as devadasis despite the crude social stigma attached to their identity. The socio-political stigma surrounding devadasis is partly based on the historical and moral discourses surrounding their reputation and profession and while it has been converted into a popular stereotype, devadasis have historically not always been associated with prostitution but to dignified art forms. These stereotypes and broader social exclusion can be traced to the colonial administration and social reformers of the late 19th and early 20th century who deemed devadasi art forms as “lewd” because of their “morally degraded lifestyle” (Soneji, 2004, 43). Even in years after the fall of the British empire, devadasi performances for social and personal festivities like blessing homes during auspicious occasions were common, moreover, the presence of devadasis in weddings was a clear marker of high social standing (Soneji, 2004, 35). Members of the community were revered as distinguished artists and their tradition was supported by patrons and members of royalty from the Western and Southern kingdoms, as Soneji notes “The Andhra devadasi court repertory as we encounter it in

the late nineteenth and early twentieth century builds largely upon the Tanjavur court repertory as it developed under Maratha patronage in nineteenth-century Tamilnadu” (Soneji, 2004, 34).

The Madras Devadasis act thus functioned in a way to not only disable the art form of the community but also outlawed their culture and drove them into dire poverty. Devadasis were denied their opportunities to teach and disseminate their art form even in their efforts to create a localised dance form, similar to the newly formed Bharatnatyam, and there were even instances where devadasis of Andhra had to obtain a certificate from police in order to teach dance as a symbol that they were not misleading young girls for other purposes (Soneji, 2004, 39). This happening in a democratic framework works against the idea that Ranciere alludes to as the workers’ “right to work” movement which demands the constitution of work as a very basic structure of collective life (Ranciere, 2006, 300). One moving example in this case is that of Nrithya Pillai, a contemporary Bharatnatyam dancer who dissented against the age-old tradition of exclusion of devadasis in the dance form. In an interview given to *Feminism In India*, Pillai states that the dominance of Brahmins in Bharatnatyam inculcated a sense of aesthetics and beauty that gave an unfair advantage to dancers from a high-caste background. She alludes to the example of popular reformers E. Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi and their insistence on putting the art form back into the hands of “respectable” women, a notion similar to what was addressed earlier in the paper regarding Hindustani classical music. She addresses these prejudices by raising questions on the representation of Bahujan and Dalit women in Bharatnatyam and various forms of exclusions and barriers they have to face to practice an art form of which their families are hereditary performers (Singh).

The Indian constitution doesn’t recognise the right to work as a fundamental right, however it is included in Article 41 of the constitution which directs the State to secure the right to work and assist the citizens where necessary. Article 39 of the constitution also requires the State to secure equal rights of men and women to adequate means of livelihood. Even so, the devadasi community is a blatant example of how social exclusion backed by policies and laws function in a sort of demonisation of communities and denying them basic rights prescribed to them in the legal body. Furthermore, as seen in the case of institutional neglect of certain communities, educational institutes can also become sites of hegemonic exercises. One prominent defense of these accusations is the ever present need of people in power, associated with art forms, to preserve their status quo, i.e their domination in the socio-cultural sphere which permeates into the political sphere, in the guise of preserving the so called “traditions” of the art forms. It is evident that domination in a form of art is translated and extended to every sphere of public and private life, as is seen in the short story by K.V Raghupathi, which cripples the social and professional aspirations and mobility of citizens belonging to less privileged classes and castes. It is also seen how class and caste intersect to create a level of compound discrimination, in synergy with Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality, while at the same time how the deep rooted caste biases can exist independent of class. It is because of these reasons that international relations and policies undertaken by modern nations impact the overall development of art forms. For instance, the fairly

recent ban on Pakistani artists following the Uri attack is a straightforward example of international relations affecting the active participation and collaborative efforts of artistic communities between nations.

Conclusion

Art forms have never existed outside of the influence of socio-economic conditions and cultural histories of regions. This paper discussed the impact of class and caste on artistic practices through exploring the social and cultural histories of three prominent classical forms of art. It focused on the development of musical pedagogy and its role in resisting the democratic frameworks and fundamental rights to its citizens. It also focused on the impact of the centuries old tradition of gatekeeping of scholarly texts and how the literature on music helped create social biases and forms of hegemonies which are in practice even today. We witnessed how revolutionary texts and figures in music catalysed the creation of systematic neglect of certain communities and provided credibility to social exclusion by institutionalising them into the fabric of educational institutes, how the very construction of names of classical art forms in different languages entail subtle forms of religious and social prejudices, how casteism prevails even now especially in the participation of these classical art forms with the notion of “respectable” performers. Even after seven decades post-independence, the artists of the nation’s still strive for basic rights and struggle against the institutions of hegemony that are situated in every sphere of the socio-cultural life.

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LITERATURE



Rusty in Room on the Roof: Cycle of Socialization

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Abstract

This article explores a construct proposed by Harro (1997) as evidenced in the novel, *The Room on the Roof* by Ruskin Bond. We examine and expatiate on *the cycle of socialization* process experienced by Rusty, the protagonist. The various socio-culturally experienced stages as revealed in the life of a young orphan are explored in depth. Harro's stages are also likened to theories proposed by Piaget, Bronfenbrenner, and Maslow. The article describes both sociological and psychological transformations in Rusty as described in the literary work. One of the core ideas in the *cycle of socialization* (liberation) as encountered by Rusty, is the major point of entry into this argument. The lack of socialization deters emotional growth in children (Mulvey & Jenkins, 2021)]. The “lone” hero's (i.e., Rusty) surprise transformations as a result of socialization later in life is one of the major findings in our exploration. One framework that facilitates critical thinking is Critical Reader Response (CRR). With this approach, issues contributing to socialization are uncovered and discussed with examples from the novel.

Keywords: alienation, cycle of socialization, Identity crisis, psychology, *Room on the Roof*, Rusty, sociology, transformation,

Introduction

Reading literary work has merit. Books enable us to travel the world vicariously and contribute to cognitive (i.e., literacy), affective (i.e., empathy), sociological (i.e., relationships) development. In order to advance our understanding of the text, the application of established theories (e.g., behavioural, cognitive) that explain the characters' *habitus* (Bourdieu, 2017), behaviour (Bykov, 2019; Sedlander, et al, 2022), socialization (Khalid, et al, n.d; Weber, 2019), and world-view (Bouma, et al, 2022). These theories explain what people are expected to do in a given society or what are the norms of socialization. The text can be read to fulfill educational requirements. However, it may also contribute to the development of critical thinking skills if teachers guide students to engage in Bloom's higher order thinking (Collins, 2014)).

Rosenblatt's (1993) classic Reader Response enables students to acquire literary mechanics of the story and the didactic purpose the text serves (Patterson, 2022). The application of the CRR framework (Smith & Iyengar, 2020) enables readers to identify issues in the text. The process and nature of absent socialization in Rusty's life, which resulted in his alienation and misery can be uncovered through the application of the CRR framework. The critical thinking method (Brookfield, 2022) aids the learner by providing several dimensions and multiple perspectives. When one reads beyond the literary level, the reader tries to establish connections, criticize, and reflect.

From an aesthetic approach, when we read the novel, *Room on the Roof* by Ruskin Bond, one would consider it a story of an orphan, who made questionable decisions during his formative years. If one examines the novel beyond the literary (semantic) level, several backstories could be sensed. For example, how this teenage orphan was deprived or had limited resources, both human and material, and their effects on his growth, can be unmasked. Had Rusty received support, he may have benefited and would have become a flourishing writer or a successful professional.

The following section is a detailed description of the stages in the *cycle of socialization*.

Core

This component initializes and propels the *cycle of socialization*. The core acts like fuel in an engine, providing thrust for the beginning of the cycle. Socialization is a process of adapting to divergent values and learning complex behaviors to be a proficient member of a community (Little, 2014). It also aids in the process of identity construction (Iyengar & Smith, 2016). Individuals acquire systematic assistance in constructing identities through socialization, utilizing the available capitals (i.e., social, cultural) (Yosso, 1995). For Rusty, the protagonist of *Room on the Roof*, the *cycle of socialization* occurs because of the experiences of insecurity, identity crisis, and alienation. The end of the novel reveals the last stage of the cycle (i.e., 'change'). Rusty, at last, was able to complete the cycle of socialization by following his own dreams, along with making friends and adhering to his own beliefs. Rusty's experiences with "fear, ignorance, confusion, and insecurity," enabled him to finally emancipate.

The Beginning

Several supportive systems (e.g., social, cultural, familial) pre-exist in every child's upbringing (Iyengar & Henkin, 2020; Iyengar & Smith, 2020). For example, a family with nurturing parents, cohesive social structure, close-knit communities with vibrant cultural heritage facilitate socialization. In this paper, we also explore Bronfenbrenner's (1977) *ecological system*, which encompasses aspects of personal, familial, or social spheres in Rusty's life. He is an orphaned seventeen-year-old Anglo-Indian living with his guardian, Mr. John Harrison. Rusty was not socialized, so he lacked certain social traits. However, Rusty initially shared his life with a few characters including Mr. Harrison, the missionary's wife, and the sweeper boy. For Rusty, family

was far-fetched and he never experienced relationships in the outside world. He had to just observe other families and speculate:

His idle hours were crowded with memories, snatches of childhood (p. 15).

Cognitive psychologist, Piaget (1967), affirms how children develop memories at discrete stages, but sometimes those flashbacks transform into void for children like Rusty because he could not remember his parents. In absent family of his own, he did not lose the opportunity to interact with families of his bazaar friends:

Rusty seized at the opportunity of pleasing the whole family (p. 54).

He was identified as an outsider by his ‘street’ friends because of Rusty’s physical (European) characteristics. His interests, lack of belonging with his guardian, identity negotiation, and his inclination to form meaningful relationships, revealed that he belonged with the friends from the bazaar:

He was exhausted now, but he was happy. He wanted this to go on forever, this day of feverish emotion, this life in another world. He did not want to leave the forest; it was safe, its earth soothed him, gathered him in, so that the pain of his body became a pleasure . . . He did not want to go home (p. 32).

The bazaar became a safe haven for Rusty and he began to enjoy life and learn to socialize.

First Socialization

For an Indian infant, the first socialization process is initiated through the *namakarana* samskara (i.e., naming ceremony). This cultural practice offers the child an inherited identity, i.e., the child is inducted into the family lineage. The child is introduced to the family, which is the *microsystem* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Parents, extended family, and communities invest time and energy by sharing information and teaching children about cultural, traditional, religious practices and beliefs that help develop a child's holistic personality (Iyengar & Henkin, 2021). On the contrary, these mechanisms of socialization are far-fetched or complex for children like Rusty, who have no exposure to their heritage and *beginnings* (Harro, 2004). For example, Rusty’s socialization initiated with the cyclist, Somi, who offered to help Rusty during the rainy months in Dehra. Rusty found it difficult to reciprocate Somi’s warmth due to the former’s isolation for a long time. For Rusty, walking away from the conversation was an easy alternative:

*‘Hullo,’ said Somi, ‘would you like me to ride you into town? If you are going to town?’
‘No, I’m all right,’ said the boy (p. 9).*

Rusty had internalized alienation, and not only refused to interact, but also avoided companionship. For example, in one instance, he refused the mode of transportation that was offered and could have helped Rusty seek friendship:

I like to walk (p. 9)...Somi said: 'Why don't you come and have your meal with us, there is not much further to go.' ... 'I've got to go home,' he said. 'I'm expected. Thanks very much'

Rusty's pretense about, 'expected at home,' although no one is eager to see him at home, becomes an excuse that Rusty cannot run away from.

Absent emotional support in children may lead them to rebel and distance themselves from socialization (Sandstrom & Huerta, 2013). To illustrate, the guardian (i.e., Mr. Harrison) was not attached to or involved in Rusty's life. Instead, there was minimal or no communication between Rusty and the guardian at home. The guardian's nonchalant behavior made Rusty may have deterred Rusty from socialization. The latter preferred being alone and drowned in memories instead of going out and making friends with other boys. As a result, Rusty was deprived of one of the *basic psychological needs*, 'belonging' (Grawe, 2004; Maslow, 1943). Rusty was capable of building friendships, but constant rejection and restrictions from people around him made Rusty calculative, skeptical, and apprehensive. According to Maslow (1943), deprivation of *psychological needs* leads to self-doubt along with developing resistance to change. Rusty aspired to be a part of the bazaar culture after the initial contact with the cyclist, Somi. But such a relationship was strictly prohibited for Rusty. The following excerpt indicate Rusty's predicament:

And all three—the bazaar and India and life itself—were forbidden (p. 18)... 'He doesn't know what to do with himself,' said the missionary's wife. 'But I'll keep him occupied... I'll keep an eye on him' (p.13)...Or should he listen to the devil in his heart and go into the bazaar? (p.16)

Rusty's foster mother, also played along with Mr. Harrison's boundaries.

On the contrary, the new experience with friends close to his age, Rusty wanted to emancipate from the regimental environment at home. He was forbidden from interacting with children of his age and temperament. Rusty was deprived of experiences such as the bazaar visit, eating chaat, celebrating *Holi*, and socializing with his 'street' friends. Apart from restrictions on outdoor activities, the cultural traditions were also unfamiliar to him. Although he was growing up in India, which is one of the most culturally diversified countries in the world, was unfortunate not to know about his regional heritage:

'Tomorrow is Holi,' said Ranbir, 'you must play with me, then you will be my friend.'
'What is Holi?' asked Rusty (p. 24).

Invitation to cultural practice that had spiritual significance was unaware to Rusty.

In addition, apart from the lack of family, friends, and belonging, Rusty had no mentors in his life. He lived with his uncle, Mr. Harrison, who may have lacked parental skills (e.g.,

communication) necessary to raise children. He failed to provide a nurturing environment for Rusty's growth:

Mr. Harrison did not reply. He seldom answered the boy's questions, and his own were stated, not asked; he probed and suggested, sharply, quickly, without ever encouraging loose conversation (p. 13).

Mr. Harrison's perspectives on Rusty's upbringing was flawed and that neglect impacted the child's psyche.

Carter (2012) asserts that ignoring children is worse than child abuse. Rusty was tacitly abused. Similarly, questions, when not addressed, make children wonder about their indispositions. The curiosity of a child would definitely perish after silent treatment that Rusty experienced, repeatedly at home. A seed grows when it is nurtured in an appropriate habitus (Bourdieu, 2017). If the seed crushes, growing flowers and enjoying fruits becomes farfetched. Similarly, lack of emotional support in children leads to problems. Therefore, socialization is essential in children's emotional growth.

Institutional and Cultural Socialization

Educational institute facilitates the construction of the identity in children, especially during adolescence (Verhoeven et al., 2019). Children's participation institution in different activities is important for scaffolding the pre-existing skills and polishing them. Interactive involvement leads children to communicate their own thoughts, understand varied view points, and interact with children from other communities with different cultural and social backgrounds. Most of these privileges were absent in Rusty's life. He went to a school that did not agree with him that made interaction with children of his age challenging:

Since his parents had died, Rusty had been kept, fed and paid for, and sent to an expensive school in the hills that was run on 'exclusively European lines' (p.13).

The school and home environments both became difficult for Rusty's tranquility.

Consequently, Rusty 'macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) were not diversified; they revolved around his guardian's house and the expensive school. Rusty finished schooling, yet he had no dreams to pursue, no model to follow, and no motivation to grow. He was assimilated into the Anglo-Indian communities that alienated Rusty.

The cultural exposure to his native place was unproductive because of how his skin colour. It worked as a barrier for Rusty to be accepted by society and the people residing in his town. He was not familiar with the cultural practices of the region he lived in. But tried improving the facility for his student, Kishen. As a result, he couldn't find much cultural relevance in his environment.

He used to feel left out by people around him. There was nothing he could have done to cope with the incongruence. He chose to accept reality instead of ranting and displacing his frustrations. Even after finishing school, he neither had friends nor skills:

Make some use of him. He dreams too much. Most unfortunate that he's finished with school, I don't know what to do with him (p. 13).

A school is a space where children should be given the freedom to express themselves so they can construct an identity and develop self-worth (Biesta, 2020; Lian, 2020; Valenzuela, 2008). It was quite the opposite for Rusty during school days. It was through the interactions with the 'street' boys at the bazaar that he had situational realizations of his potential. Soon he was able to understand his aspirations were and why he wanted to become a teacher.

Enforcement

As Harro (1997) points out, people who go against the conventional route are usually called troublemakers. That is what Mr. Harrison thought of Rusty after finding out about Rusty's involvement with the children from the bazaar. Mr. Harrison expected Rusty to grow up in a very regimental fashion that hindered Rusty from making friends from the bazaar. Parents usually expect children to develop in a desirable direction (Ferry, 2006). In the process, facilitators ignore the individual identity of the child, but rather focus on implementing the perfect path (Solomon, 2012). To illustrate, Mr. Harrison imposed the life of an Englishman on Rusty:

I've tried to bring you up as an Englishman, as your father would have wished. But, as you won't have it our way, I'm telling you that he was about the only thing English about you (p. 35).

Mr. Harrison's plan of making Rusty an Englishman outside the cultural milieu was not only a failure, but also caused serious harm to the young boy's mental health.

The following lines indicate the verbal abuse and slants that impacted Rusty's character building. Mr. Harrison abhors Rusty's disposition as he socializes with the bazaar friends.

How can you call yourself an Englishman, how can you come back to this house in such a condition? In what gutter, in what brothel have you been! Have you seen yourself? Do you know what you look like? (p.26).

Mr. Harrison inflicts physical pain by beating Rusty for spending time with his friends that he loves to hang out with:

It is not enough to say you are sorry, you must be made to feel sorry. Bend over the sofa (p.26).

Results

Rusty's conundrum enraged him and he developed *self-hate*. Eventually, he developed low self-esteem and lost hope. He began to question his unique identity that did not enable him to situate himself. Rusty began to fantasize his life with Somi and Kishen. Mr. Harrison's brutal and unrealistic *enforcements* resulted in Rusty's questionable lifestyle. The following excerpt is an indication of Rusty's temperament and longing for something that he could not achieve:

Nothing could be more depressing than the dampness, the mildew, and the sunless heat that wrapped itself round the steaming land. Had Somi or Kishen been with Rusty, he might have derived some pleasure from the elements; had Ranbir been with him, he might have found adventure; but alone, he found only boredom (p. 103).

Lost and alone, Rusty is left to just lead a secluded/hermetic life.

Rusty wanted to teach Kishen without rigidity like his European school:

Where do I teach Kishen? 'On the roof, of course.' Rusty retrieved his gaze, and scratched his head. The roof seemed a strange place for setting up school (p. 57).

The room on the roof became a metaphoric space that enabled both Rusty and Kishen to grow in each other's company. It was symbolic of freedom, friendship, and liberation.

Actions

At the end of the novel, Rusty questions the status quo and becomes proactive with a plan. He realizes that the only way to escape the limiting life was to run away from home for introspection. This self-discovery liberates Rusty in the end. Finally, like the quest heroes, Rusty embarks on a journey to explore life and finds fulfillment through the nomadic experiences. His announcement to the readers that, *I want to be either somebody or nobody. I don't want to be anybody...Don't go where you don't belong*, become a *consciousness-raising* struggle.

Conclusion

We argue that having compassionate and understanding people around us is a privilege, and not all of us have access to nurturing relationships. One can experience life if there is freedom. Those understandings are subjective to individual's involvement in society. In fact, perspectives differentiate us from others around us in society. Rusty traveled through the *cycle of socialization* alone at times, while his friend, Somi was more privileged. Somi had social and cultural capitals that were missing in Rusty's life. Kishen too had supportive systems, but Rusty had to learn to build capacities alone and at times failed. Stories like that of Rusty is a reminder that people flourish in nurturing and supportive environment. We all need to be *socialized*, so we can live life to its fullest.

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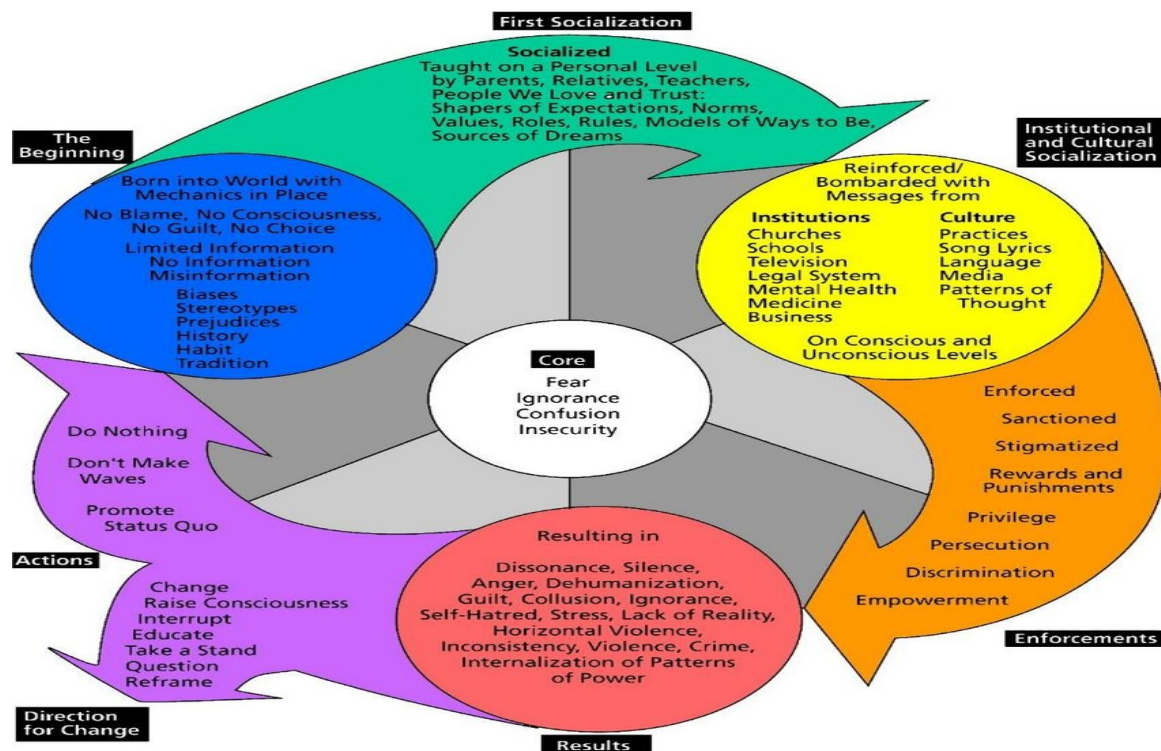
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Appendix A: Harro's Cycle of Socialization



***Bhakti* and Pottery: Góra Kumbhār in Iconography**

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Abstract

The potter Gora Bhakta Kumbhār is known for his *bhakti* of lord Vitthal and holds his stature all across Maharashtra today with more than fifteen temples in his name. This paper will look at the life narratives of this potter saint, and the understanding of his caste and personal life vis-à-vis diverse narratives by studying his iconography. Gora Bhakta Kumbhār's biography is perceived in illustrations and signages, temples and sculptures, and oral and literary traces as modes of remembrance. One can find a hagiography in Marathi in both oral and written traditions about this saint. Furthermore, in the visual media, including- illustrations and signages- the aspects of multilingualism and devotion can be understood. The popularity of the saint is found in temples and sculptures as well. Hence, this paper looks at the remembrance of the potter saint through various mediums in the contemporary times.

Keywords: pottery, narrative, caste, bhakti movement, iconography

Introduction

Gora Kumbhār saint is believed to have lived between the century 1267 CE to 1316 CE in Terdhoki village. Saint Gora is born in a community of potters. His *jāti*/caste name is *kumbhār*, which literally means a potter. Along with pottery, the saint is deeply indulged in the *bhakti* of the lord Vitthal/ Vithoba/ Panduranga¹. The potter saint's narrative is famous all across Maharashtra. He has attained the name of *Sant* for his wisdom and knowledge of pottery. Gora is contemporary to and older than Gyandev and Tukaram hence all the saints call him *Gorobākaka*. In the popular narrative, Gora is preparing his clay with his feet and crushing his toddler along with the clay (Fig. 1). He is so busy chanting Panduranga's name that he does not realize the tragedy. His wife Santī comes and witnesses the tragedy and makes him aware of his actions. However, Gorobā is still immersed in the *bhakti* that he shows his anger towards his wife and chops off his hands for doing so. Since, Gora was devoted to Vitthal and Rukmini, both the gods visit Gora in disguise and help him in his pottery business, and in the end, Gora gets his hands back. Henceforth, Gora is known as Gora Bhakta Kumbhār, and his narrative becomes popular in the state of Maharashtra.

There are multiple temples in his name in Maharashtra. The prominent ones are in Pandharpurⁱⁱ, Alandi Devachi, and Osmanabad.



Fig. 1

Source: Jawla, Sangeeta (2019). Gora crushing his child. Alandi Devachi, Maharashtra.

The written and oral traditions: Miracles of Gorobā's life

If we look at the regional aspects in the narratives of Gora, he belongs to Osmanabad, and the written texts about the potter are available only in Marathi with the names- *Shri Gora Kumbhār Charitra* and *Sant Gorobā Kākā: Charitrātmak Abhang*. These texts have the idea of language and regionalism, and the context of these textsⁱⁱⁱ is related to this particular saint belonging to western parts of India, especially Maharashtra. These texts mention the similar story discussed above but also mention various *abhangas*^{iv} sung by the potter and those sung for the potter. In one narrative, another potter named Raka^v is mentioned. In the Raka tale- a cat once gives birth to two kittens in a clay pot that Rakakept for baking in the kiln. Raka and his wife start worshipping Panduranga to save the kittens. Raka and his family did not take a single drop of water and kept chanting god's name. The fire stops, and the kittens are saved due to Panduranga's miracle (Fig. 2). A similar story is collected from the north Indian potters^{vi} of Haryana and Rajasthan that depicts the *bhakti* of a potter in the northern context and is certainly inferring the dispersion and 'diffusion' of one tale into different geographical spaces and 'polygenesis' where a tale and its origin are found in more than one place (Thompson 380). In this tale, there were two kittens stuck in a pot that the *kumhār*^{vii} was baking. When *kumhār* finds out about the tragedy, he starts worshipping lord Hari^{viii}, and the kittens are saved. Hence, one can see that in the two different tales, two different gods are worshipped according to the religious aspect of the state in which it is found.



Fig. 2

Source: Gosavi, R. R., and Vina R. Gosavi, (2017). The narrative of the kittens. *Shri Gora KumbhārCharitra*. Indira Printing Press, p.102.

In a different folktale, a pot's baked and unbaked nature is delineated. A clay pot symbolizes the human nature of having knowledge (baked) and ego (unbaked). This narrative is taken from a larger and more significant myth of Gorobā hence it is a 'broken-down-myth' (Thompson 370). In this myth, Gorobā, the oldest saint among all, is invited with his beating tool-*thāpī* to examine if the human-pot is baked or not baked, i.e., if it is knowledgeable enough for the *bhakti* of lord Vitthal (Fig. 3). Not just the tapping tool but the knowledge of making pottery, a caste-oriented work, are playing an essential part in this scenario. The pot is considered to have been shaped like humans (with a neck, belly, etc.). The saints, such as Namdev, Muktabai, Chokhamela, and others sit down to get enquired by the beating tool, a *thāpī*. The *bhakti* of these saints can be compared to the heat of the kiln in which the pots are baked. Just like the fire bakes the clay pots, the undivided *bhakti* also makes the human-pot knowledgeable. It is considered for the saints to leave all the aspects of the world behind them which fall in their path to mindfulness. Jnandev proposes to have this gathering to make Namdev learn about his ego which he cannot recognize himself. Gorobā, the oldest and a devoted bhakta, can tell by the knowledge of making pots by using his tools that Namdev needs more knowledge to be a devout bhakta as he has to lead various other bhakta to the path of Vitthalbhakti^{ix}. Hence, this narrative can be catalogued under various moral tales that surrounds Gora Kumbhār.



Fig. 3

Source: Gosavi, R. R., and Vina R. Gosavi, (2017). The gathering of saints. *Shri Gora Kumbhār Charitra*. Indira Printing Press, p.72.

Image Adaptation: Gora's Iconography

Muktabai, a female saint, mentions in her *abhangas*^x a prevalent iconography where the saints are depicted as small children to Vitthal and surround him (Fig. 4). She also says that Gorobā is sitting in the lap of the lord Vitthal. When we look at this iconography, we can see that the *bhakti* movement brings the local artisans of all communities closer to god, and the potter is one of them. The potter is seen in the lap of Vitthal, which shows his close bonding with the god Vitthal like



Fig.4

Source: Jawla, Sangeeta, (2019).A graffiti with Vitthal and his bhaktas.Pandharpur, Maharashtra.

other saints in the picture. We can also see this close connection between Gorobā and Vitthal when we look at the location of Vitthal's and Gorobā's idols in the temples in Maharashtra.

In the temples of Gorobā, we find an idol of Vitthal, Rukmini, and Gorobā, but the placement of their idols differs from place to place. In the Pandharpur temple (Fig. 5), one can see the depiction of the story of Gorobā in the placement of the idols. The female character in the narrative, Santī, Gorobā's wife, is a less dominant character in contrast to Gorobā. She gets angry when her child is killed. She tries to run the household while he keeps himself busy with the hymns. While the whole narrative is about *bhakti* and sainthood, she brings us back to household life. Interestingly, the idol of the wife Santī can also be seen in one of the temples in Pandharpur, and the idols of Rukmini and Vitthal and placed in the centre. Furthermore, Gorobā's idol is placed in the centre (Fig. 6) in his temple of Terdhoki (where Gora is born), and in his temple in Alandi Devachi, Gora's idol is placed in the right corner (Fig. 7) whereas Rukmini and Vitthal are at the centre in both Terdhoki and Alandi temples.



Fig. 5

Source: Jawla, Sangeeta, (2019). Gorobā (l) and Santī (r). Pandharpur, Maharashtra.



Fig.6

Source: Jawla, Sangeeta, (2019). Gorobā(c) with Vitthal and Rukmini. Ter, Osmanabad.



Fig.7

Source: Jawla, Sangeeta, (2019). Gorobā(l) with Vitthal and Rukmini (c). Alandi Devachi, Maharashtra.

In Alandi Devachi, Osmanabad, and Pandharpur, the temples of the Vitthal and Gora are very close to each other. These temples are visited by every community, irrespective of their castes, during the pilgrimage^{xi}. This dissolves the differences between a god and its worshippers. Although, it gives space to the bhakta saints as well, as we know that common people have also been worshipping them along with Vitthal. As Deleury postulates, - ‘In many other Hindu sects the “gurus”, the “swamis”...are highly honoured and respected by their followers and disciples: indeed one could say that it is a common feature of Hinduism. But in the Varkari Panth, this veneration takes a peculiar aspect. Not only are the “santas” [saints] venerated as avatars of god at the place of their Samadhi by the group of their disciples and their descendants, not only are temples erected in their honour, but they are considered as still present in a spiritual ways, as still living for the good of the community. This fact is at the root of the very existence of the pilgrimage’ (Deleury 73). Henceforth, Vitthal, as mentioned in Gorobā’s story, is an essential character in the narratives of different saints. Vitthal is always seen as a helper to the artisan communities at one point in their narratives^{xii}.

Even the walls of the temples of Gorobā are covered with various graffiti, including the picture of Vithoba surrounded by various *warkaris* (Fig. 7). Gorobā’s iconography depicts him worshipping Vitthal and also, crushing his child. The iconography also shows the *abhangas* of

Gorobā written on the walls. These *abhangas* are popular among the bhaktas of even today who belong to all the castes and sects of Hindu society. When we discuss today's generation of potters worshipping this *kumbhār*, one can find a good number in the religious places where the temples are located, such as Alandi Devachi. The young kids belonging to the potter family, whom I met in my journey to these places, were deeply engrossed in their *bhakti* of the potter saint. The young kid worships Gorobā in the morning and goes to school after his prayers. His family owns the trust of the Gorobā temple of Alandi, and make and sell pottery. The boy himself makes various clay idols of Vithoba. Interestingly he does not have any mould for the idol of Gorobā, and after asking he told me that no such clay or metal idol is being sold of this potter saint. Hence, one can see that the ordinary worshipper does not have Gora's idols but indeed have various *abhangas*, pictures, and his *charitakathā* books in their homes.

The image of Gorobā is not just popularised via temples, but his image is popular vis-à-vis signages and illustrations as well. Signages and illustrations around this potter are revered by the potter community of Maharashtra in general and Keshav Nagar in particular. The signages of Gorobā become a worship pattern for the people who believe in the saint. These popular images of Gorobā depict him as a spiritual figure, but also make him a regional and an ordinary man.



Fig. 8

Source: Jawla, Sangeeta, (2019). Signages at potter's workshops. Keshav Nagar, Pune.

Away from the *warkari* temples, Keshav Nagar^{xiii} in Pune is two hundred kilometres away from Pandharpur. The potter families in this region make vessels from the clay procured locally and sell them outside their houses. Interestingly, these potters have established a place for themselves in Keshav Nagar, and if we look at the religious orientation of these potters, they are both Kannada and Marathi, and worship Gora Bhakta Kumbhār. These potters built a temple in the colony in



Fig. 9

Source: Jawla, Sangeeta, (2022). Gorobā Temple in Keshav Nagar. Keshav Nagar, Pune.

which they we can see an idol of Gora Kumbhār (Fig. 9) who they worship on multiple occasions. One can draw a similarity between the temple in Keshav Nagar, Pune, and the temple in Uttam Nagar, Delhi (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10

Source: Jawla, Sangeeta, (2017). Prajapati Shiv Mandir. Uttam Nagar, Delhi.

The *Prajapati* potters of Uttam Nagar also built a temple in their '*kumhār colony*'^{xiv}. Hence, one can see that the small settlements of a community shift their gods wherever they reside. Therefore, one can find the similarities and differences between temples in which communities' inputs are mostly created versus this saint becoming part of the larger pantheon. The dissolution of caste in the temples of Gorobā is seen when we look at the number of temples found in Maharashtra, and on the other hand, we see only one caste (of potters) worshipping this saint.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to arrange the multiple narratives surrounding this potter saint through his iconography. The numerous narratives are studied through various media such as illustrations, graffiti, signages, idols, and written texts. Every medium plays its role of portraying the narrative of this potter saint differently. The written texts do not just mention his narratives but also bring new characters like Raka, another potter. In the tale of baked- unbaked elements of a pot, the description of Namdev and his ego is given importance, along with Gorobā and his thorough knowledge of pots that makes him a good potter along with a good saint. The placement of the idols in the mainstream temples across Alandi Devachi, Pandharpur, and Osmanabad depict the closeness of bhaktas and gods during the *Bhakti* movement. In the contemporary scenario, the naming of the temples in Keshav Nagar, Pune, and Uttam Nagar, Delhi, shows the importance of movement and placement of the respective gods of the bhaktas where they reside. Hence, the paper tries to cover the critical elements that give the narrative of a *bhakta* potter saint prominence even in contemporary times.

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The Short Stories of Jagannath Prasad Das: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

Jagannath Prasad Das, who is well known as J.P.Das, is a unique figure in modern Odia fiction, especially for his short stories. His stories are thrilling and readable, but sometimes, the readers face difficulty entering the deepness of his stories. Even after that, at every level, the entryway is indicated. That's why a conscious reader can measure the depth of his stories. This paper attempts to explore the features of his short stories that make his short stories unique.

Keywords: Jagannath Prasad Das, modern Odisha, Short stories, conscious reader, unique

Introduction

Jagannath Prasad Das is an Indian writer, poet, playwright, and novelist who writes in Odia. He gave a new dimension to Odia literature for over forty years. His literature comprises poetry, plays, short stories, novel, essays, children's poems, and nonsense verse. He is also a good translator and has done various translations from different languages into Odia and English. He is also a good researcher in Odia arts and has published three works on the pictorial arts of the state. He also actively takes part in social and cultural activities. His works are written in Odia but are widely translated into various Indian languages and English, bringing him national recognition.

In the 1960s and 70s, Jagannath Prasad Das gave a new dimension to Odia literature. Das considers poetry his first love. He says, "All that I want to say, let me say in poetry." Writing poems from an early age, but after the publication of his first story collection in 1980, it attracted attention for the novelty of its theme and the use of a new style and language for Odia fiction. His stories are not only creative creations but based on intensive research. J.P. Das is an excellent poet of Odia literature, however his contribution to the Odia fiction especially to short stories, is well-appreciated. He has seven stories collections such as *Bhabanath O Anyamane* (1982), *Dinacharya* (1983), *AmeJeunmane* (1986), *Sakshatkara* (1987), *Priya Bidushaka* (1992), *Sesha Paryanta* (1987) and *Ichhapatra* (2000), etc. For a new experiment, he adopted various literary theories of world literature.

Absurdism

The Second World War was a time of catastrophic changes to the physical and metaphysical world. The world order was turned upside down. Nations were destroyed. Cities were destroyed villages were destroyed. Families were torn apart. Fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters were slain. Everything previously known about the world was destroyed. The Second World War was the divorce between man and his life, the actor and his stage, which constituted the truthful sentiment of the absurd. Mr. Das, in his short story 'Satyasatya' (Truth is Truth) indicates the world's situation after the Second World War and then the origin of Nihilism. Maybe this story is slightly inspired by the 'trial' (1925) or 'Der Process' [1] by the German novelist Franz Kafka because there are some similarities between the character of 'Josef. K' (The Trail) and Padmadhar (SatyaSatya). In this story, the writer describes that today's world is an absurd and aimless world, and in this world, everyone seems like a wooden doll. For better understanding, we can quote a line from the story " He saw that Hakeem has turned into a wooden doll. The thread went from his hands and disappeared on the roof. The lawyers act like stuffed toys, and the man is standing on the docks is talking nonsense in his sleep. The sound of donkeys braying comes from the chamber, and vultures fly on the roof" (Das p.48). To be free from such a world, the writer also uses creative visualization in this story " While watching the scene in a flashback, Padmadhar repeatedly edits it, and he was editing that conversation less film by giving much dialog. For example, he dramatically affects Vasudha's entrance into the classroom. Vasudha looked more beautiful, and her makeup was not less than a movie star. As she entered the class she greeted Padmadhar, and Padmadhar is in his best attire in the movie, has a strange look of joy. Sometimes Padmadhar, "by desire, changed the classroom atmosphere into a pleasant atmosphere of a park" (Das p.51).

After the first and second world wars, the fear of death, anxiety, losing faith in god, and belief that are living in a godless world the people, especially the young generation, is described in his other story, 'Duswapna' (Bad Dream). For this story, the writer is influenced by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and his philosophy that God is dead.[2] The writer beautifully describes man's helplessness, loneliness, and fear of man, symbolically explained by the story writer. For example, he can quote some lines from the story: "The man is not tall, although his height was not correct. Under his head was a bale, and a monkey was tied nearby. The man was in a deep sleep, and the monkey was busy playing many games. (Das 63) In this line, the man in deep sleep and is a symbol of god, and the monkey is a symbol of human beings. His other short story, "Jogajoga" (Communication), is a perfect example of absurdism. In writing this story, the writer was influenced by the Irish novelist Samuel Becket and his drama 'Waiting for Godot.' [3] There are some similarities between the characters of these two works. Vladimir with Chakrapani, Estragon with Mini, Pozzo with Sakuntala, Lucky with a Tribal boy, and Godot with Bula and Papu. In this story, the writer describes the outrageous behavior of the characters, like Waiting for Godot drama and the endless waiting, which represents the aimless and absurd life of the people after the war. Humans tend to torture and enjoy oppression, and this thought is described in the 'Bhrutya' (enslaved person) story of Mr. Das.

Psychological Analysis

We can also provide an analysis of Mr. Das's various stories from a psychological viewpoint. He also describes the multiple ways of post-Freudian psychology and Parapsychology. 'Jharaka' (Window) is a symbolized story. The story Jharaka or window represents the desire of human beings. Sigmund Freud called 'Libido' and is part of our 'Id' instinct(4). Alexithymia is a personality trait characterized by the subclinical inability to identify and describe emotions experienced by oneself(5). This type of anxiety of human beings is described in his 'Picnic' story. Besides this, another concern called Anhedonia, where a person cannot feel pleasure in usually pleasurable activities[6] is explained in his 'Dinacharya' (Routine) story. There are several types of stress, including 'Acute stress,' 'Episodic acute stress,' and 'Chronic stress' but Das, in his story 'Chithi' (letter), describes the features of Acute stress and how it works. We can see the scientific study of dreams called 'Oneirology'[7] in his 'Bagha' (Tiger) story. Here the writer analyzes the various stages of dreams like a wake, light sleep, deep sleep, REM, and repeat, and in which stage we are in the plan called Rapid Eye Movement or (REM). In this story, with the help of the character Satyakama, the writer describes this stage very beautifully. For example, we can quote some lines from the report: "Through the imaginary dark room, the air conditioner humming, he first saw a branch of a tree to the left of his coveted surroundings. The bird emerged from the leafy greenery, and the slow tempo began to fly in a lazy motion before his eyes closed; Satyakam looked to the right, where another green hawk was waiting for the bird." (Kathayatra-P-275) In this story, the dreams about animals, especially the tiger, represent human beings' wildness. 'Swati Asiba' (Swati will come) is another beautiful story of Mr. Das. Here the writer describes 'Genophobia' and 'Pistanthrophobia.' The study of 'Déjà Vu'[8,9] is the research area of Para Psychology, and we can see the experiment on this study in the 'Pratyabartan' (Repatriation) story.

The writer also describes the reason behind Déjà vu and how it connects to our previous memory, which is named Collective Unconsciousness by the Post Freudian psychologist Carl Jung. 'Muhurta' (Moment) is another story where the writer describes the research area of Para Psychology[10,11] called Near Death Experience, Life review, and Life flashback. Besides this, in his 'Jana Ajana' (Unknown to known) story, the writer describes Ghost and Witch and the Para Normal activity.

Feminist overtimes

Mr. Das, in his various stories, describes now a day's how females are fighting for their rights. From this viewpoint, "Nijatwa" is a beautiful story where the writer describes both the Liberal and Radical approaches which are part of Second Wave feminism. Being a girl only became a problem for her. She has been asked many questions like; this job requires much touring. Can you go? Or, we will spend a lot of money on your training if you leave the job after getting married. Or in this job, you will have to go to the field and see the work hour by hour, will you be able to do it? Urmila wanted to say yes, I can. I am in no way inferior to those half-dead youths—those who sit

outside for an interview. I won't get married; I will do the job. I will go on tour. Standing in the sun and supervising the work of twenty men. Give me a job and see." (Das, p.203).

Beside this, the Third Wave feminism and the reality of the 'Sisterhood' concept is also described by the writer in this story. With Urmila's character, the writer expresses all these thoughts very beautifully. Females are always sacrificing themselves for others. So now the time has come for females to understand their situation, condition, and importance. This type of Cultural thought is described in Das's 'Daitwa' (Responsibility) story. In his other report, 'Budhiani Jala' (Spider Web), the writer evaluates the relationship between a male and a female.

Reader Response and New Criticism Theory

In broad sense, the text, writer, and readers are the branches of one tree. But now, so many theories separate these from each other. New Criticism and 'Reader Response Theories'[15] are these types of two theories. So how a writer faces various problems when he tries to make consistency between the text and the reader describe very beautifully in Mr. Das 'Priya Bidusaka' (Dear Clown) story. 'Sabdabheda' (Word difference) is another story where the writer uses the theory of Charles Darwin called 'Natural Selection'[16] to analyze the condition of today's poetry.

Natural selection is the process through which species adapt to their environments. It is the engine that drives evolution. Like this, poetry also needs a good environment and readers for growth. Hear the writer also support the theory of New Criticism and Structuralism. That's why he said the text is significant for analyzing modern poetry. Also, like Structuralists, he said the word is god. "Words are a weapon Bhavanath explained to me, and the more effectively you use it, the more powerful you are." (Kathayatra- P- 10) Besides all these, he indicates the conflict between Structuralism and De construction theory[17,18] when a writer tries to make a consistency between New Criticism and Reader response theory which type of problems he faces described in Mr. Das 'Lekhaka' (Writer) story.

Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism is a philosophical movement that developed in New England's late 1820s and 1830s.[19] A core belief is in the inherent goodness of people and nature. While society and its institutions have corrupted the purity of the individual, people are at their best when truly self-reliant and independent. Transcendentalism saw the religious experience as inherent every day, rather than believing in distance heaven. Transcendentalists saw physical and spiritual phenomena as part of dynamic processes rather than discrete entities. This philosophy comes from the eastern Buddhist and Jainism philosophical ideas. That's why this philosophy is very familiar with Eastern philosophy. Mr. Das, in his various short stories uses this positive philosophy very beautifully. The short story "Sanyasa Ra Rasta"(The Way of Sanyasa) represents transcendentalism's multiple thoughts. Besides this, the conflict in Buddhist philosophy reflects that not everyone's thinking and philosophy are the same. Happiness is around us, and we need to see that happiness and apply them in our lives, and this type of thought is described in his 'Samparka' (Relation) story. A

different vision to see life is another thought of transcendentalism, and in the short story “Samasya” (Problem) , the writer applies this thought very beautifully.

Social and Economic environment

The current social, as well as economic condition of the country is very beautifully described in Mr. Das’s various stories. Time is potent. It can change everything, but how the society and mindset of the people regarding the caste system are still unchangeable is excellently described in the short story “Nirdharita Sthana.” Poverty and loss are two different issues. Poverty means not being able to meet our basic needs. But it is not certain that poverty will affect the mind. One can be happy even in poverty. This type of thought which we can consider as a psycho dynamic of poverty or poverty and deprivation, is described in both ‘Nababarsha’ (New year) and “Dwipa’ (Island).. But in many cases, poverty is both external and internal. The depiction can be seen in the short story ‘Aiswarya,’ The helplessness of man in search of wealth and importance in today’s society is reflected in the short story ‘Sansar’ (World). Corruption has occurred even in the case of dead people seen in the ‘Mala loka’ (Dead People). Besides this, in this story, the writer describes the Near Death Experience.

Human sexuality is much more complex than the biological forces that initiate sexual maturation. As such, the development of adolescent sexuality includes not only physical development but also cognitive, emotional, social, and moral development. Basically, the sexual development in this period and its impact is described in ‘Nisidha Rasta’ (story: Curiosity about people: The effect of social interest is the topic of ‘Padosi’ (Neighbor). Besides this, in the story ‘Bhagya’ (Destiny), we see the use of social psychology very beautifully. The human being’s desire to be famous and their helplessness are described in the ‘Amaratwa’ story. The emergency in India was 21 months from 1975-1977, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency across the country. At that time, the fear of the public and the situation of these people who were growing in uncertainty at every moment is very well explained in ‘Jaruri Paristiti’ (Emergency) story. How contemporary folk culture has lost its simplicity in national and international definitions is reflected in the ‘Loka Sanskruti’ (Folk Culture) story. The devotion and sanctity in folk culture have today been transformed into a hybrid culture under the influence of modernization. An example of how the rural civilization associated with this folk culture is also oriented today can be found in some of the story’s lines “ This is not the village of Raghu Chowdhuri. This was an international art field. The people of our village had nothing to do with Baghanach. This dance is the subject of the enjoyment of the famous people of the country and abroad and the study by modern sociologists and dance scholars. (Katha Yatra- P- 400)

An example of how one’s helplessness can be a source of joy for another is seen in the story ‘Bhavitvy’ . But the author particularly raised the issue of ‘Alexithymia’ in this story. Alexithymia is a personality trait characterized by the subclinical inability to identify and describe emotions experienced by oneself. The core characteristic of alexithymia is marked dysfunction in emotional awareness, social attachment, and interpersonal relations. Furthermore, people with high levels of

alexithymia can have difficulty distinguishing and appreciating the emotions of others, which is thought to lead to un-empathic and inadequate emotional responses. And this type of feeling is very excellently described in this story.

The story 'Bahara Loka' (Outside People) is about how a person who devoted himself completely to the family becomes useless and a stranger to the family one day. Nostalgia, or in other words, back to nature in the language of roman poets, as well as the great gap between the past and the present. The contrast between fantasy and reality can be seen in the story 'Ghara Bahuda' (Home Coming). The development of a country and nation depends on the thoughts and consciousness of the people living there. It is impossible to develop one nation by forcefully helping it because it is related to the psychology of the people, and this thought is described in the 'Bharasamya' (Balance) story.

Conclusion

Based on the previous discussion, we can consider that Mr. Das not only read the various theories of world literature. Like a scholar, he does multiple experiments. Also, very beautifully, he uses these theories in his stories. We find all these features in his short stories that make them unique.

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PEDAGOGY



New Dimension in Higher Education in India

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Abstract

Higher Education has an important role in the task of rebuilding a nation and it paves the way for overall development of a nation. The twentieth century has witnessed several revolutions like Green revolution, White revolution, I.T revolution, so on and so forth, taking human civilization to new heights. At the start of 21st century, we gave a lot of importance given to higher education. Every country realized the value of higher education and the benefits that accrue from it. “The social demands for higher education continue to increase. The inabilities of the state to support this growing demand result in new financing arrangements for higher education. The recent reforms in this area could be broadly divided into two categories: the privatization of public institutions and the establishment of private institutions of higher education. Privatization implies the application of market principles in the operation of public institutions, while ownership rests within the public domain. Promotion of the private sector implies the growth and expansion of the non-state sector in higher education, and very often this sector does not rely on state funding for its growth and expansion. Both of these measures have paved the way for market operations in higher education

Keywords: foreign countries, higher education, educational quality, access to education,

Introduction

In his bestseller “The World is Flat”: Thomas Friedman describes a world of shrinking trade impediments and expeditious technological advances which have led to revolutionary globalization of industry. Domestic companies in India and other parts of the world are now able to compete on a level playing field with companies the world over. The world has been flattened. In today’s world where there is neck-to-neck competition, education must be such that our graduates have a reasonable opportunity to achieve success. Education is important for the sustained growth

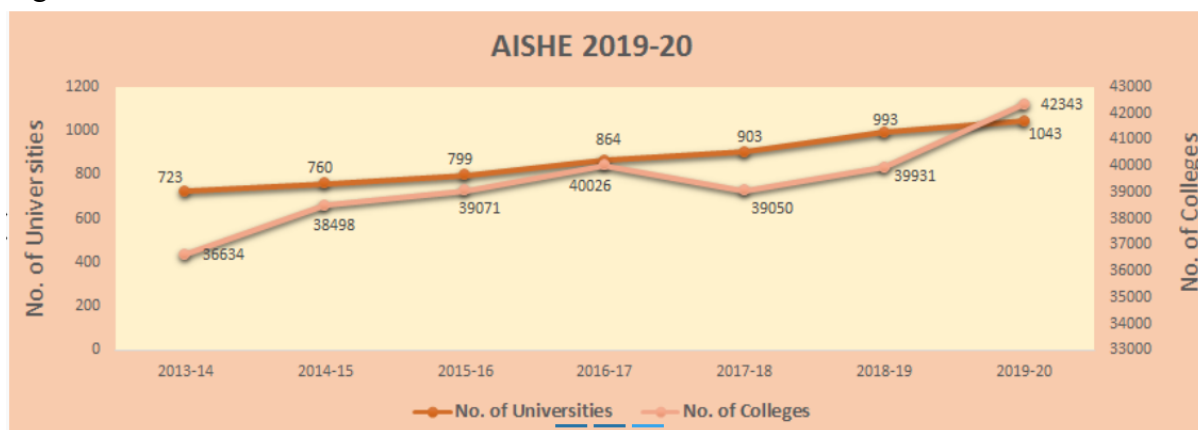
of the nation. It is the foundation on which the development of every citizen and the nation as a whole is contingent.

The direct correlation between higher education and human resource development is an area of abundant research. Capacity building in the national context presupposes numerous resources of which human resource is the most important one. Developmental activities require a workforce that is proficient across a range of skills. With the emergence of LPG era, the value of education has multiplied leaps and bounds.

Higher Education in India:

A paradigm shift has been noticed in higher education, from national to global, from teacher-centric to learner-centric education. These changes pose novel challenges to the traditional education systems and practices.

Fig.1



Source: AISHE

The higher education system in India has seen a huge 80% growth in the number of colleges and universities in the last decade. The higher education system in India constitutes the third-largest in the world. When India has attained independence there were only 500 colleges and 20 universities with 0.1 million students. This has increased to 1043 universities and university-level institutions and 42343 colleges, 11779 standalone Institutions as of 2019-20. The number of students enrolled in the universities and colleges has increased since independence to 3.85Cr. India has truly lived up to this global challenge.

Globalization and higher education: The Indian Scenario

Globalization has changed the dynamics of economies and the politics of world nations. And policy formulation across the board is increasingly influenced by the factors of globalization as the domestic markets protected so far opened up to completion from across the world.

The Indian higher education institutions have been undergoing transformation for the last 20 years under the influence of globalization. Many new universities have been conceptualized and established to increase the reach of higher education throughout the country. The universities with stronger relationships with industry and the economy have adapted to changes arising due to globalization and the ecosystem. Globalization leads to many opportunities and also challenges in higher education in India.

Contemporary Issues in Higher Education in India

Shortcomings in Intuitional Capacity Expansion

The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education is only 27.1% in India as per the report of All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20, under the Ministry of Education. This ratio is quite low when compared to that of developed as well as developing countries.

Making higher education inclusive and equitable:

The composition of students in higher education is not representative of the various sections of society. Merit should not be the exclusive domain of only the rich, wealthy, and elite which has increased after globalization. Measures must be taken to ensure that the people untouched by the advances of technology and globalization are also brought into the fold of higher education.

Ensuring quality and promoting excellence in HE:

After globalization, the higher education institutions are in competition not just with domestic institutions but with global institutions. Excellence in higher education has to be pursued to make the institutions globally competent and they have a lot to learn and implement from best practices across the world. Though the Government is consistently focusing on quality education still the UGC and our universities are not in a position to mark their place among the top universities of the world.

Expansion, excellence, and equity are interrelated any policy should address these 3E's.

Investment percentage of GDP:

One of the reasons for lower quality not being able to attain a global level of excellence and also not being fully equitable is because of underinvestment in HE. In 1968 the Kothari commission has suggested 6% of GDP should be on HE. As per the Economic Survey 2019-20, the expenditure on education by the Center and the States as a proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 2014-15 to 2018-19 has been around 3%. National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP) reaffirms the recommendation of an increase in public investment on education to 6% of GDP, but this target has not been achieved till now.

Employability:

Many a time, there is a long gestation period after graduation and before landing a good job. Sometimes people remain unemployed even after completing higher education because of lack of skills that are required for employment. The focus of education has to shift to skilling the students to make them industry ready and not just to impart knowledge.

Poor Infrastructure, Facilities, and Faculty shortages:

Infrastructure particularly of public sector institutions suffers from poor facilities, faculty insufficiency, and the incapacity of the educational system to attract, retain and preserve well-qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. There are plenty of vacancies in higher education but still large numbers of NET/Ph.D. candidates remain unemployed.

Inadequate Research:

Not much attention has been catered to research in higher education institutes. The quality of the research is getting compromised as the scholars are working either without fellowships or not getting their fellowships on time. Moreover, Indian Higher education institutions are poorly tied with research centres and industries.

Poor Governance Structure:

Excess-centralization in decision-making, bureaucratic structures, and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism are some of the challenges faced by the Indian education system.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of understanding the students' views on various issues faced by them during covid and their opinion on online education and in-class education, we have conducted a survey through a questionnaire which were sent out through various means such as mails, WhatsApp, and paper. We received 184 valid responses which are analyzed in detail in this study.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with industry professionals from across different companies such as Amazon, Google, Yash technologies, and Sell Craft solutions. Their responses are analyzed in detail in this study.

Companies Expectations from Universities:

The author has interacted with HR and Managers (both from the technical and non-technical side) of different companies viz. Amazon, Google, Yash Technology Solutions, Sell Craft Global Solutions. They have responded to the questionnaire on varied aspects such as curriculum by the University, students' performance at campus placements, time period for providing training, percentage of the quality of students they are getting versus the quality of students they actually want, etc. On interacting with them it has been found that there is an

immense gap between the skills required by them and skills possessed by the students. They got to spend most of their productive time training the unskilled freshers.

Other skills of high importance for employers: Oxford Economics Survey

Apart from the domain knowledge, there are other skills that are of high importance to employers for hiring a candidate as per the Oxford Economics Survey, refer Fig.2 to 5. They included Communication Skills, Computer Skills, Numerical and logical ability, and behavioral traits like learning agility, adaptability, and interpersonal skills. From the figures, we can see that these skills which are so important for companies are necessary irrespective of the individual's field of study or course. However, most universities do not lay emphasis on these skills and there is an urgent need to redesign the curriculum, method of instruction, and evaluation to ensure that these skills are developed in students as part of regular instruction and also create extra-curricular opportunities for the inculcation of these skills.

Fig. 2: Skills in high demand over the next 5 to 10 years.

Digital Skills

| Digital business skills | Ability to work virtually | Understanding of corporate IT software and systems | Digital Design Skills | Ability to use social media |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 50.6% | 44.9% | 40.1% | 35.2% | 29.3% |

Source:Oxford Economics

Fig. 3: Agile thinking skills

| Ability to consider and prepare for multiple scenarios | Innovation | Dealing with complexity and ambiguity | Managing paradoxes and balancing opposing views | Ability to see the big picture |
|--|------------|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 54.8% | 46.0% | 42.9% | 40.9% | 15.3% |

Source: Oxford Economics

Fig. 4: Interpersonal and communication skills

| Co-creativity and brainstorming | Relationship building with customers | Teaming | Collaboration | Oral and written communication |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 48.3% | 47.4% | 44.9% | 30.4% | 29 % |

Source: Oxford Economics

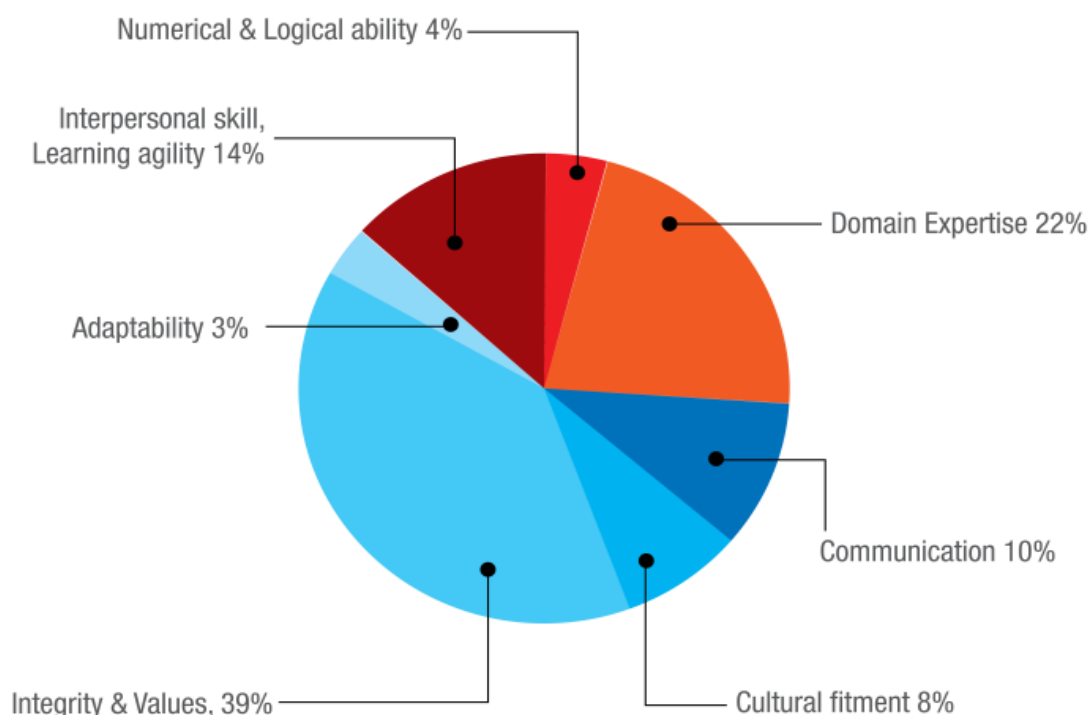
Fig.5: Global operating skills

| Ability to manage diverse employees | Understanding international markets | Ability to work in multiple overseas locations | Foreign language skills | Cultural Skills |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 49.1% | 45.7% | 37.5% | 36.1 % | 31.5% |

Source: Oxford Economics

Fig.6: Employability Skills

SKILLS DESIRED BY EMPLOYERS



Source:Job-market-India-2015-an-essential-report

From the graph above in Fig.6, it can be seen that huge importance is given by industry to soft skills such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, etc which are given minimal importance in the current higher education institutes. Thrust must be given to these areas in higher education by making the courses more hands-on.

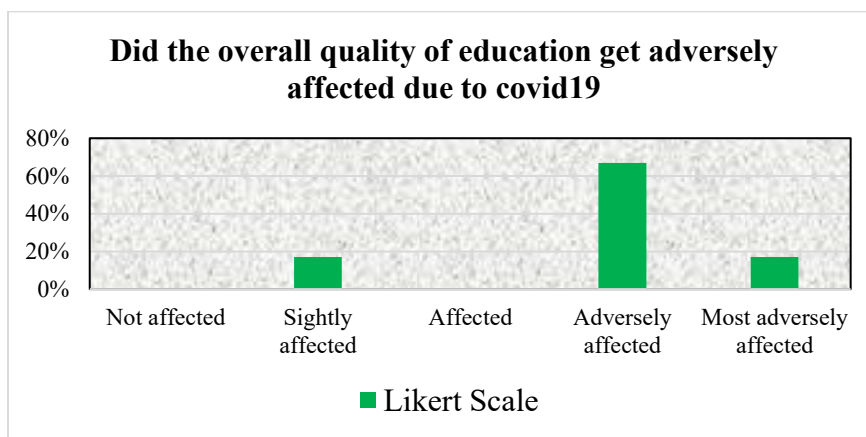
A student perspective on challenges faced during and after covid:

To understand the impact of covid on the overall effectiveness of delivery of lectures, assignments, and activities in the effective delivery of education during and after covid crisis, we have conducted a survey on students across different disciplines in Osmania university. We have delivered a short questionnaire to students and we have received a total of 184 valid responses The questionnaire was sent in multiple methods such as SMS, WhatsApp, and paper-based. The results of the questionnaire are discussed in detail below.

1. Did the overall quality of education get adversely impacted due to covid19?

We used a Likert scale of 5 with 5 being most negatively affected and 1 least affected. Of the 184 students, 17% chose 5 which is most negatively affected while 67% selected 4 which is negatively affected. A total of 154 i.e.,84% of the students feel that the quality of education has been adversely affected due to covid19. Nobody felt that covid19 has not affected education during covid19.

Fig.7: Overall quality of education on Likert Scale

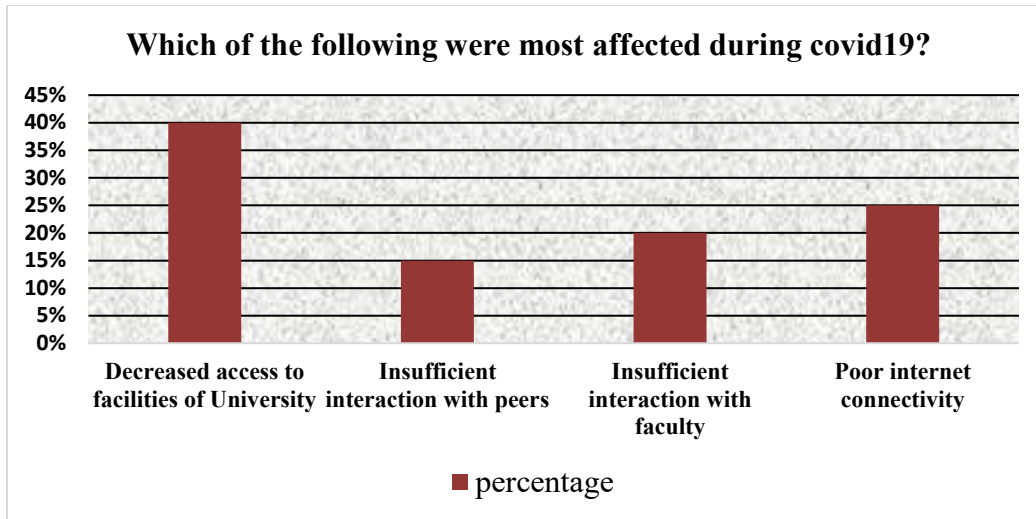


Source: Author

2. “Which of the following are most affected during covid19?”

For these 74 students,i.e.,40% of the students said that decreased access to university facilities was the most important factor that was affected followed by poor internet connectivity at 25% and insufficient interaction with faculty at 20%.

Fig.8

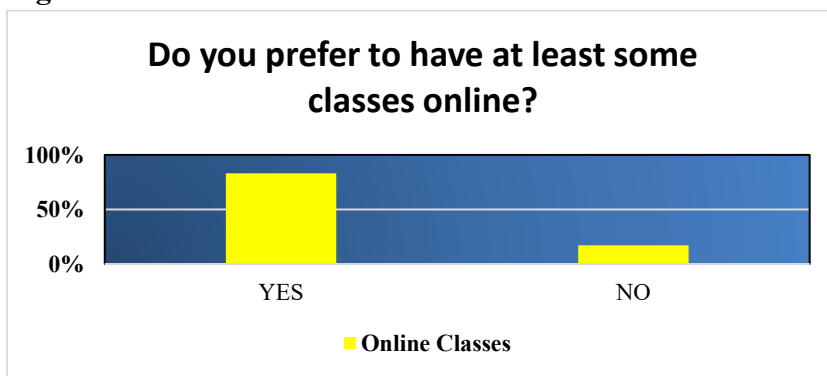


Source: Author

3. **“Do you prefer to have at least some classes online?”**

For this question, a whopping 83%, 153 students said yes.

Fig. 9:

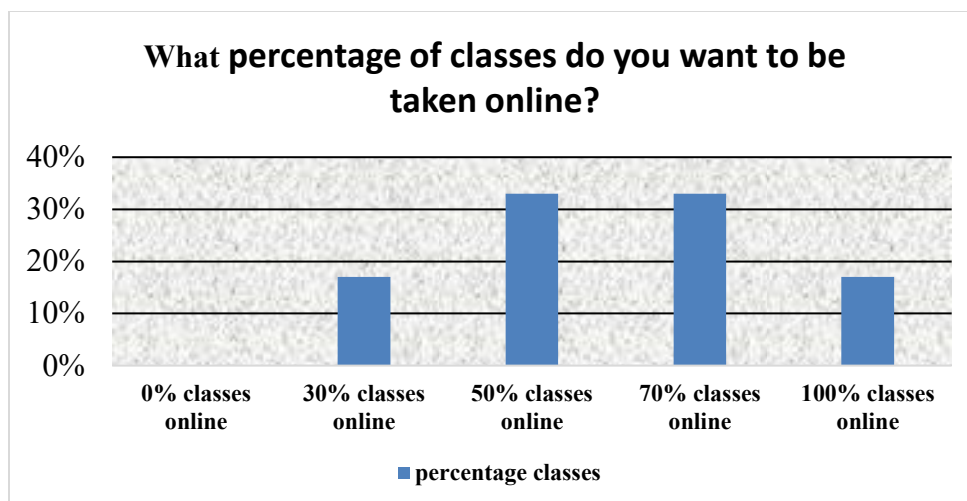


Source: Author

4. **On further asking “what percentage of the classes would you prefer online?”**

17% of the students preferred to have 100% classes online while 33% preferred to have 70% classes online. So, a total of 50% i.e., 92 students preferred to have 70% or more classes online. Another 33% of the students preferred 50% classes online. Nobody wanted to have 100% in-classroom teaching.

Fig.10



Source: Author

Major Observations from the student survey

1. Students feel that overall education during covid is adversely affected. They flagged lack of university facilities and poor internet connectivity as the main reasons.
2. From the above two questions students on the one hand have overwhelmingly said that the education during covid is adversely affected but on the other hand a vast majority still preferred the online mode of delivery of classes. This seems contradictory but the most reasonable explanation would be the flexibility of location and freedom to work while studying that online classes offer to be the reason for students preferring online classes while they do feel the shortcoming of lack of access to resources in the university such as the library, direct interaction with faculty, etc.

Need for foreign investment in Indian Higher Education

FDI in higher education will solve the problem of enrolment rate as we are in a situation of less supply high demand. Indian money and talent going abroad would be arrested to some extent. Infrastructure will improve in higher education will improve as the foreign universities will build their campuses as per international standards tried and tested in their countries. The ensuing competition would induce the homegrown Indian universities to become more competent by improving their infrastructure, method of imparting education, up-gradation of curriculum to keep abreast with the changing requirements of the industry. Moreover, FDI in education would generate immense employment opportunities.

Integration of Universities and Industries :

By keeping in view, the intensified global knowledge economy, there is a need for strategic partnerships between the universities and industry that go beyond the customary funding of discrete research projects. Their partnership will work well when the research-driven university work in coordination with the innovation-driven environment of the company.

Fig 11: Enrollment of Indian Students by fields of study

| Field | Number ('000) | Total % |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Arts | 7,539 | 37% |
| Science | 3,790 | 19% |
| Commerce & Management | 3,571 | 18% |
| Engineering & Technology | 3,262 | 16% |
| Education | 733 | 4% |
| Medicine | 716 | 4% |
| Law | 373 | 2% |
| Others | 218 | 1% |
| Agriculture | 97 | 0% |
| Veterinary Science | 28 | 0% |
| | 20,327 | 100% |

Source:International Journal of Academic Research ISSN: 2348-7666; Vol.3, Issue-2(2), February 2016

Initiatives taken in the Higher Education

Attracting foreign universities to establish institutes in India:

One of the recommendations of UGC is that foreign universities should be encouraged to offer their programs in India. On behalf of GOI, there are several schemes which are offered by various regulatory bodies concerned with higher education. These schemes support the bilateral exchange of academic staff from India to foreign countries. Moreover, international institutions such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP are also offering similar programs. All these are aimed at bilateral transactions and aimed at Quality enhancement.

Global Initiatives for Academic Network (GAIN): Approved by Union Cabinet in Higher Education:

Union Cabinet has approved a program titled **Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN)** in Higher Education aimed at tapping the talent pool of scientists and entrepreneurs internationally to encourage their collaboration with the institutes of Higher Education in India. GIAN will initially include the participation of foreign faculty in Institutes as Distinguished / Adjunct / Visiting faculty / Professors of Practice, etc., to participate in delivering Short or Semester-long Courses.

New Education Policy (NEP) 2020:

The Government of India has come up with NEP with the aim to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035 and increase public sector investment in the education sector to 6% of GDP.

Way Forward/ Suggestion:

1. The States must come up with a new vision and programs specifically addressing the needs of the State, its industry, economy, social setup.
2. Collaboration between higher institutes in India and abroad must be given more emphasis so as to enable the exchange of students, best practices, and knowledge sharing.
3. To enable diffusion of knowledge among research various research institutes in India, collaboration and inter-institutional research have to be encouraged to avoid reinventing the wheel, save resources, and achieve higher productivity and progress.
4. Government must promote an alliance between Indian higher education institutes and top international institutes and also generate liaisons between national research laboratories and research centres of top institutions for standard and synergic research.
5. There should be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education so that students develop rounded knowledge and personality.
6. Pedagogy must be improved through the following ways:
 - a. Increase the teacher training days and the frequency of training.
 - b. Establish teacher training institutes to cater to the existing and new faculty for training.
 - c. Collaborate with premier institutes in India such as the IITs and IIMs for teacher training.
7. Improving the quality of all Universities irrespective of Public or Private.
 - a. Stringent implementation of UGC norms will help improve the quality.
 - b. Many private institutes have mushroomed without basic infrastructure and facilities. These must be made to adhere to the norms failing which punitive measures need to be taken.
8. Need to create standard and qualitative education infrastructure to grab futuristic jobs.
9. Ensure that education policy is fully integrated into larger economic growth strategies.
 - a. Government should facilitate and enforce concrete integration of higher education with industry by making an internship mandatory. Incentives must be provided by the government to the industry for giving internships to students. This will boost the industry-higher education integration and will be a win-win as the industry can make a full-time offer to the interns and students can get real-life work experience for future job searches.
 - b. A percentage of classes conducted for the various higher education courses must be reserved for industry professions. This will not only foster stronger engagement of industry with higher education but also helps knowledge sharing on current issues faced in the industry and the best practices.

10. Move rapidly to develop new forms of digital and automation-enabled training programs.
11. Develop and promote investment policies that encourage foreign direct investment and curtail long-term unemployment.

Conclusion

Higher education is the pipeline of manpower resources for all economic activity and the quality of output from the higher education institutions will determine the present and future economic growth and prosperity. It is indispensable that higher education has continuously evolve in tandem with the rapidly changing requirements of the industry in terms of knowledge and skill required. Indian higher education sector is fraught with many issues in terms of quality of education imparted, methodology of delivery, and the skills imparted. Apart from catering to industry, higher education also has to be accessible to all sections of society and to different geographies. Expansion of higher education sectors in terms of quality, as well as volume, is the need of the hour. While the government has made many efforts to expand the capacity of higher education such as attracting premier foreign higher education institutes, expanding Indian institutes and bringing about changes in UGC norms, etc, a lot more needs to be done to reform the higher education sector in India.

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Task-readiness framework: Schematic familiarity and written performance

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Abstract

The shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred pedagogy has resulted in an increased interest in assessing performance of second language learners in India. Several studies have reported the effects of task-planning conditions and performance of learners while working on speaking tasks. However, research in the use of task-planning conditions and written performance of second language learners is scanty. This study, based on the Task-readiness framework (Bui, 2014) and the pedagogic principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) investigates the effect of schematic familiarity on the written performance of Indian ESL learners of Class VIII. Three task types—personal information exchange, narrative, decision-making—were used to assess the performance of thirty-five participants. Written performances of the sample were statistically analysed for complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). Findings of the study indicate that schematic familiarity affected CAF and presented evidence of trade-offs with accuracy as the forerunner for attention between the three variables of performance.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, Task-readiness Framework, L2 writing, CAF

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Indian educational context, guidelines of the National Curriculum Framework (2005) emphasize on a need to produce learners who are effective users of the language and suggest a reorientation towards measurement of language proficiency, and state that Language evaluation need not be tied to "achievement" with respect to particular syllabi but must be reoriented to the measurement of language proficiency. Evaluation is to be made an enabling factor for learning rather than an impediment. We really wish children to read and write with understanding. Language—as a

constellation of skills, thought encoders and markers of identity—cuts across school subjects and disciplines. Speech and listening, reading and writing, are all generalised skills, and children's mastery over them becomes the key factor affecting success at school. (p. 40)

This invites an evaluation of learner performance as it is an external determinant of language acquisition. 'Success at school' is usually measured through the written performance of learners in an examination conducted at the end of the academic year. However, factors that affect learner performance or limit their linguistic proficiency are seldom looked into. In other words, the cognitive aspects involved in the production of a written discourse are rarely researched. In order to identify factors that affect learners' written performance, this study investigates the cognitive processes, chiefly with reference to the planning conditions, adopting the principles of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT).

The proponents of TBLT (Bui, 2014; Branden, 2009; Ellis, 2009; Nunan, 2006; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 2014; Oxford, 2016) propose that tasks are effective tools that promote learning by enabling learners to explicitly focus on meaning, resulting in an implicit focus on form as well. Further, the efficacy of tasks, in a language classroom, has been proved by widespread empirical research. This study draws its theoretical base from the Limited Attentional Capacity Model (Skehan, 1996) which suggests that limitations in attention and working memory of learners constrain performance. Further, as a potential solution to ensuring optimum performance in the classroom, the study adopts the broader framework of Task-readiness and employs different task types in combination with time planning conditions in order to investigate the effect of preparedness in learners to combat their limited attentional issues.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A cognitive perspective to language production involves understanding the psychological processes involved while performing a task. As English is not a native language of the learners, it is possible that learners find it difficult to cope with task demands leading to poor performance (Skehan, 1998, 2014). The information processing models, and, models of speech (Levitt, 1989) and written (Kellogg, 1996) production offer clearer insights in this domain. The models of speech and written production, which account for learner production of language, are largely similar and emphasize that a parallel processing ability would consequently lead to smooth, error-free and effective communication in both skills. However, every task is different and exhibits its own characteristics (such as task design features and task implementation factors), and each task is likely to affect performance in different ways.

According to Skehan (1996), during task performance attention gets compromised in such a way that 'trade-offs' occur between various aspects of performance viz. complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). As a result, a learner is most likely not be able to devote equal attention to CAF, consequently resulting in poor performance. Skehan avers that it is not only essential to

understand the difficulty level of a task but also to explore methods of overcoming the attentional limitations which could eventually enable effective design of tasks to manipulate learner’s attention between form and meaning.

According to the tenets of the Limited Attentional Capacity model, planning—an unobservable activity—is a construct in speaking and writing skills that enable learners overcome their limited attentional capacities as it provides them time for task performance. Ellis (2005) proposes different types of planning conditions viz. pre-task planning (strategic and rehearsal) and within-task planning (pressured and unpressured). For all the planning conditions, the participatory structure usually comprises the conventional individual/group/with the teacher. Ellis (2009) later revised his categorization and proposed rehearsal as a separate form of planning condition instead of the earlier framework where strategic planning subsumed rehearsal as well. Taking it forward, Bui (Bui, 2014; Bui & Huang, 2018; Bui & Teng, 2019) argues that in conventional planning conditions, the focus is on time allotted for task performance (before or during a task) and only involves preparation time. Further, extending this conventional notion of planning, Bui proposes the concept of ‘readiness’ which may have an impact on production. Planning is, therefore, seen as an element which offers “readiness” as an external factor because time could easily be manipulated to achieve the required results. Time and task are independent of each other in this context. Bui (2014) expands the time component in Ellis’s planning framework and categorises it as task-external readiness. He, further, introduces an element of natural preparedness which is inherent in a task and presents a framework of task-readiness, comprising internal and external readiness components.

2.1 The Task-Readiness Framework

According to Bui (2014), there exists a difference between “readiness” and “preparedness”. Readiness is a case where the speaker has some connection or relationship with what is said. This could come from the relevance of the task. On the other hand, preparedness is where information to be conveyed does not particularly relate to the speaker’s previous life or experience. Bui states that there exist several inbuilt features (outlined in Table 1) in a task which add to its “readiness” quotient.

Table 1

A framework of Task-readiness (Bui 2014)

| Macro-dimension | Micro-dimension | Sample Studies |
|-----------------|---|----------------|
| | Topic familiarity (prior subject knowledge) | Bui (2014) |

| | | |
|---|--|------------------------|
| Task-internal readiness (implicit planning) | Schematic familiarity (structural or procedural knowledge) | Skehan&Foster (1999) |
| | Task Familiarity (task types) | Bygate (2001) |
| | Task repetition (content repetition without awareness of future performance) | Bygate (2001) |
| | | |
| Task-external readiness (explicit planning) | Rehearsal (repetition with awareness of future performance) | Bei (2013) |
| | Strategic Planning (pre-task preparation) | Foster & Skehan (1996) |
| | Within-task planning (online preparation) | Yuan & Ellis (2003) |

With regard to the first macro-dimension of task-internal readiness, topic familiarity (prior knowledge which an individual possesses of a specific area or discipline such as medicine or history or electrical engineering) is believed to facilitate the completion of a task if the task is based on or has potential to exploit such knowledge. Similarly, schematic familiarity, which refers to structural or procedural knowledge of how things are done generally, eases the pressure of task completion. Therefore, when a task exploits available schema, it is likely to affect performance in one way or the other. In case of task familiarity, the aim is to determine whether there exists a practice effect on performance of the learners from one task to the other. The tasks in this case may belong to the same type but have a different topic. The last dimension i.e. task repetition involves learners performing a task without prior knowledge that they would be required to do the same task in future. The planning conditions, incorporated under task-external readiness dimension, have already been discussed in the previous section.

Thus, categorising task-readiness under two macro-dimensions (task-internal readiness and task-external readiness), Bui (2014) states that, it is the “degree of naturalness or rather the degree of ad hoc manipulation of the task preparation” which differentiates the two from each other. Task-internal readiness is, thus, inherent with more natural type of readiness as the task itself has potential for preparation, whereas, task-external readiness is comparatively less natural because it involves external factors imposed upon the learners. Overall, the general findings on task-readiness conditions report that the framework can “facilitate learners to overcome the limitations of their working memory and achieve more balanced CAF performance” (Bui & Teng, 2019). Although there is ample research evidence on spoken performance, the domain of analysing written

performance, within the limited classroom time available to learners, has remained under-researched in the Indian context. Thus, the present study explores this research gap at the school level and investigates factors which affect written performance in actual classroom context.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND QUESTIONS

The study employed three task types—personal information exchange (PIE), narrative (N), decision-making (DM)—as these are directly based on real world communicative acts which are replete with instances of individuals sharing their personal experiences, narratives, and often, contemplations on minor or major decisions. Placed within the micro-dimension of schematic familiarity, these task types reflect a sense of embedded naturalness which allow the learners to engage in an organic learning processes. Predominantly quantitative in nature, the study also includes a brief qualitative analysis of learner performance. The data has been analysed and interpreted statistically using ANOVA (Analysis of variance). The research questions for the study have been formulated around two independent variables viz. schematic familiarity (task-internal readiness component) and strategic planning (task-external readiness component). The dependent variables in the study are complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The study aimed at investigating the following:

1. Does schematic familiarity across task types have a significant effect on the written performance of ESL learners?
2. How do learners utilise strategic planning opportunities presented to them while engaged in written task performance?

4. METHODOLOGY

The main study was carried out on thirty-five students of class VIII at the entry level (aged between 14 and 15), from an English-medium school in Gujarat, India. Learner responses to the three task types served as the main tool for data collection: Personal Information Exchange (Appendix A), Narrative (Appendix B), and Decision-making (Appendix C) tasks comprising three sub-tasks each, thereby making it a total of nine tasks for the participants. The Personal Information Exchange and Narrative tasks required the participants to respond in about 200-250 words while the Decision-making task required responses in about 100-150 words. Before any task performance, participants were briefed about the task demands with regard to time allotted and modalities of working on the tasks. Task-external readiness components were partly used with regard to time allotted for the tasks. The standard classroom time was forty minutes. Table 2, given below, shows the time protocol followed for the target tasks.

Table 2

Time protocol for tasks (in minutes)

| Task | Priming | Planning | Task |
|-------------|---------|----------|------|
| No planning | 5 | - | 25 |

| | | | |
|----------------------|---|----|----|
| Within-task planning | 5 | - | 35 |
| Strategic planning | 2 | 10 | 15 |

The No planning and Within-task planning conditions are regular practices in the classrooms depending on when the teacher introduces a specific task. The study, thus, only focused on examining the effects of strategic planning to determine how learners utilized the opportunity. During this time, they were encouraged to write what they had planned to produce in the task. These slips of paper were then taken away from the participants before they actually started writing for the main task to ensure that the language produced for the task was within the time allotted (Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Each participant's script was analyzed based on the tripartite structure of CAF. For complexity, analysis of the texts was carried out by determining the different types of tenses used in the text as the tasks provided scope for use of different tense forms. Thus, complexity for the main study was calculated by counting the number of tense forms in the text divided by the total number of words multiplied by 100 (Ellis & Yuan, 2003). With regard to accuracy, incorrect verb forms and tenses were identified as errors while in case of lexis, incorrect spellings were taken as errors. Overall accuracy was calculated by counting the total number of errors divided by total number of words multiplied by 100 (Mehnert, 1998). For this study, fluency was calculated based on the overall meaning conveyed by the text. The text was considered to be fluent if the ideas represented in it were well-organized and coherent. A specific rubric to assess fluency in the written texts was designed wherein two broad sub-divisions viz. organization of the text and ease of communication, were created. Organization of the text comprised discourse structure, progression of ideas, links between the ideas, main idea and supporting details, and appropriate use of cohesive devices. On the other hand, ease of communication essentially assessed choice of language structures and use of appropriate vocabulary which made the text less "patchy" (adapted from Hughes, 1989).

Based on the scores obtained through the measures of performance variables, a one-way ANOVA was carried out on the data set for the dependent variables across all tasks.

Given the focus of the study, investigating the effect of schematic familiarity on CAF in writing, it was essential to determine if there existed such an effect on performance. Additionally, the aim was also to identify the most affected variable, if such an effect existed. Data based on the effect of each task type (PIE, N, DM) on the three performance variables has been presented individually in the following parts of this section.

Table 3 shows the overall scores of accuracy, fluency, and complexity on all tasks carried out in the study. The Mean and SD scores were calculated for all three performance variables.

Table 3*Descriptive statistics for effect of task types on CAF*

| | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Minimum | Maximum |
|-------------------|-------|-----|----------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| | | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| Accuracy | PIE | 105 | 88.3238 | 6.44198 | .62867 | 87.0771 | 89.5705 | 67.60 | 99.20 |
| | N | 105 | 86.1590 | 7.62403 | .74403 | 84.6836 | 87.6345 | 53.30 | 98.50 |
| | DM | 105 | 89.7981 | 6.09734 | .59504 | 88.6181 | 90.9781 | 74.00 | 99.10 |
| | Total | 315 | 88.0937 | 6.89573 | .38853 | 87.3292 | 88.8581 | 53.30 | 99.20 |
| Fluency | PIE | 105 | 74.4086 | 18.57177 | 1.81242 | 70.8145 | 78.0027 | 16.60 | 100.00 |
| | N | 105 | 63.7800 | 20.11351 | 1.96288 | 59.8875 | 67.6725 | 16.60 | 100.00 |
| | DM | 105 | 65.5190 | 22.94741 | 2.23944 | 61.0782 | 69.9599 | 16.60 | 100.00 |
| | Total | 315 | 67.9025 | 21.08026 | 1.18774 | 65.5656 | 70.2395 | 16.60 | 100.00 |
| Complexity | PIE | 105 | 13.5652 | 4.56857 | .44585 | 12.6811 | 14.4494 | 2.45 | 28.30 |
| | N | 105 | 14.8344 | 4.57950 | .44691 | 13.9481 | 15.7206 | 2.10 | 25.50 |
| | DM | 105 | 21.0731 | 7.21251 | .70387 | 19.6773 | 22.4689 | 6.20 | 68.70 |
| | Total | 315 | 16.4909 | 6.47224 | .36467 | 15.7734 | 17.2084 | 2.10 | 68.70 |
| Total | PIE | 105 | 176.2976 | 26.41926 | 2.57826 | 171.1848 | 181.4104 | 93.80 | 218.20 |
| | N | 105 | 164.7734 | 27.81414 | 2.71438 | 159.3907 | 170.1562 | 92.40 | 219.30 |
| | DM | 105 | 176.3903 | 30.41844 | 2.96854 | 170.5036 | 182.2770 | 99.90 | 235.40 |
| | Total | 315 | 172.4871 | 28.70051 | 1.61709 | 169.3054 | 175.6688 | 92.40 | 235.40 |

5.1 Effects of Personal Information Exchange tasks on CAF

From table 3, it is seen that the Mean \pm SD for accuracy is 94.7 (M=88.3, SD=6.4), for fluency is 92.9 (M=74.4, SD=18.5), and that for complexity is 18 (M=13.5, SD=4.5). Based on these scores, it can be noted that among the three dependent variables, accuracy appears to have been the most affected. Although there is a slight difference between the scores on fluency and accuracy, there exists a larger difference between the scores on complexity and the other two variables. The findings indicate that participants paid more or less same attention to accuracy and fluency (46 and

45 percent) but minimum (9 percent) to complexity. Therefore, it can be inferred that the students seem to have focussed their attention most on accuracy and least on complexity while performing the task. In other words, accuracy was prioritized over fluency and complexity.

5.2 Effects of Narrative tasks on CAF

From Table 3 it is seen that the Mean \pm SD scores for accuracy is 93.7 (M=86.1, SD=7.6), for fluency is 83.8 (M=63.7, SD=20.1), and for complexity is 19.3 (M=14.8, SD=4.5). Based on these scores, accuracy appears to have a much greater score as compared to the other two variables. The difference between accuracy and fluency is considerable. In terms of complexity, the difference between the scores is even greater than that in the case of fluency. Clearly, complexity emerges as the least affected performance variable. The analysis shows that the participants allocated least attention to complexity (10 percent) as compared to accuracy and fluency (48 and 42 percent). It can clearly be seen that accuracy was prioritized over fluency and complexity to a great extent.

5.3 Effects of Decision making tasks on CAF

From Table 3, it is seen that the Mean \pm SD scores for accuracy is 95.7 (M=89.7, SD=6), for fluency is 88.4 (M=65.5, SD=22.9), and for complexity is 28.2 (M=21, SD=7.2). In this case, the scores above indicate a greater effect on accuracy as compared to the other two variables. Complexity appears to be the least affected while in terms of fluency, the score indicates a moderate effect as the difference between accuracy and fluency is not much. Findings of the study show that 45 percent attention was allocated to accuracy, 42 percent to fluency, and 13 percent to complexity. Based on the individual analysis of the effect of each task type, accuracy appeared to be the most affected variable, followed closely by fluency, and then complexity.

5.4 Effect of Schematic familiarity on CAF in writing

With regard to schematic familiarity, the study found an extremely significant effect (Table 4 below) at $p < .05$ level for accuracy [$F(2,312) = 7.715$, $p = .001$], fluency [$F(2,312) = 8.023$, $p = .000$] and complexity [$F(2,312) = 54.199$, $p = .000$] on all three task types.

Table 4

Overall scores showing effect of schematic familiarity on CAF

| ANOVA | | | | | | |
|------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Accuracy | Between Groups | 703.583 | 2 | 351.792 | 7.715 | .001 |
| | Within Groups | 14227.464 | 312 | 45.601 | | |
| | Total | 14931.047 | 314 | | | |
| Fluency | Between Groups | 6825.506 | 2 | 3412.753 | 8.023 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 132708.952 | 312 | 425.349 | | |
| | Total | 139534.458 | 314 | | | |
| Complexity | Between Groups | 3391.553 | 2 | 1695.776 | 54.199 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 9761.854 | 312 | 31.288 | | |
| | Total | 13153.406 | 314 | | | |
| Total | Between Groups | 9371.842 | 2 | 4685.921 | 5.865 | .003 |
| | Within Groups | 249276.034 | 312 | 798.962 | | |
| | Total | 258647.876 | 314 | | | |

6. INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

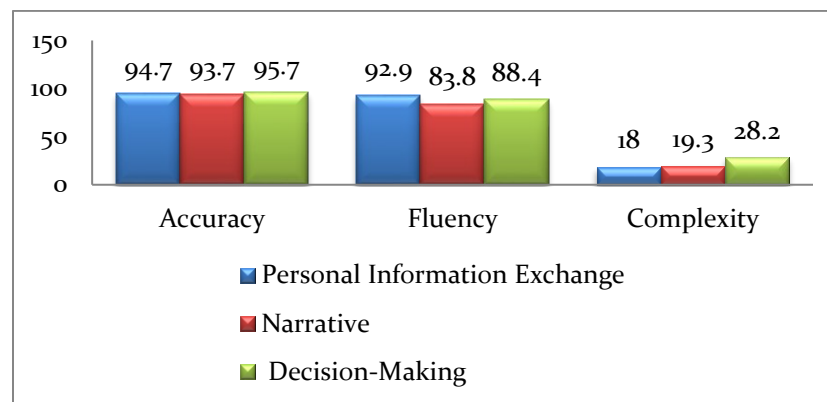
The study aimed to determine the effect of schematic familiarity, on written performance of ESL learners in terms of three performance variables—complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The findings and results of the study have been presented as responses to the two research questions, posited in the study.

RQ1: Does schematic familiarity across task types have a significant effect on the written performance of ESL learners?

In response to the above stated research question, a cumulative assessment (data drawn from Table 5) of CAF scores under all three task types is represented in the bar graph below (Figure 1).

Figure 1

CAF scores under all three task types



It can be seen that there is a huge difference between the scores acquired on complexity as compared to the other two variables in all three task types. On the other hand, there exists a considerable but not large difference between the scores of accuracy and fluency. From the graph, it is seen that the score for accuracy was the greatest for the Decision-making task when compared to the Personal Information Exchange and Narrative tasks. Accuracy was lowest for the Narrative task. The scores of accuracy on all three task types do not have a significant difference which clearly indicates that although there was a greater score on one of the tasks, accuracy, however, was the most affected and prioritized variable. With regard to fluency results, the greatest score was for the Personal Information Exchange task, followed by the Decision-making and Narrative tasks respectively. This means that it was in the Personal Information Exchange task that more attention was allocated on fluency as compared to the other two tasks. The results in case of complexity, indicate that Personal Information Exchange task was allotted the least attention followed by Narrative and Decision-making tasks. In other words, it means implies that from among the three tasks complexity was prioritized the most in the Decision-making task. Taken together, to answer the first research question, it is seen that task-internal readiness components impacted performance on written tasks. Statistically speaking, the results report a significant effect of schematic familiarity on CAF in writing.

RQ 2: How do learners utilize strategic planning opportunities presented to them while engaged in written task performance?

With regard to utilizing strategic planning opportunities, it was found that, for the Personal Information Exchange task, eight students started writing the actual content for the main task, and twenty-seven wrote ideas in terms of content and organizational heading. Among the twenty-seven students, one wrote down ideas as well as specific vocabulary to be used in the task while the others noted down ideas for the task. Similarly, for the Narrative task, two participants wrote the elements of a story, and the remaining thirty-three wrote down ideas in terms of content. Finally, for the Decision-making task, five participants wrote about how they intended to organize their answer, while the remaining thirty wrote down main ideas for the task. A quick overview of the responses indicate that attentional resources seem to have been directed more towards achieving fluency, and, the least towards complexity.

The theoretical framework in the study was drawn, in the form of a potential issue-solution combination, from the Limited Attentional Capacity Model and the Task-readiness framework. On one hand, it aimed at determining whether trade-offs between the performance variables occur in writing, and, on the other, the study employed the use of familiar task types to investigate the effect of schematic familiarity on written performance. The basic premise of the Limited Attentional Capacity Model is that the task conditions should favour a need to allocate attention due to the complexity of the tasks. Moreover, it is important that the cognitive level of tasks is appropriate for the learner level. Thus, all three tasks under each task type were considerably equal in terms of the cognitive challenge they posed. Therefore, the three tasks each under Personal Information Exchange, Narrative, and Decision-making task types laid an equal cognitive demand. Based on the results acquired, it is seen that accuracy and fluency were the highest for the Personal Information Exchange task with a score of 94.7 and 92.9 respectively. This task type had three tasks which aimed at the learners sharing their experience of a recent trip or a birthday party which they had attended, describing their favourite person, and sharing details about their favourite festival. In line with empirical findings on oral performance (Foster & Skehan, 1996; 1997), it is said that tasks requiring a transaction of familiar information from the learner leads to raised accuracy and fluency. The task used in the study required learners to access their schema, retrieve, arrange, and present information in an organized manner. As the task in itself contained some sort of macrostructure, it made it easier for the learners.

The findings on accuracy, fluency, and complexity are in line with Skehan's observations (1998) that structured information leads to greater accuracy and fluency while the converse produces more complexity. In the case of Narrative tasks, a similar conclusion can be drawn as the scores for accuracy and fluency are higher than complexity. Although in all three task types, accuracy scores were the highest; if one were to examine only complexity scores on all three tasks one would find that complexity has been the most affected in the Decision-making task as compared to the other two tasks.

Again in line with empirical findings on oral performance (Prabhu, 1987; Foster & Skehan, 1996), it has been observed that situations which demand transformation of information lead to raised complexity. Moreover, a result of increased complexity leads to a decreased effect on

accuracy and fluency. Thus, for the purpose of this study, these findings apply only partially if complexity is to be seen within the three task types. With a score of 28.2 on the Decision-making task as opposed to 18 and 19.3 on the Personal Information Exchange and Narrative tasks respectively, it can be inferred that complexity was most prioritized when the learners had to build new information and present them in an organized manner in the Decision-making task. It must be noted at this point, that the three tasks under the Decision-making task type resulted in argumentative writing. An overview of the activities presented in their textbook revealed that the participants were accustomed to such a style of writing. An argumentative piece of writing requires taking a stand or expressing one's opinion and then supporting it with relevant points. In this case, unlike the other two task types, the learners were unable to use readily available knowledge combined with language techniques. This is probably because the Decision-making tasks by themselves did not require them to retrieve information from their schemata. Although there was some amount of reliance on their own value systems, the learners did not have access to information which could directly help them in task completion. The learners were involved in a process of crafting responses to the given task by creating newer content. The task appeared to be less predictable as compared to the other two task types and hence made it less susceptible for the learners to use previously developed communication strategies.

With regard to the use of strategic planning opportunities, the objective was to identify language-related output created by the learners to aid task completion. For the study, the participants were not pre-trained on how to plan for any of the tasks as this was an exploratory study, which aimed at examining the phenomenon as it existed. Any guidance on planning in this matter would have affected the data collection.

On all the tasks, there are reported effects of a greater attention allotted to accuracy as compared to fluency and complexity. An inclination towards accuracy could be because the sample group for this study were not advanced users of the language. Learners at this stage usually do not take risks in writing and are more likely to be drawn to accuracy because they would rather use language that they are sure of instead of using that which is not well-known to them. A need to adhere to the target language norms and to be 'correct' could also be a reason for higher attention allocated to accuracy. Along these lines, a lower score on complexity is understandable because learners at the lower levels of proficiency as stated before, are not risk-takers; hence they would prefer to stick to applying language which they are comfortable with. Another explanation is that as these learners are quite young, it is possible that due to the time allotted for tasks their interlanguage system was pressurized but not enough to cause restructuring during performance. They therefore, refrained from using more elaborate language. The result of such conservative strategy has possibly led to a greater reliance on accuracy at the expense of complexity.

7. CONCLUSION

This study attempted to investigate the cognitive processes involved in the production of personal information exchange, narrative, and decision-making tasks. Findings of the study

indicate that a knowledge of the processes involved are beneficial to language teachers as they can design tasks that focus on the development of one or all three components viz. CAF so as to ensure effective performance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Personal Information Exchange tasks

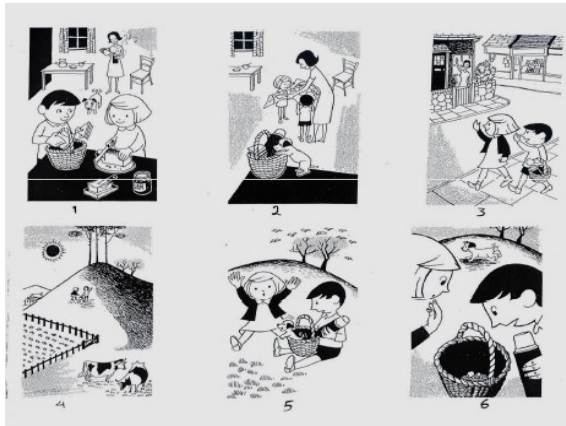
Describing your experience: Have you attended anybody's birthday party recently? Did you enjoy it? When was this? Who all were present? Recall as much as you can and describe the experience. Tell us why this is so special for you.

Favorite Person: Who is your favorite teacher or sportsperson or actor/actress? What do you know about this person? Which qualities in this person do you like the most? Why? Give us as many details as possible about the person who you admire/like the most.

Favorite Festival: Which is your favorite festival? Why? What are the things you do on this day? How do you celebrate it? Describe it in 150-200 words.

Appendix B: Narrative tasks

Under No-planning condition (adopted from Heaton, 1966)



Under Within-task planning (adopted from Heaton, 1975)



Under Strategic planning (adopted from Panchatantra)



Appendix C: Decision- making tasks

Cheating in the Exam: You find your best friend cheating in a mid-term examination. Your teacher does not notice him or her. In such a case what would you do? Would you report this to the teacher or keep quiet? For either of the options, justify your decision.

Buying a Birthday Gift: Your best friend's birthday is in the last week of February. It is the end of the month and you do not have enough pocket money to buy him/her a birthday present. While walking back home you find a 500 rupee note on the footpath. You turn around and see that nobody seemed to have noticed the note lying on the ground. Would you pick it up to buy your friend the birthday gift? Would you ignore it and walk away? What would you do? Explain what you will do and justify why you would do that.

Being Late to the Class: At school, you have a very strict teacher who does not like students coming late to class. One day, on your way to school, you see an old lady making several attempts to cross the road, but in vain. A lot of people on the road see her attempts, but do not come forward to help her cross the road. In such a situation, what would you do? Would you help the lady cross the road and risk being late to class? Or would you just walk away to school in order to avoid being late? Explain what you will do and justify why you would do that.

Using Children's Literature to teach Reading and Writing: Strategies to counter Matthew Effect

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Abstract

Using children's literature in the ESL classroom can be both a challenging and a rewarding experience. While choosing your own materials to teach a language can involve considerable planning and designing, the outcome can be gratifying. It not only creates an appealing language experience but also encourages the students to imaginatively engage with the text and its characters. It also promotes the learning of varied sentence structures and vocabulary, while at the same time exposing them to heightened cultural knowledge. This paper uses the Matthew effects theory (the rich get richer/poor get poorer – Stanovich 1986) to explain the sources of poor reading and writing skills and to research-supported instructional strategies and interventional methods that helped in countering Matthew effects. In this article, I would like to explore the use of children's literature as an effective tool in impeding the Matthew effect. Bearing in mind, Brian Tomlinson, assertion that the most meaningful learning takes place when students are "involved intellectually, aesthetically, and emotionally" in their own education, the students were encouraged to engage with the text at multiple levels. The result was a comprehensive learning experience that created measurable advancement in the learning of language skills.

*Keywords:*Matthew effect, Interventional strategy, Supplementary Materials,Reading,Cognition

1.0Introduction:

Teaching writing is a challenge. The difficulties vary from a general reluctance to write longer pieces to uneven skills in writing. I also found that the size of the class matters considerably while trying to teach writing. The class I was dealing with consisted of 32 students in the age group of 10-11. Most of the students were able to communicate in English and had adequate speaking skills. However, a high percentage of students(79%) had serious difficulty with writing skills.

Since the medium of instruction was English, the inability to write effectively was adversely affecting the student performance in other subjects as well. To overcome this handicap the motivated students among the identified group were resorting to memorising the answers and reproducing it. Since the school in question – Rajghat Besant School, Krishnamurti Foundation India, Varanasi had written records of students’ performance and not merely a record of marks, I checked the performance of the students from class I to class V. That is when I realized that the underperformers had performed consistently badly from class I, while most of the 21% students who had excellent language skills were good performers from the beginning. It appeared to be a classic instance of the Matthew effects theory (Stanovich, 1986) which refers to a biblical parable in Matthew 25:29: “For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.” The students who performed well initially, got better, the weaker students got worse.

1.1 Over the initial week, I identified that the poor writing skills was mainly because the students had inadequate vocabulary and reading skills. The lack of adequate vocabulary appeared to be a direct consequence of severely restricted exposure to general reading. There was also significant individual differences in the comprehension of oral language, which proved challenging. Moreover, restricted vocabulary had an adverse impact on student participation in extension activities, like debates, presentations, role-plays and contributions to the school journal. Research on the role of participation in school activities, including leadership activities and sports has consistently linked it with future success, including better earning capacity in adulthood (Barron, Ewing, & Waddell, 2000; Eide & Ronan, 2001; Persico, Postiewaite, & Silverman, 2004; Kuhn & Weinberger, 2005; Stevenson, 2010; Weinberger, 2014). In fact, in an environment where English was used as the lingua franca, a handicap in the language could adversely affect the quality and quantity of engagement experienced by the students. “Participation in social, economic, and cultural life requires successful handling of written information, as written text contains not only facts and information but also ideas, values, and cultural content (Pfof et al., Artelt & Dörfler, 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2003). It was evident that there was a pressing need to introduce effective intervention strategies to enhance English language skills as well as metalinguistic abilities.

2.0 Matthew Effect:

The idea of *Matthew Effects* in reading – the widening achievement gap between good and poor readers is not a novel concept (Stanovich 1986, 2009; Walberg, & Tsai, 1983; Maximilian Pfof, John Hattie, Tobias Dörfler and Cordula Artelt, 2014). The framework provided by *Matthew Effect* places special emphasis on the effects of reading on cognitive development. Although extensive studies have been conducted on the correlation between good and poor readers and their performance in cognitive tasks (see, for example, Carr, 1981; DeSoto & DeSoto, 1983; Mitchell, 1982; Palmer, MacLeod, Hunt, & Davidson, 1985; Share, Jorm, Maclean, & Matthews, 1984; Singer & Crouse, 1981; Stanovich, 1982a, 1982b, 1986) the whole premise is fraught with difficulties arising from the inability to point out specific correlation between reading abilities and

cognitive skills, the cognitive locus of the difference, and inferring causation. However, there is enough empirical evidence on the existence of definite correlation between the two.

2.1 It is evident that the students who enter the primary school system do not come with the same prerequisites. While some students come from backgrounds that lay emphasis on rich and varied linguistic input, others come from homes, where they are only exposed to children's programme on television. While some parents read aloud to their children from early childhood, there were children who had never been read to.. When I collected statistics, it was evident that a majority of the students in class V did not have any exposure to stories, even fairy tales. The achievement gap between students who were exposed to multiple modes of linguistic input – conversational and literary – and the other students at the entry stage was predicted to widen without effective intervention.

3.0 Intervention strategies: To reduce the gap in language skills between the majority of the students and the minority of high performers, I had to immediately implement intervention strategies. According to the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP; www.ritap.org/rti/about/an-intervention-system.php), “effective interventions must be aligned with the core instructional program and focus on the specific needs of individual students as identified by effective assessment.” Planning an instructional programme that focus on specific needs of individual students was not viable at this stage. Firstly, there were too many students who required intervention and secondly, there was a time constraint, as I was also involved in teaching other classes. So I settled for a strategy which targeted the needs of a majority of the students. I planned a comprehensive strategy that involved teaching of listening, reading, writing and vocabulary^{xv}. The plan was to introduce students to a variety of children's books and stories and to encourage them to be independent readers. I set apart an afternoon exclusively for reading. In consultation with the Junior School librarian, I selected two dozen books for a special reading box for class V. The librarian created a reading corner with straw mats, colourful durries, throw cushions and low tables. I added a white board to this corner because I wanted to write down the difficult words that we encountered while reading.

3.1 The selection of supplementary reading materials, in this instance, children's literature was not an easy task. Most of the children's books available were by western authors and had cultural content that was unfamiliar to the students who were mostly from smaller towns of north India. The books published by the Children's Book Trust also proved to be unsuitable. The language did not have the components I was looking for and the production was also not very attractive. I was looking for stories that contained rich and authentic examples of English, yet it had to be written in a style that was accessible to students with very little exposure to literature. I was also looking for texts that had literary devices commonly found in children's literature such as repetition and cumulative content, rhyme, onomatopoeia, humour and suspense. I was also looking for stories with high quality of production and varied illustrative styles. Since I was planning a pre-reading activity based on the book cover and the illustration inside the work, I also selected books with illustrations that synchronise with the text to support children's understanding and to develop their

visual literacy. I picked up a selection of Indian and Western authors: Animal Ark stories R. K Narayan's *Swami and Friends*, Ruskin Bond's *The Blue Umbrella*, and a few stories from Panchatantra, Myths and Legends, Aesop's Fables and Fairy Tales.

3.1.1 The very act of physical distancing from the classroom, the comparative casualness of the reading corner specially created for them, the informal seating arrangement and the prospect of a whole afternoon "without studying" succeeding in creating a sense of excited anticipation. I followed the usual practise of a story-based methodology structured around the three stages of pre, while and post reading. The first story was from the Animal Ark collection. Pre-Reading Activities consisted of a) Generating prediction based on the cover picture and the title and b) Encouraging students to bring their own experiences with pet animals and c) Introducing key vocabulary needed for comprehension and encouraging students to figure out the meaning through illustrations and context.

3.1.2 The text chosen "*Kittens in the Kitchen*" was successful in engaging the attention of a multilevel class. The story of two children, roughly their age, struggling to save a few helpless kittens and their mother proved to be highly engaging. The simple language, manageable story length, the illustrations, and the drama succeeded in capturing and retaining the attention of every student. At the end of each session, we paused to discuss the difficult words we encountered. These words were written down on the white board and students were encouraged to guess the meaning from the context. I used the opportunity to encourage student to predict the trajectory of the story. While some students came up with implausible and far-fetched story lines, others proved remarkably adept at predicting what might happen. The reading was followed by post reading activities which consisted of vocabulary activities based on the words that we encountered while reading as well as a discussion. Students were encourage to bring their own experiences and share pictures of their pets. This was followed by a writing activity. Instead of the usual theme of "My Pet," the topic was "An adventure I had with ___" which the students were encouraged to read in the class. The creativity displayed by the students were remarkable. Realizing the significance of illustrations many students went on to include drawings while others included pictures or photographs cut out from newspapers or magazines. This pattern was repeated with all other literary works that was picked for the reading sessions. At the end of the year, the written works were collected together to make a folder. The best pieces were included in the school magazine.

4.0 "Children do not learn from demonstration by passively absorbing information. To learn, children must become engaged with the demonstration," observes Barrentine (1996, 38). To become "engaged with the demonstration" it is imperative that the students are motivated. The motivating factor in the project was the creation of individual folders. The students spent considerable time after the class creating folders, decorating them, illustrating their writing etc. The display of these folders on open school day drew considerable attention from parents, teachers and other students. The sense of achievement that the students experienced proved to be a huge motivating factor. Marion Williams and Robert Burden opine that motivation is a "state of cognitive arousal which provokes a "decision to act," as a result of which there is "sustained

intellectual and/or physical effort” so that the person can achieve some “previously set goal’ (Williams and Burden 1997:120). The collection of writing that the students saw growing in their folder pushed them to strive for greater achievements and they requested whether their class work can involve more compositions which they wanted to include in their folder. This request from a group of students, who initially displayed real reluctance to undertake any writing activity, was very encouraging. Also evident was a subtle change in the attitude towards learning and using English.

4.1 A corollary of this activity to further reading skills was an increased interest in individual reading. “Students will often be encouraged to read a particular book by hearing an amusing, exciting or stimulating extract read dramatically by the teacher” observes Tricia Hedge. While students with an advanced level of proficiency needed hardly any encouragement to pick up a book from the box, the rest of the students were not so enthusiastic about reading on their own. This reluctance was overcome to an extent by reading an engaging extract or an amusing anecdote from the books. Curiosity, that is natural to children ensured that they read the entire story. In this context I should acknowledge the contribution made by the students themselves. The initial selection of books for the reading corner was rather limited. I added to it based on student recommendation. I also encouraged the students to introduce the book and share with the class why they liked a particular book. I was careful not to make this mandatory because I was afraid that this might put off students who were reluctant to speak publically from sharing the books they liked.

5.0 Conclusion

The concept of a “Library Box” was successfully used in Malaysia in 1976 when the English Language Reading Programme (ELRP) was set up in 19 residential schools. By 1983 the number of schools involved in the programme had risen to 200. One crucial difference was that the Library Boxes used in ELRP had 50 readers rather than a collection of story books. This experiment had proved to be very successful in raising the English language proficiency of the students in Malaysia and has been duplicated in other countries. However, when the ELRP programme was evaluated in 1983, David Hill who was charged with the evaluation made a number of modifications. The use of a Library Box to enhance reading skills is a tried and tested method. The use of keeping a record of individual reading has also been found to be effective in encouraging proficiency in Reading. Adapting tested methods minimize the risk involved regarding the success of a programme. However, it is to be noted that any intervention strategy should take local conditions into consideration and the teacher should be willing to change the method accordingly.

The real test for any intervention activity is the possibility of continuing to build on the achievements. This can only happen with cooperation between the faculty and other stakeholders including parents and administrators. Intervention strategies often involve time, effort and money, and as every teacher knows, these are factors which often exist beyond her control. It is

imperative that the teacher gets the necessary support to undertake and implement intervention strategies to overcome language deficiencies that she encounters in the class

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ⁱ ‘The Varkari tradition drew upon both Shaiva and Vaishnav traditions. The Varkaris’ deity, Shri Vitthal of Pandharpur, iconographically combines Shaiva, Vaishnav and folk traditions in himself. He is identified with Krishna but has a Shivaling on his head’ (Vanita 51). Rukmini is the consort of Panduranga/Vitthal.

ⁱⁱ ‘The word *santa* (saint) in *Warkari* terminology is applied “to any pilgrim on his way to Pandharpur’ (Deleury 75). ‘So the company of the saints on the pilgrimage includes all the ordinary *Warkari* men and women as well as their present gurus-- that is, the entire living *Warkari* community of today’ (Deleury 16).

ⁱⁱⁱ All the *warkari* saints speak the same language i.e. Marathi and as per the research, no other language is found as per the texts of *Sant Gora Kumbhār* is concerned. As Karve puts it ‘All were Marathi- speaking people - coming from different castes, but singing the same songs, the same verses of the Varkari cult, speaking of each other, helping each other, singing songs of each other’ (Karve 22).

^{iv} ‘*Abhang* are the songs sung by the *warkaris*’ (Karve 22).

^v The written texts also mention another potter named Raka. ‘The Saint biographer Mahipatibuwa says that Raka Kumbhar belonged to Pandharpura and he was Gujarathi potter. He was originally from Gujarat, after some time his family may had moved to Pandharpur. He was supposed to be in the same period of Namdeva. Although his precise biography was not available, his devotion was so great that he should be included among all the other great devotees.’ (Gosavi 88)

^{vi} These are north Indian potters’ folk narratives collected (in an oral medium) from various parts of Haryana, Rajasthan, and Delhi and have no connection with the sainthood of Gorobā.

^{vii} The north Indian potters are either called *kumhār* or *Prajāpati*- which they use as their titles as well.

^{viii} Lord Hari is lord Brahma. People in the artisan communities are considered Hari’s kids in Indian pantheon. Hari/Brahma is the one who created the earth and gave birth to all the communities. Despite the caste division, the *kumhārs* of north India iterate in their folklore that ‘kumhar Brahma kesar par baithatha/kumhar has taken birth from Brahma’s head’ and this shows the subversion of these *kumhārs* from the typical ideology of Brahmans being at the top of caste hierarchy.

^{ix} ‘Their names and castes reflect almost the complete range of the populace of Maharashtra in the early 14th century...Gora the potter, who used to test the spirituality of the saints as “baked” or “half-baked...” (Mokashi 40).

^x ‘My Vithoba has many children — a company of children surrounds him. He has Nivritti sitting on his shoulder, and holds Sopan by the hand. Jnaneshwar walks ahead, and beautiful Muktai behind. Gora the potter is in his lap, and with him are Chokha and Jiva. Banka sits on his back, and Namdev holds his finger. Jani says, look at this Gopal who loves his bhaktas’ (Vanita 52).

^{xi} ‘The pilgrims go to Pandharpur singing the songs of the saint-poets and they feel that the saint- poets go with them. The living and the dead walk together, and all who join the pilgrimage join the company of the saints’ (Mokashi 38).

^{xii} ‘Eknath wrote,

God baked pots with Gora,

Drove cattle with Chokha,

Cut grass with Savata,

Wove garments with Kabir,

Colored hide with Rohidas,

Sold meat with the butcher Sajana,

Melted gold with Narahari,

Carried cow-dung with Janabai,

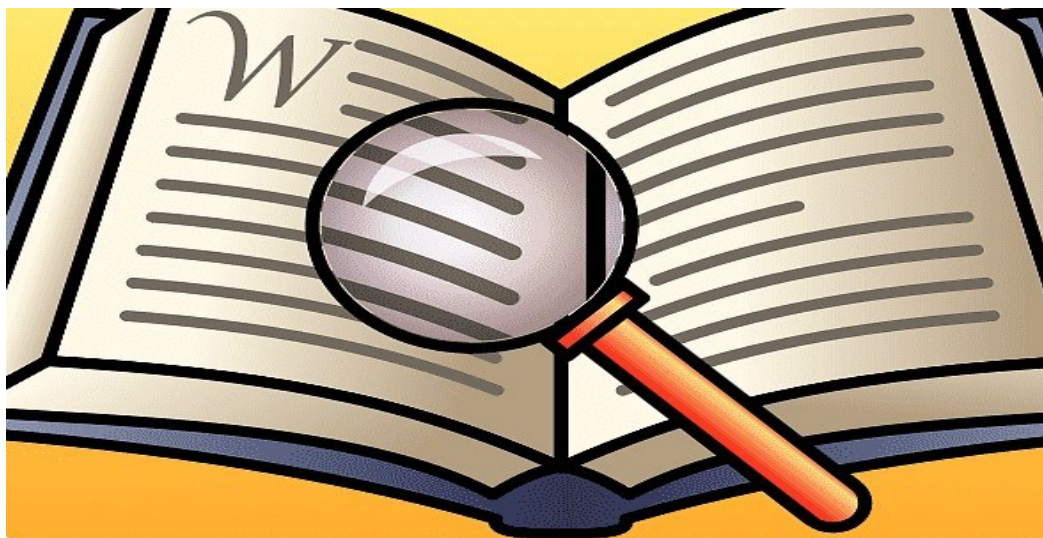
And even became a Pariah messenger for Damaji.’ (Mokashi 42)

^{xiii} Keshav Nagar, Pune is an example for the resettlement of the potters. This settlement was not deliberate but the government has given space to the potters and re-settled all Pune potters here.

^{xiv} The settlement of the potters in the *kumhār* colony was deliberate and not resettled by the government. They have been traveling from various villages in Haryana and Rajasthan and settling in the *kumhār* colony in Uttam Nagar, Delhi.

^{xv}The focus was on listening, reading writing and vocabulary because the students were fairly good at communicating in English because it was an English medium residential school. They also had an effective grasp of basic grammar.

BOOK REVIEWS



1.
Geetanjali

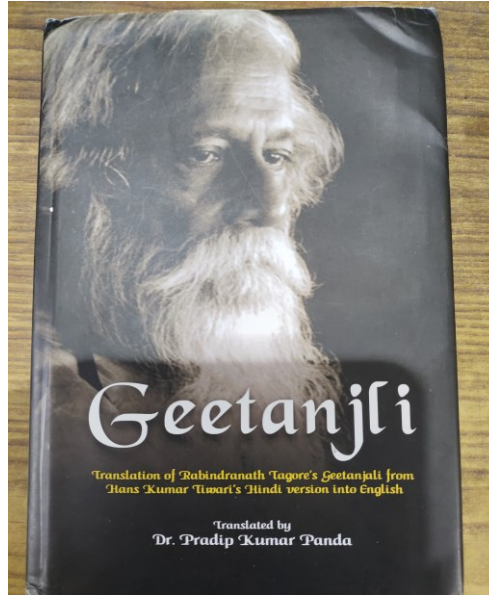
*Translation of Rabindranath Tagore's Geetanjali from Hans Kumar Tiwari's
Hindi version into English by
Dr. Pradip Kumar Panda*

Reviewed By

Dr. Hitesh Kumar Mishra

TGT ENGLISH

JAWAHAR NAVODAYA VIDYALAYA, Belpada, Bolangir



The translation work of Rabindranath Tagore's *Geetanjali* from Hans kumar Tiwari's Hindi version by Dr. Pradip Kumar Panda into English is a novel endeavour to explore the technicalities and methods of utilizing translation as a means to justify the highest form of poetry disseminating it to a wider readership. The work attempts in bringing communion with God the human form of the Almighty through words

drawn from a plane beyond mind. It is never so easy to accomplish a piece of translation of a poetry carrying such a stature written by a poet like Rabindranath Tagore. *Geetanjli* or “The Song Offerings” originally written in Bengali by the seer poet hooks a direct connection to the metaphysical world which involves intuition and it lacks proper words for translation into different languages other than the one in which it is written. However, the translation of *Geetanjli* by Dr. Pradip kumar Panda has taken care of both the intellectual as well as subtle aspect of the exquisite poetry twinning words quite appropriate to the thoughts expressed while having a conversation with God by the poet.

The First poem of the book is a gratitude offered to the Almighty for His grace to human beings. Tagore considers the human body as a frail vessel; God intermittently repairs its damaged and fills up it with fresh life. God is all master of Human being, he takes care of his subjects and solves all of their problems. In that way, man is made endless with the pleasure from God. And for that man must remain grateful to the grace of God. Tagore has tried to use similes and symbols of various orders to explain the beauty of an ethereal relation which is perennial in the ephemeral world substantiating his expression through poetry as a mode. The symbol of flute for human being is of a distinct order. God is a great flute player or a musician and the poet is considered to a flute. The breath paid through the flute comes as a melody and it is eternally new, it lasts forever. Tagore might have considered the poet, epitomising human race, as a flute and the poem comes out of his mouth as an eternal melody which is new forever. The poet reaches to an unspeakable plane about the characteristic of God. Every touch from God thrills the poet’s heart and it fills him with a sense of delight soaring him to a state of pleasure extreme to be expressed. Tagore says God’s infinite gifts come only to him, to his little hands. God will save him, protect him and bless him. He will be the same person even when the ages pass. God continues to pour his blessings to rooms of his hearts, but still, there is room to fill. God is omnipotent and omnipresent.

Tagore’s state of mind sometimes intimates his connection with God yet again throwing away from Him at times. He says God is with the poorest and the lowliest and the lost people. But again questions his presence saying “now I’m going to offer my life and bend down on your footstool”. The poet is living among the common people where he can see God. Here, the poet may be trying to explain that we can find God through the poorest, lowliest and the lost people. God won’t leave them

but definitely will help. Like a king rests his feet on a footstool, here poets tell God's footstools are the poor men themselves, He rests his feet among them. However, the belief oscillates between positivity and negativity of the Presence.

The poems in *Geetanjali* are so deep-rooted in expressing the relationship of God with the people that it makes the task of translating the poet's work to other languages a Herculean task. The poet has bowed down before God, his obeisance reaching down to the depth of God's feet before giving the gesture a form of language. The poet says, "People with ego can never reach God". God has worn the cloths of humbleness, and he walks among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost. If anybody wants to come closer to God in his life, he needs simply to remove the ego and get purified. God gives a meaning to life. The jargon becomes a solution with his grace. Sri Aurobindo in his epic poem *Savitri* writes, "Life is a paradox with God for key." In yet another line the seer poet writes, "A date is fixed in the calendar of Unknown" which quite resembles the idea of Tagore's expression of relationship with God.

Besides, Tagore's concept of Nationhood as a distinct space of living touches the height of humanism which is well depicted in his poems in *Geetanjali*. He believed in internationalism thinking the whole human race as one and a creation of God with common factors to live together as expressed by James Kirkup in his poem "No Men are Foreign". His concept of nationalism encompasses the mankind barring the limits of nationhood. He has always thought of India as a nation free from racial and religious orthodoxy actively seeking a common destiny with the rest of mankind, constantly evolving towards God achieving her spiritual destiny. So, he writes in one of his poems in *Geetanjali*:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way in the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forwarded by Thee in the ever widening thought and action;

Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake.

These lines expressed by the poet may not find an apt expression in any translation version.

Nevertheless, *Geetanjali* is a devotion to God. It focuses on the all-pervading presence of the Almighty everywhere and brings its readers into direct contact with the Infinite. The philosophical aspects of the poet and his unison with God are also perfectly imprinted in the anthology. The present translator of the collection of poems Dr. Pradip Kumar Panda has put his honest efforts to make it easier to understand and expedite a voyage for a wide range of readers.

2.

Life's Little Tales

By-B.N Patnaik

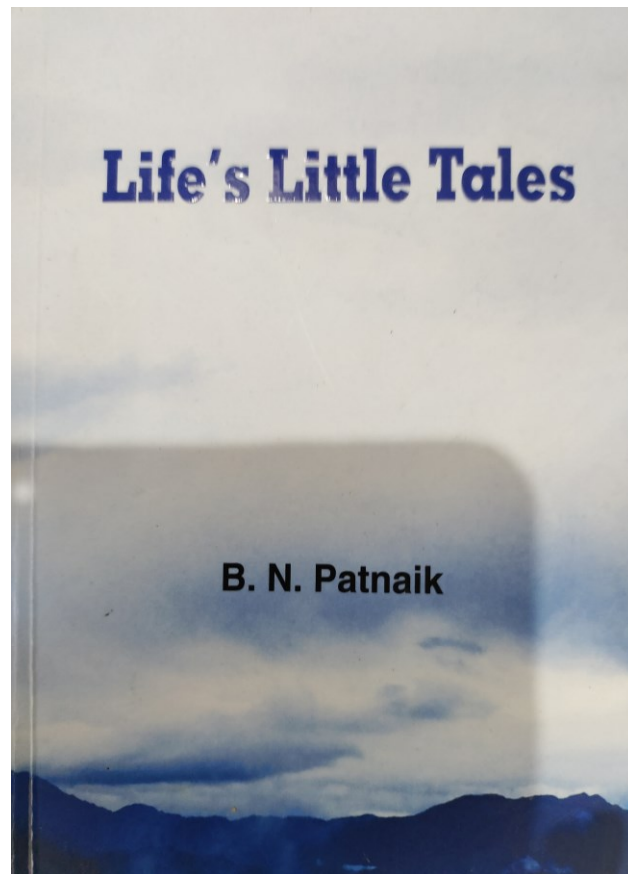
Shikshasandhan, Bhubaneswar, 2022.

ISBN-978-81-955752-0-6

Price-195 /

Pages-175

Reviewed by Dr Pramod Kumar Das



Introduction

The book *Life's Little Tales* consist of twenty one tales. These tales reflect various phases of the author's life as he has experienced it. These tales are autobiographical in nature written in casual and conversational narrative mode. The essays talk about the author's past and present, his childhood days, his growing of in the village in the Cuttack district of Odisha.

The author used to listen to stories during his childhood, met people and discussed various issues with them; read books –these infact provided the raw materials to compose such a fascinating book. The book consists of various themes ranging from *the Mohabharata* to the story of Alakshmi, from food to football, from speech to language and linguistics, from *bhuto upuri*, from retirement to death etc. The life of an individual is encompassed, encapsulated and illuminated in this magnificent composition.

From birth till death, an individual performs many roles and responsibilities; these are reflected in these tales. The world is a stage and we all are mere actor and actresses: Shakespeare.

The book consists of 21 chapters out of which four are dedicated to the theme related to the *Sarala Mohabharata*. They are: “The Great War at Kurukshetra”, “In Need of a Closure: The Story of Dhritarastra”, “Lockdown Ramblings on Sarala Mahabharata” and “Sahadeva Condition”. Three essays reflect themes related to women; “The Assertive Wife Wins Her Space”, “And the Offended Wife Has Her Sweet Revenge” and “The Story of Alakshmi”. Language related essays in the book are: “Right Speech”, “Bad Language”, “Honeyed Language”, “Dying Language”, “Thinking about Language and “Linguistics”. The author alma mater CIEFL is included as a chapter in the book. Food related chapters of the book include-“Dosa” and “Rasgola”. “The Hand of God Goal”; a chapter is dedicated to football. One chapter is dedicated to side income i.e. *upuri* (side income) the other culture of ours. One chapter is dedicated to *Bhuta* (ghost). The last two chapter of the book include “Of Retirement” and “Facing Death”.

Chapter wise Summary

Chapter-1

“The Great War at Kurukshetra”

This chapter talks about the great war at Kurukshetra and the events that led it to happen during the war and its planning before it. The author rightly mentions “one can’t plan anything taking destiny into account in one’s planning. Unpredictability is another name of destiny” (p-16). This can be connected to the present day war between Ukraine and Russia, how unpredictable it is.

Chapter-2

“In Need of a Closure: The Story of Dhritarastra”

As the title of the chapter suggests the story of Dhritarastra needed a closer. Patnaik rightly points out, “Humans are not gifted to live with uncertainty, unclarity, ambiguity and incoherence”. (P, 24)

Chapter-3

“Lockdown Ramblings on Sarala Mahabharata”

In this chapter Patnaik gives new perspectives on Bhima’s oath, Vidura’s silence, Dhritarastra’s anguish and the redemption of the Vasus. As he rightly mentions at the end of the chapter, “We will have to reconcile to these sad and depressing ends (because of life of unclarity, doubt and skepticism would be unbelievable) thinking that although (p, 37).

Chapter-4, 5, 6

“The Assertive Wife Wins Her Space”, “And the Offended Wife Has Her Sweet Revenge” and “The Story of Alakshmi”

The next three essays are women centric in nature, for example, in the chapter titled “The Assertive Wife Wins Her Space”, the wife’s demand for space in her family highlighted by using the narrative of *Lakshmi Purana*. The author rightly mentions: *Lakshmi Purana* is indeed a revolutionary composition; It is just contrary to the popular view, it embodies a protest primarily against the denial of space in the family to the devoted wife, committed to her husband’s family-unquestionably a very bold idea in the context of poet’s times. It is only secondarily against the caste-based discrimination in the society (p, 41).

In the essay titled “And the Offended Wife Has Her Sweet Revenge”, the author portrays different narratives of *Lakshmi Purana*, for example- “in the Rathayatra narrative, she emerges as a devoted housewife in a traditional household; in Krushna Das’s account of the altercation between her and Jagannath, she relents when her elder brother Balabhadra intervenes and asks to forget what happened and let Jagannath in. Other versions have somewhat different stories of reconciliation but in none of these versions have somewhat different stories of reconciliation but none of these she emerge so vindictive obdurate, unloving and unforgiving not the least . In the *NiladriBije* narrative she emerges as the goddess of happiness and joy” (p-46).

Chapter-6

In the essay titled ‘The Story of Alkshmi’, the author brings out the narrative of Alakshmi gives a new perspective of looking into the narrative for example in the story once Narada compared between Lakshmi and Alakshmi and said, “it is beautiful when Alakshmi leaves the house and it is beautiful when Lakshmi enters the house” (p-47).

Chapter-7, 8,9,10

“Right Speech”, “Bad Language”, “Honeyed Language”, “Dying Language”, “Thinking about Language and “Linguistics”

The next four essays of the book talk about the use of speech and language and how does it affect our experiences while communicating with others. The author provides the basis for right speech in present day context. One should avoid “PNPC-*paranindaparacharcha*” (p-57). One must

- (a) Avoid saying what one, after careful consideration, believes to be lack of factual basis,
- (b) Dissociate for constructing, promoting or disseminating information or views that one is not sure that they will not mislead or confuse,
- (c) Desist from using language that smacks of intellectual arrogance and
- (d) Use polite language in all situations believing that it is a right for a human to receive such a language.

What not to say plays an important part when we decide what to say in a certain context.

In the essay titled “Bad Language” the author highlights the reason for using bad language by giving suitable examples from his childhood experience, experience at IIT Kanpur and from football and *Sarala Mahabharata* too.

The next essay titled “Honeyed Language”. The author provides various instances from real life experiences where people use such ‘honey’ language, metaphors, euphemisms and so on.

For example, the use of *Chandramunhi* (face like a moon; a metaphor), euphemisms like “pass water, *ekajibi*, *duijibi*, *baharakujiba* etc”. Even the example of uncle and tiger is quite thought-provoking.

Chapter-10 “Dying Language”

The next essay is titled “Dying Language”. Drawing insights from the discussion with R. Subhakrishna, the author highlights the need to reserve languages as he underlines the strong message that “A language itself is knowledge in some sense - knowledge of a language is the way that language is structured and the way it is used by people in real life situations (p-84). We should and we must make efforts to preserve, document and use the languages that are on the verge of extinction.

Chapter-11 “Thinking about Language and its Use”

In the essay titled “Thinking about Language and its Use”, the author highlights the need to think and talk “about language which can indeed be fun as for those who are aesthetically inclined, it can be amply rewarding “(p-93). Patnaik gives various examples from his class room teaching experiences and his experience as a student in CIEFL, Hyderabad to support his argument.

Chapter-12 “Bhuta”

The next essay titled as “Bhuta”. The author shares his experiences of reading ghost stories, his childhood experience of seeing the cremation ground in his village, the fear of seeing ghost in SCS college, Puri, the suggestion received from Prof. V.Y Kantak to read great ghost stories, reading such stories in Nainital, IISC Shimla and other places.

Chapter-13 “Dosa”

The author shared his experience of getting introduced to the word ‘dosi’ which is now called dosa. Dosa served at South Indian Hotel (SIH), near Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, South Indian restaurant near AMU, dosa as Odia *chakulipitha* (flat semi-fried rice cake), egg dosa, mutton dosa of Kanpur, set dosa, mysore masala dosa, onion dosa, neer dosa, paper dosa etc come live in this chapter as the author shares his experience of having these varieties of dosas. The author claims that the best masala dosa he has eaten is at Ambi’s dhaba which is located just outside IIT Kanpur main gate.

Chapter-14 “Rasagola”

In the essay, the author shows his experiences of having rasagola, khirmohan, bundia since his childhood in Cuttack, Dhenkanal and other places. He mentions that the biggest rasagola of a kilo size the shop owner has told him in Cuttack. He talks about brown rasagolas, pahalarasagola, Salepur rasagola which is the king of rasagolas (p-116). which he tested in his early forties, that is in the early so a student of IIT Kanpur had bought that all the way from Salepur. The author mentions from 2015, the day when *Niladribijaya* takes place, has been named as *Rasagola Dibasa* (Rasagola Day) in Odisha (p-117).

Chapter-15 “Linguistics”

This chapter talked about how the author got introduced to ‘*bhasatatwa*’ in Sri Jagannath temple at Puri, Odisha by his friend who was teaching at SCS College Puri. The chapter further elaborates his study and fascinating experience at CIEFL, Hyderabad when he was doing diploma in English language teaching (ELT).

Chapter-16 “CIEFL”

The next chapter is titled as “CIEFL”. This chapter provides a detailed account of the author’s interaction with many well-known professors like S.K Verma, Bikram.K Das, H.N.L Shastri and others. The author also shares his experience of traveling to the different parts of Hyderabad as a participant who enjoyed his study at CIEFL.

Chapter-17 “Upuri (Side Income): The Other Culture of Ours”

This chapter highlights the other culture of ours that is i.e. side income like side dish in a menu that many people enjoy in a very captivating manner, the author provides good examples to support his argument. For example “ *nei an ithoi janile chori bidya bhala-* if one can manage it, a bit of stealing is not something to fuss about”(p-148).The author expresses his concern to deal with the upuri- lancha culture and suggests how it is a real ‘challenge to protect the interest of poor and the marginalized’(p-151).

Chapter-18 “The Hand of God Goal”

This chapter talks about how the football culture acquired the phrase ‘hand of God goal; Maradonna is the one responsible for the phrase too. Later in the chapter the author provides various instances from football to support his claim.

Chapter-19“The Sahadeva Condition”

Taking example from *Sarala Mahabharata* the author points out ‘there is a Sahadeva in every intellectual. He has the knowledge but being unsure about his own protection, he would always be hesitant with regard to whether or not he would share it with anyone, be it power or people’(p-163).

Chapter-20“Of Retirement”

This chapter highlights the author and his friend’s perspective on the life after retirement; a life everyone has to enjoy by virtue to it.

Chapter-21

“Facing Death”

The final chapter is concluding in nature. It seems life’s little tale comes to an end here. Taking examples from Bharata and the *Mahabharata*, the author mentions what Professor Mohanty, Professor Behera, Sri Y did was extraordinary in unusual circumstances.

Language and strength of the book

“Think like a wise man but communicate in the language of the people”- W B Yeats.

Patnaik uses simple language throughout the book which is reader-friendly. There is a saying “beauty lies in its simplicity”. The language used in this book is not only simple but also lucid. He uses homely, simple sentences which have depth as a literary style; that does not appear to be labored and difficult but it has the beauty, simplicity and aesthetics. In this book, we can find the use of chutnified English; i.e. making the English language as Indian as possible.

The strength of the book lies in its choice of various topics and themes of the essays concerning human experience which are individual as well as universal.

Conclusion

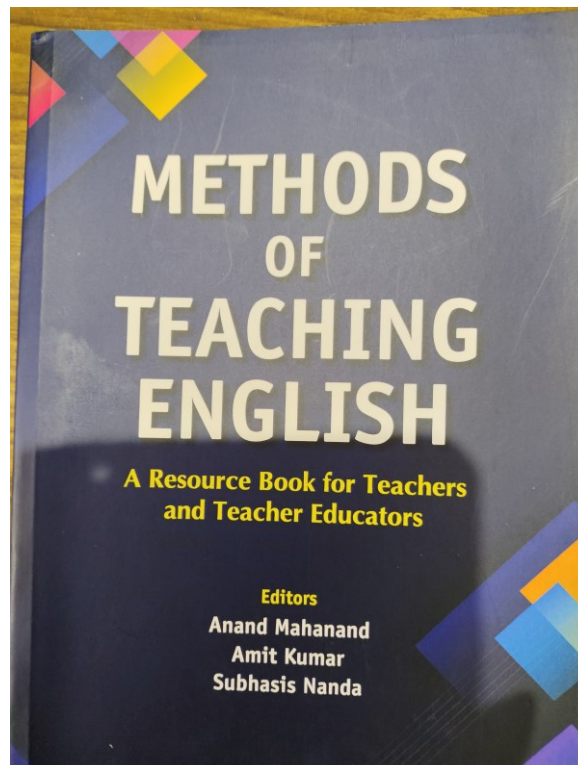
The book will be useful for general readers and academicians especially those who are interested in autobiography studies, life writing and so on. We strongly recommend the book for students and teachers working in the area of life writing.

3.

Methods of Teaching English:

A Resource Book for Teachers and Teacher Educators

Book Reviewed by Sharoon Sunny, PhD



Methods of Teaching English: A Resource Book for Teachers and Teacher Educators, edited by Anand Mahanand, Amit Kumar and Subhasis Nanda and published by Viva Publishers, New Delhi, serves as a guide for language teachers and educators to deepen their knowledge in English language teaching. In a little over 300 pages, through ten separate chapters, the authors try to present the theoretical base for several methods in English language teaching. They explain the historical background of each method and provide a novice ELT teacher with an understanding of the vast area of approaches, methods and other aspects of ELT. For instance, the first few chapters progress from the relevance of English as a language that opens employability to the language's contentious place within the three-language policy. The book provides an English teacher with theory and possible

research areas in subsequent chapters. The book also suggests how one could potentially undertake research in English language teaching, write a research proposal and prepare a research project report.

In addition to English language teaching methods, some chapters are devoted to the current trends in ELT, such as Collaborative and Cooperative learning and flipped classrooms. Each section discusses the objective and theoretical underpinnings of the method, techniques a teacher could use to adapt it to the classroom, the teacher's role and the learner's role within each of these methods.

For the more test-oriented teacher, an entire chapter is focused on testing, evaluation and assessments. The chapter on testing discusses somewhat briefly the assumptions around testing and the different types of tests. The chapter only introduces the reader to the concepts but does not provide examples or sample test items. It would have been ideal to have some example steps on how to create a valid and reliable test since several teachers continue to find creating meaningful test items a difficult process. The meaty part of the book is in chapter seven about teaching aids and instructional materials with the importance, process and sample lesson plan; the chapter explores components, the teacher's role, types of aids and materials and the various stages of a lesson plan.

The book could be helpful, especially for those teachers who have a background in literary studies but do not know the theoretical aspects of language teaching or how to integrate them into their practice. The book certainly is useful to pre-service teacher trainees since it provides a survey of English language teaching and other related aspects. With a cost price of Rs. 715/-, the concern is whether the book will be accessible to teachers who truly need access to it.

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Jodan Alang

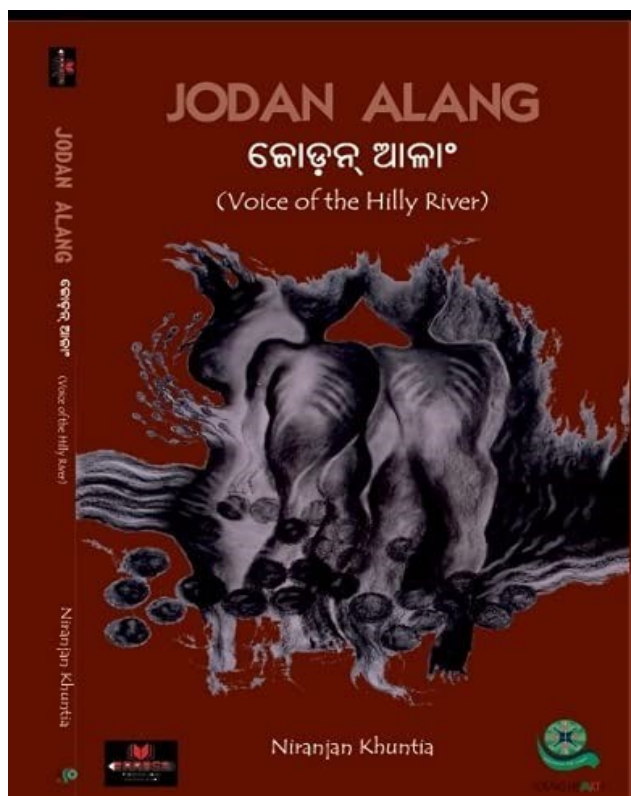
An anthology of multilingual poetries by

Niranjan Khuntia

Publisher: Young Heart), Balesore, 2021

Language : Tribal, Odia, English

Reviewed by Dr Mahendra Kumar Mishra



Jodan Alang which means the Voice of the Hilly River is a compilation of thirty multilingual poetry written and compiled by a senior writer Niranjana Khuntia, is a true poetry of the tribal people expressing the life world of their environment and human imagination and emotion. These poetries are bilingual, for the first time presented in original tribal and local languages followed by Odia and English

translation. Thus in theme, language and spirit this compilation is a multilingual poetry which is accessible to tribal, Odia and English readership. The purpose of this book is to portray the human creativity in original and disseminate on other languages to reach a wider audience. This is a new experiment of the poet who took the responsibility of document the human happiness and melancholy. Khuntia has written that he got this inspiration of using unwritten and marginalised languages in poetry from his intellectual guru prof Chittaranjan Das, a noted writer and a social thinker of our time.

The aim of Khuntia is to reduce the gap of languages and respect all languages as a marker of human sensibility. He wished this to create a solidarity among the speakers of many languages, and establish a co-existence in languages. It is well known that India is a multilingual country. Many people speak more than one language.

Bilingual poetry has strengthened and challenged the genre for centuries and plays a larger role today. The theory of one nation and one language of colonial world has changed and the globe has become multilingual. No language is superior or inferior. People who are monolingual are considered less intelligent than the multilingual one. The reason is the co-existence of many languages and man cultures of the people. Research shows that not only speaking a second language but being exposed to one—like through a poem or song—leads to increased empathy and the ability to see other perspectives. Poems in indigenous languages help preserve beautiful disappearing languages. While indigenous languages have degenerated from 62 to 32 in Odisha submerging 30 ethnic languages, one can imagine how these long-standing languages provide an important look at historical and cultural origins.

Over last 20 years, indigenous languages are emerging in the field of creating new indigenous literature of their modern lifeworld. The despair of life and the exploitation of nature has severely portrayed in their short stories and poetry. On the other hand the indigenous writers also lament the beauty of nature, their natural habitat where they were living a life of being one among nature. For indigenous people, humans are not important and their production of poetry was embedded in dance, music, songs, stories and proverbs. Poetry speak the most unspoken words of the indigenous people. Yes, it was a collective creation and still is created among the

indigenous nonliterate, but the literate indigenous writers along with the nontribal writers also do have the same worldview of Honouring nature and being one of them.

Khuntia has imagined a serious venture that the most elite of postmodern and ecocriticism do imagine and discuss. The poems sing their voices through their theme, rhythm, and association with the nature, spirit and human in an integrated worldview. Some of the poems can be discussed here to illustrate how the words of Khuntia has represented the ethos of indigenous poetry .

O the hill god, you are the Lord of all gods

And paramount ruler or emperor of the world.

Offering the sargi flowers at your feet.

I am bowing my head on a distracted state of mind.

Another poem who played the flute here .

Who played the flute here ?

so that the changing of the musical gamut gradually.

and gently is spreading over all around.

As if the song of life is floating in copious torrents

From this tone. The passionate warmth is swallowing up me.

The sky is quivering and the wave of the tone is kissing the flowers,

Another poem called O Rain .

O Rain, you get down,

The hill , forest land, agriculture fields and

gardens are calling you to get down

With torrent of water .

At the same time, it's estimated that the multilingual population will keep growing in the future. It's important for individuals to gain exposure to other languages not only to be successful themselves but also to connect more effectively and compassionately with others, including groups who face prejudice.

Kara Lewis writes on multilingual poetry "You may have read poetry in different forms, from different regions, and from writers of diverse sexualities, races, and genders, but there's yet another way to revolutionize your canon—what about poetry in different languages?" August 20, 2019

The different words from different languages used in Khuntia's poetry sounds like a melody of many musical note. Khuntia has picked up the beautiful words from Santali, Munda, Juang, Odia Sambalpuri, Kurmali, Kol, Kondh, and many other languages of Odisha has been woven in the poems to make it a garland of multicoloured poem. The originality of his multilingual poetry is unique in the sense that, he has assimilated many words from many languages and has made it a multilingual poem. This imagination is the call of the time where each language respect the other and not ignore or neglect the other language. Using the unwritten words from different oral languages will create a multilanguage that is drawn from a composite community of different ethnic groups, sharing the common themes and common elements of human existence. Bilingual poetry has strengthened and challenged the genre for centuries and plays a larger role today.

It is evident that only speaking a new language is the simple act of being exposed to one—like through a poem or song—leads to increased empathy and the ability to see other perspectives. The thoughts have come from their ancestors, parents and elders to maintain the beauty of poetry and oral tradition. This tradition is helpful in providing an important look at historical and cultural facets of many languages co exists together, but unknown to each other ,despite their socio-economic co-existence. The attempt of poet Niranjana Khuntia is the inspiration to the modern poets and linguists who speak of translanguaging in public sphere and also in academic domain. More often than not, such poems are the best possibly could be

used in Ashram schools where children and youths from many communities and many languages live together.

The world has never been monolingual, and language has never been the means of expression. A nonwritten expression like music, dance, singing, art, and sculptures, and even productive work like sowing paddy or planting vegetables, collecting foreword and food products in the forest has been associated with poetry. Poetry is life, may it be in a romantic life or difficult life.

Jodan Alang is such a poetry collection where one language is not enemy to other, but complementary to each other, expressing the feeling of human emotions, narrating the nature and feeling one ness of human and animals with the chirping of birds and soothing music of nature.

INTERVIEW



A Contemporary Voice of Indian English Poetry:

Some Reflections on Tirtho Banerjee's Poetry

(An online interview)

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Abstract:

This is a review essay including an online interview with a contemporary Indian English poet namely Tirtho Banerjee. Here the scholar has attempted an in-

depth analysis of his recent compositions. Shri Banerjee has recently published two anthologies entitled as *Cityscapes* (2020) and *Ripples* (2021). These anthologies have a number of short lyrics, which are of two lines (couplet) or three lines (triplet) or four lines (quatrain). There are a few long poems consisting of several stanzas. The poems present the life in a city and its various shades that every city-dweller experiences in modern times. The poet has a keen observation of modern life in different cities where he has lived and has composed his experiences and thoughts using words very carefully and appropriately. Many readers may not easily comprehend the poems at a casual reading, but they carry the content in images seriously as well as contextually.

Key Words: India, English, Poetry, City, Suffering, Survival and Spiritualism

Text:

William Wordsworth, in his critical essay “Poetry and Poetic Diction” which was the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, writes the following paragraph:

“Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, let me ask, what is meant by the word Poet? What is a poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, that are supposed to be common among mankind...” (298)

Wordsworth has added many more attributes to the creative artist called poet and his skill of composition. I think the same opinions can be considered for the following Indian English poet namely Tirtho Banerjee. Let me begin with his statement on poetry first. In a reply to my question about his poem composition, he sends me the following reply:

“Poetry comes by trial and error. A poet should not shy away from innovations. A poet should try using expressions in a novel way.” ---
Tirtho Banerjee(personal email dated 08/08/2022)

The poet Mr. Banerjee, in his anthology entitled *Cityscape*, introduces himself as “an international citizen” and he believes in the Indian philosophical and spiritual thought “vasudhaivakutumbakam” (the world is one family). He has been a media professional for over two decades and has lived in several cities in India. He is passionate about travelling to remote places. He has confessed that “he doesn’t lose a single opportunity to commune with nature”. In his fourth poetry volume entitled *Ripples*, he further adds: “Tirtho writes essentially to unburden himself. His compositions spell out the subtleties of the human mind. He has a deep “passion for life from which stems hope”. *Ripples* “dwells on agony and tribulations”. Here the poet “flashes out a narrative about life’s vicissitudes”.

The scholar intends to begin the essay asking the following questions to the poet. The answers submitted by email are included below:

MD: Tell me about your family background and school days.

TB: My father is a retired bank manager. My mother is a housewife. I have an elder brother and two younger sisters. My father used to get transfers every three years, so we traveled many places. During my job, I had the opportunity to work in many cities. I studied in different schools in Delhi, Dehradun, Varanasi and Lucknow. I got interested in poems, while I was in the high school (10th). Our English teacher in class 12th namely Mr. V. P. Singh instilled keen interest in me in the language and poetry. Adeebahdidi was another influence. Both Singh sir and Adeebahdidi taught English poetry in a way that I started loving and writing poems.

MD: What made you think of being a poet in English?

TB: Since I was 15-16, I harboured a desire to become a writer, essentially a poet. I realized that I could observe things very intently and found expressions with ease. I started learning the nuances of the language and the vocabulary too. Initially, I wrote rhyming poems and thought that free verse was not genuine poetry. But over the years, that perception has changed drastically. Now, I find my older poems too amateurish. But even now when I write, I am full of self-doubt.

MD: When did you start to compose poems in English? Can you remember about your initial publications?

TB:My early poems were the creation of a young mind. But at the time of composing them, I felt thrilled. Now, when I read them, I feel like changing the entire form and tone. My first poem got published in *The Times of India* (Lucknow edition) and one got published in a Bombay-based magazine *Upbeat* around 1990-91.

MD:You are a graduate in Commerce and Law, but you became a journalist and a creative artist. How did this happen in your career?

TB:I always loved writing. I used to write on environmental issues, I still do. I chanced upon a course of Journalism and applied. I did it and embarked on journalism journey. It was a good feeling to see one's reports and writings being published with one's name in the publications. I started reporting and then learnt sub-editing as well.

MD: When you begin to write poems, then you have thoughts or ideas in English or Hindi or Bengali. How do you respond to this issue of language being an Indian poet in English?

TB:Some of the thoughts come in Hindi, some in English and a few in Bangla. But because I write in English, the expressions of the emotions come in English. The language comes spontaneously. But one has to improve on it.

MD: What made you write short lyrics of two/three/four lines?

TB:The concentration span of people these days is very less. I realize this. If you write long poems, you may not be able to strike the right chord of the reader. Therefore, I write pithy poems. Moreover, I believe in the statement Brevity is the soul of wit. If you are verbose, you lose the punch. So, I keep it short.

MD:Have you been under the influence of some English/American/Indian poets of earlier times?

TB:I read the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Wordsworth, Robert Browning, Rabindranath Tagore, Sahir Ludhianavi, Kaifi Azmi, Firaq Gorakhpuri,

Neeraj ji, Gulzaarsahab, Emily Bronte, William Butler Yeats, Agha Shahid Ali, Mahadevi Verma, Devika Mathur, Niranjana Kumar and so many of them have influenced me.

MD:Have you been trained to develop your writing styles?

TB:No. No training at all. I believe you can't train anyone to write poetry. (Even though I have done a Diploma in Creative Writing, I think creativity can't be taught).

MD:What is the importance of imagery or figures of speech in your poetry?

TB:Very crucial. Images give a poem its identity. Metaphors are the soul of a poem. Figures of speech are the lifeline. Without imagery, a poem will sound drab and won't have an impact.

Tirtho Banerjee has published four volumes of poetry. The titles include *Beyond Words and Between Lines*, *Cityscape*, *Love Knots* and *Ripples*. The author's page in the website of the Leadstart Publishing has the following information about the poet: Tirtho Banerjee is a "poet, journalist, spiritualist, nature lover and sports enthusiast". He has mentioned about the three things that people do not know about him: "(I) wrote major part of my first book when jobless, I dread numbers/calculations. I self-doubt a lot." His greatest fear is "falling victim to mediocrity". His greatest achievement is "the self-realization that I must write". He confesses that he writes "mostly during nights", but he can write anytime and anywhere. Lastly, he has the following advice to the future poets: "Always be honest with words and never shy away from innovations." (Leadstartcorp.com)

Many of Banerjee's poems are consisted of two or three or four lines. He has been very precise and economic in his compositions. I will illustrate some poems below:

The poem "Hybrid" has the following two lines:

"This hybrid generation
Sucks more energy to grow."

Another poem entitled “For Survival” has the following couplet”

“How many deaths will you live through
to endure this tilted survival?”

Given below is another poem with three lines:

“In the effort to
build assets after assets
life turns into a liability”

Banerjee has written a very few long poems with many lines or stanzas. In the anthology *Cityscape*, we can find some long poems such as “Regret”, “Lost Footwear”, “Monotony”, “Jogging At 6.30 am”, “Are We Liberated?”, etc. In a poem with the title “Marketplace”, we can see five lines in one stanza:

“This is a marketplace
where every ambition has a price tag
with an expiry date.
Every stale dream reeks
and then perishes, unseen.”

In this volume, there is no poem entitled “Cityscape”, but we will find the word “city” in some poems, such as “Wow! City Life”. In most poems, there are references to different shades of city life to justify the literary significance of the title.

The fourth anthology entitled *ripples* consists of one hundred and seventy-eight poems in two hundred and ten pages. The publisher’s page on its website mentions the following remark: “*Ripples* encapsulates a range of intricate emotions and bittersweet experiences...The book offers a glimpse into the poet’s inner conflicts and deep struggles he has encountered. It is an honest attempt to depict the various shades of thoughts that form our being and fuel our existence...*Ripples* is a journey into your mind and soul.” (ukiyoto.com)

The narrators of the poems have many experiences in life and they try to express their feelings, emotions and thoughts by using appropriate words. The lines are having rhythm of their own. The first poem "Perception" mentions about an adventurous journey where the difference between the 'ships' and 'waves' as well as the 'seas' and 'storms' has been drawn. What one does and another does not do has been taken into consideration in the following lines: "Ships don't/ make a journey,/ waves do.../, Seas don't/ make an adventure,/ storms do..."(1). In another poem "Ignorance suits the pursuit", the narrator speaks about the absoluteness of "life's incompleteness". However, the conflicting shades of life are "indisputable". The second stanza is as follows: "Love is offered in parts./ Truth carries half lies;/ beauty has an ugly side,/ peace hides discord,/ surrender imposed,/ and sharing fraught with inhibitions". The narrator mentions at the end that something is missing from our way of life and we know what it is. The final line which is the title of the poem highlights our "ignorance" and our "pursuit" (3).

The title word of the anthology "ripples" appears in the poem entitled "Revisiting". The narrator finds nothing appearing on the surface and then he throws a coin into water and there is a "ripple". Then he finds "a face" that "summons my eyes". In the next stanza, he adds: "It carries me/ to a moment in history/ where I am the kingdom" (9). He watches his own people whose familiar voices or sounds reach him from faraway places. The poem is about memories of the past, of his ancestors, his motherland or native place. He climbs up without having anything "to hold on to" and he says finally: "I am lost in the now.../ Bewildered..." (10). His mortality or the departure of his own self from this world is the most important aspect of reality and truth.

Another poem "What pains us" is a good composition, which consists of six lines and two grammatical sentences. The lines are as follows: "It's not the/ nothingness of life/ that aches our hearts." In fact, as the narrator mentions: "It's the pointless effort to fill the void with forced meanings/ that pains us" (28). In the poem "Dissolved and diluted", it has been stated that every spoken word "becomes an echo/ in time's infinity" and every passion "becomes a void/ in soul's eternity" (35). The castles that we build to live in this planet become actually our "graveyards" (40) according to the narrator. We live here as temporary guests and die after a period of stay. We have illusions in life and we forget the true meaning of life. He states about "the indefiniteness of life" in the next poem. He adds that the "bizarre uncertainties"

of life make it “a vaguely misunderstood dilemma” (41). A dry leaf has no relevance but the “sad rustle whispers/ a desire to hug the branch again” (45). The fate has something else for it. It has “to merge into the soil of oblivion” (ibid). That is the law of nature and life. That is the mortality of plants and animals that are born and live in this earth. The poem “Empty Words” mentions that words are starved of meaning and our hearts are fed on “silence”. The words are created by human beings for definite purposes and with specific meanings. In language study, it is called denotative meaning. When it is added with contextual meaning, then it becomes connotative meaning. No word can be meaningless in nature. Silence becomes the best medium of communication for us, if we do not have words in our vocabulary. Human beings can be like plants, animals, birds and insects without language. The food for our thoughts and emotions or even action will be silence or speechlessness only.

The poem “Identity” has two lines and the narrator here prefers to “earn” and not to buy his/her self-identity. Again the title of the anthology appears in the poem “No Plot”, the lines of which are mentioned below: “A Star’s script vanishes in ripples”. The river of life “meanders through/ without a plot” and it is “lost in a blank void” (110). As human beings, we are “trapped” in “a battle of opposites”. That is what the narrator realizes in his life and mentions in the poem entitled “Trapped!” (137). Life can be simplified as “half-truth” rather than absolute truth. Truth is always presented with a covering of falsehood. For the effective expression of this concept, the poet has used the opposite “half lies” in the title (183). Some more poems such as “We are stars”, “Unwritten”, “Rust”, “Lockup”, “To hell with heaven”, “Dying”, “Exit”, “Endlessness” can be illustrated to bring out various ideas of the poet. He has concentrated upon topics such as survival, myopia, remorse, oblivion, deprivation, courage, agony, pain, dream, desires, revelation, insanity, and inwardness in his poetry. A modern poet under the influence of globalization, consumerism, materialism and spiritualism is too much worried about the salvation in life. He tries his best to adapt to the ways of our ancestors, but that does not give any sense of fulfillment, joy and peace. The conflicting ideas of the narrators are put side by side in the poems. Time has played an important role in some of these poems. In the poem “Life’s fleetingness”, the narrator mentions in the second stanza: “We find it hard to accept that/ time doesn’t remember years/ and our memories are/ just a personal treasure/ till they exist” (209). Autobiographical elements have been used

in an objective manner with the use of figures of speech like simile, metaphor, personification, etc. The Nature imagery has been used by the poet for composition purpose. The poem “The setting sun” brings darkness slowly and leaves the narrator “with dusk”. The last stanza mentions: “It’s in this fleeting moment/that life becomes a muse/ and death a soft embrace” (199). The anthology ends with the poem entitled “Endlessness”, in which the narrator states that the soul travels into the other world. He considers it as a journey that ends when a new journey begins. The last couplet mentions: “We alight from the ship of life/ to cross another ocean” (210). The poetic journey goes on and the publication of anthologies one after the other goes on too. Many more socially relevant and psychologically-oriented contemporary poems are expected from the poet.

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