

Ghotul: Cultural Significance And Fraternity In An Indigenous Institution

Suchita Kujur

Assistant Professor

Dept. of Music

Purnidevi Chowdhury Girls' College

Bolpur, Birbhum, W.B. India

Abstract:

Ghotul, as indigenous institution practiced by the Muria and Gond tribes of central India, holds a deep cultural significance and serves as a communal space for socializing, education, and personality development. Ghotul, traditionally a structure resembling a dormitory, serves as a gathering place for the youth of the tribe, particularly unmarried boys and girls. It provides an inclusive environment where young individuals engage in various activities such as singing, dancing, storytelling, and discussion on cultural heritage. Ghotul acts as a medium to transmit the tribal values, rituals, folklore, and traditional knowledge from one generation to the next.

One of the notable aspects of Ghotul is its emphasis on egalitarianism and gender equality. Both boys and girls are allowed to participate equally in the activities and decision-making processes, promoting mutual respect and understanding between genders. This inclusivity challenges traditional gender roles prevalent in the broader society and empowers young girls by giving them a voice and platform to express themselves freely.

Key words: Tribe, Ghotul, Muria, Gond etc.

I. The Tribe

Tribal population found in almost all parts of the world. India has the largest population of tribals who live in central India i.e. Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh. Chhota Nagpur plateau, Hill region of North East. Tribals refer to the oldest inhabitants of the country who could not progress and were deprived from the mainstream of the country. In some developing countries they are called adivasi (first settlers), Adimjati (primitive people), aboriginal, janjati (folk people), uncivilized by nature etc. Article 342. It says that only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public amending Act of Parliament will be considered to be scheduled Tribes.

According to D.N. Majumder, "tribe as a social group with territorial affiliation endogamous with no specialization of function ruled by tribal officers hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes." (Majumder, 1937).

The tribal people are simple, humble and possess a great amount of feeling for their Co-villagers and community members. They grow in the intimacy of the social atmosphere of their own community. Their close association with nature inspires them to lead a carefree life. These people are rich in culture and tradition. Tribal art and culture are a reflection of the cultural heritage of a tribe.

Ghotul is a place where young, unmarried boys and girls live together. Ghotul(youth dormitory) is the traditional system of education in the tribal community. As a social institution Ghotul is the club of unmarried boys and girls at the outskirts of the village.

It is known differently in different tribes. Such as Ghotul in Maria, Muria and Gond tribes of Bastar, Kodada in Malpaharia tribe, Giti ora in Munda and Ho, Dhumkuria in Oraon, Morung among the Konyak, Naga. It is an important social institution for the tribals. It is a specific place of their entertainment. Young boys and girls of Ghotul enjoy it. Life by singing and dancing. Tribals regard their youth Dormitory as a cultural and social institute. It is a site of transmission of their culture. It plays a vital role in the transitional stage of tribals from childhood to adulthood. It is a meeting point of culture, education and customs which generates uniformity at dormitory level.

The evening begins with the arrival of Ghotul members. The Ghotul (Youth Dormitory) lighted by fire. Boys and girls gather here to sing, dance, play, tell folk tales, folklore to each other and later to sleep for the night. Tribals do not live in five or six roomed houses. They usually live in a hut. This is the reason after five-year-old children do not live in the hut where parents live at night. In some tribal communities' young boys and girls work in their community during the day, have dinner with their families and then come to the Ghotul at night. Senior boys and girls who are well versed in tribal culture and tradition pass on to the juniors.

In Vedic tradition, 'Chaturashram' or four steps of life to maintain purpose like Brahmacharya, Grahasth, Banaprastha and Sanyas. Ghotul is similar to Brahmacharya when the growing up boys and girls went to guru's ashram and taught education, discipline in order to lead their life purposefully and liberally in the society. To make a healthy society, it is both Ghotul and Brahmacharya the most necessary part of every one's life. Moreover, to continue the tradition of cultural ethnicity, these customs are the foundation rock or backbone for every society.

II. Design of Ghotul:

The design of Ghotul is done on the basis of the local environment. There is a special place for the ritual which stands apart from others in the village, for e.g. The Oraon tribes called Ghotul as Dhumkuriawhich is made in the middle of the village. The Morung of the Naga tribes are made in the solitude of a corner of the village. The Ghotul house is made of wood, mud and grass. In front of the Ghotul house a mandap is made by making a roof of grass or tiles on wooden pillars. Ghotul is surrounded by a wooden fence with a long wide courtyard inside the enclosure, and a pillar is erected in the middle of this courtyard. Young men and women who are called Chelik and Motiari move around this pillar and dance. The rooms of the Ghotuls are square in shape and there is an open space next to the room, where only the roof is made, there is a place to light the fire. Ghotuls companions spend the night in these rooms; many types of stories are heard and narrated. This is a place which is the means of their entertainment. According to their innocent nature they do not worry about tomorrow.

III. Ghotul members and their duties:

In the tribal community at the age of five to ten automatically become a member of the Ghotul. Whenever a new member enters the Ghotul, a new name has been given to unmarried boys and girls of the village who are the members of this institution. Among the Maria, Gond tribes' girls are called Motiyaries and boys are called Chelik. The female leader Ghotul called Belasa and male leader called Seridar.

There are different duties and responsibilities shared among the Ghotul members. Charias responsibility is to keep the Ghotul clean. Ghotul is decorated by Musawa. Diwan looks after the discipline of the institute. Kotwair takes the attendance of Ghotul members.

IV. Classification of youth dormitory:

In tribal communities, youth dormitories are classified into three types.

1. Boys' dormitory: 'Jonkh Edpa' of Oraon. The word Jonkh meant for the boys and Edpa is for house. Konyak tribes call boys' dormitories Morung.
2. Girls Dormitory: "Pello Edpa" Oraon tribes. The word Pello meant for girls in the oraon community. Yo of Konyak Naga
3. Joint Dormitory: 'Ghotul' of maria, Muria and Gond tribes of Bastar Chhattisgarh. In the joint dormitory boys and girls sleep at night in the same house.

V. Importance of youth dormitory in tribal life:

As a traditional institution education in youth dormitories, children learn about their social life, cultural, economic and political aspect of life.

At the Social level junior members of Ghotul (youth dormitory) learn about the sense of cooperation and discipline which are very important social dimensions to survive in a harsh environment.

At a cultural level, tribal children learn about their deities, festivals, music and dance. They learn dance and music from their seniors which are used to propitiate the particular deities. Thus, the youth dormitory is an appropriate place for transmission of tribal cultural heritage.

At an economic level, children at the tune of drum beating learn the lesson of hunting, when to attack the hunted animal, when to surround and when to retreat. They learn all this technique in the dormitory in a very playful musical way.

Entertainment function of youth Dormitory: it is also a fact that in dormitories members of this institution entertain themselves by singing, dancing, playing Mandar (instrumental drum) and expressing their joy the supreme facts of life.

Youth dormitory is a youth power-oriented place of the tribal society which comes to help whenever huge labour is required in the village. They do all these things willingly and happily. The lessons learnt in the youth dormitory life because they have an informal way of teaching by senior boys and girls as teachers. Youth dormitory system of tribal communities has preserved their tradition, culture which they have been practicing from ancient times.

VI.Conclusion:

Thus, it may be said that, youth dormitory run by Indian tribes is a cultural institution which is addressed by the name Ghotul. Meeting center of unmarried boys and girls where there is love and harmony. There is reciprocity, there is discipline and there is a balance. This is an abode of bliss that has been explained appropriately. A place where 'unity, liberty and fraternity perfectly grow and develop into innocent growing ups who will have a healthy world.

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