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The Folk Songs Of Mithila: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACTS

Maithili folk song is an important genre of Maithili literature. Its area is very huge. It is related to human life. There is an expression of the human conscience in it. Maithili folklore gives a glimpse of the social, cultural, religious economic scenario of Mithila society. In this article the Maithili folk songs are divided into various sections, its description is made- such as Samskara Songs, Devi-Devataka Songs, Nursary Rhymes, Seasonal Songs, Caste Songs, Miscellaneous Songs etc. These songs are sung on a special occasion in Mithila. In conclusion, the cultural tradition of Mithila can be known only through Maithili folklore.

KEY-WORDS: Communal, cultural, Devotional, Gosaunika-Gita, Hinduism, Bhajana, Lagani, Mahesavani, Miscellaneous, Nursary Rhymes, Nacari, Prati, Season Song, Samskara-Gita.

THE FOLK SONGS OF MITHILA : A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The folk songs of Mithila are primarily sung in the Maithili language and encompass diverse themes, including devotional songs ritualistic songs for occasions like weddings and work-related songs. Ballads are also songs which have the story of the supernatural power of legendary Characters of Mithila. About Maithili folk songs, an eminent historian of Maithili Literature, Dr. Jayakant Mishra says:

"There is very little written record of Mithila Folklore available. It has mainly come down through the word of mouth of women and of men who have afforded wisdom, recreation and entertainment to children and others."¹

Sir George Abraham Grierson is known to have been the first Scholar who tried to collect Mithila folklore in such works as Bihar Peasant Life (Published from Calcutta, 1885), Maithili Chrestomathy (Published in JASB, 1882), Bihari Grammers (Published from Calcutta, 1887) and Dinabhadrika Gita (ZDMG, 1885, p. 617) and Nebaraka Gita.² The folk songs of Mithila are of numerous kinds. Their broad division according to the women of Mithila is into "Dev Paksha songs" and "Rusa Paksha songs. But they cover almost every aspect of Mithila Society; because it is said that literature is the mirror of society. For the study purpose, we may divide them under eight heading-- (1) Drvi-Devata-ka Gita, (2) Sanskar Gita, (3) Vtata-Upasa O Samayik Utsava-ka Gita, (4) Season Song, (5) Work Song (6) Nursary Rhymes, (6) Communal song, (8) Miscellaneous Song.

(1) DEVI-DEVATSA-KA GITA :

It is a devotional song in Mithila, and also may be mythical and zonal. These songs (Gitas) are a significant Hindu philosophical text from the Shakta, Shaiva and Vaishnava, which centres on worship of the Goddess Devi (the Devine Mother), Shiva and Vishnu respectively. These three Devi-Devatas are of the main denominations within Hinduism, where Shaivas worship 'Shiva' as the supreme deity and Shaktas to 'Shakti' as the ultimate essence of the cosmos.

Perhaps these deities are borrowed from the popular above demands. They are sun to 'Brahma' (A village deity supposed to be the soul of some Brahmana who died before his sacred -- Thread-ceremony) ;³ to 'Gosauni', to 'Gauri', to 'Bhairava', to 'Hanumana', to 'Govind', to 'Jivachha', to 'Mahadev', to 'Vishnu', to 'Rama', to 'Kamala', to 'Shitala', to 'Visahara', to 'Ganga', to 'Jvalamukhi', to 'Dharmaraja', to 'Ganesha', to 'Jalpa', to 'Gahila', to 'Bamati', to 'Devi Bhavani', to 'Kalika', to 'Bhairava' and to 'Tajiya', to many others. These deities are worshipped by certain families only, and they even give them preference to "Gosaunika-Gita" on an auspicious and gala occasion. Among these Maheshvani, Nachari, Vishnupada, Bhajana-Kirtana prati, and Sanjhaka- Gita are more important. The compulsion, poverty and compassion of commonality has to be expressed in it. See the following example:

*"Tutal maraiya sita-sita-vadna,
Kon vidhi bachstani laj yau.
Gauri ken nahi chhani nua chetara,
Nahi chhani phatal purana yau.
Ekahi kammal tini putra mili
Ghichi tiri ghamasan yau.
Pusa Goitha jara khepalani,
Basaho gelni parai yau.
Agave sag khesari par e,
Magho khepati dai yau."*⁴

(i) GOSAUNIKA-GITA (SONG):

Gosaunika-Gita is the most important song which is sung on every auspicious occasion in Mithila. The idol or Pidi of 'Gosauni' is installed in every household of Mithila. The Gosauni-ka Gita or Devipad or Bhagavati-ka Gita is the devotional song or hymn in praise of several forms of Sakti. Notable Contribution to this type has been made by Vidyapati, Malla of Nepal, Ratnapani and Ganganath Jha though almost every poet has been known to have written in this form. Among these 'Gosauni-ka Gita' of Vidyapati (1350-1450) is the most popular- as for example see his song-

*"Jay jay bhairavi asur bhayaun, pasupati bhamin maya.
Sahaj sumati var dia he gosauni, anugati gati tua paya.
Vasar rain savasane sobhit, Charan chandra- mani chura.
Kataok daitya mari muhe meral, katan ugali karu kura.
Samar vadan nayan anuranjit, jalad yog phul koka
Ghan-ghan-ghanan ghughuru kati bajay, han-han kar tua kata.
Vidyapati kavi tua pada sevak, putra bisaru jan mata."*⁵

(ii) NACARI :

The Nachari are distinguished by the direct prayer to lord 'Siva' The name Nachari seems to have been derived from the ecstatic dance of 'Siva' and is probably intended to liken the cognate state of the devotee into which he loses himself while praying to the lord. The name Nacari is now often confused with Mahesavani in common parlance, but there is really a marked distinction between the two. In this context, Ain-i-Akbari (1598) by Abul Fajal notices the 'Lacharis' of Tirhut as one of its specialities,⁶ and this is also why hundreds and thousands of Mithila pilgrims visit Pasupati, Kapilesvara, Singhesvara, Videsvara or carry heavy 'Kamaru' on foot to the Temple of Baidyanath Dhama singing - "kakhan haraba dukh mora he Bholanath" and shed innumerable tears of devotion. See one of the examples of Lacari Written by "Muse kavi" (Musai Thakur).

*"Visam vipatti haru he Siva, visam vipatti haru
Hamahu dhael sharan ahanka, kakar asha karu"*⁷

(iii) MAHESAVANI:

The Mahesavani is merely a song about 'Siva Vani (speech) of Mahesa (Siva) but the 'Vani' in honour of Mahesa. Mahesavani is frequently addressed to 'menaka' (Called in Maithili 'Manaini', due to this Bengali scholars call it- "Haragauri-Padavali") the mother of Gauri and represents songs of the marriage of 'Siva',

song from the days of Vidyapati, Lalakavi, Kanharam Das and Chanda Jha. Generally, Mahesavani and Nacari are mixed in practice, but there is a clear difference between both of them. As above mentioned Nacari is purely the prayer of Siva but Mahesavani is the domestic life songs of Siva and Parvati. See an example of the very popular Mahesvani in Mithila :

*"Aju nath ek vrata mahasukha lagat he
Tohe siva dharu natavesha ki damru bajabah he....
.....Bhanahi Vidyapati gaola gabi sunaola he
Rakhal Gaura ker man, Hara nachai dekhaola he"⁸*

(iv) BHAJANAS (KIRTANS):

Bhajan (Kirtan) of Maithili" refers to devotional songs sung in lyrical form. These songs, sometimes referred to as bhajans or chants, invoke deities like Radhe -Krishna, Rama-Sita, Siva- Parvati, Visnu- Pada, Kali- Durga Hanumana and many others to foster a deep connection to the divine, promote inner peace, and build a sense of community among listeners. The songs are primarily focused on praising and connecting with deities. Bhajans are known for their rhythmic and melodic qualities, which are designed to create a sense of peace and joy.

On the other hand, there are many kinds of Bhajans. They are generally sung in the early morning or on auspicious occasions. The 'Prati' (morning) songs include 'Jajamanti', 'Vihaga', 'Bhairavi' and 'Prati' songs. They are generally in the praise of Lord Visnu sung in the order of time indicated by the order given above, and their language is generally a mixture of Maithili and non-Maithili languages. Songs in Praise of Ganga , Vishnu (Visnupadas) and Mahesa and Sakti (Gosaunika Gita or Bhagavatika Gita) are also sung with reverence in the morning. See the following Visnupad sung on the occasion of Satyanarayan Puja:

*"Gaika gobar mangaeb, ohi sau angana nipaeb
yugal jori Ahe Ram Siya he yugal jori.
Oipar chauka baisaeb, yugal jori.....
Arva chaur mangaeb, oime chini milaeb,
Oi sau chautath banaeev jugal jori."⁹*

(v) PRATI (PARATI) :

Prati songs are morning devotional songs sung in Maithili, and their lyrics vary widely by artist and theme, often focusing on deities like Ganesha or praising the beauty of Mithila. In the context of Mithila's culture, "Prati" refers to devotional songs sung in the morning, similar to Bhajans or Kirtan. Prati songs aren't a single song but a genre of folk music. They can praise various gods and goddesses, express feelings of love, or celebrate the land of Mithila.

Prati, Parati or Prabhati is a very popular song in Mithila. It is a traditional song. It is sung early in the morning, due to this, it is known as "Parati" or "Prabhati" also. The important God-Goddess are Rama, Krisna, siva, Ganga Maiya, Ganesh, Janaki, Gauri and many others. See the following pada:¹⁰

*" Prata darshan dev he Ganga Maiya
Prata darshan dev" -- (For Ganga Maiya)*

*"Laj mora rakhu he vrijaraja"
-- (For Visnu or Krisna)*

The song "Sanjha" in Mithila is sung by the women. This song is sung to enlighten Maa Lakshmi. These songs are sung in the question -answer style, there is a description of the golden lamp (Sona Ka deep), jute wick (PatuaKa Vati) and mustard oil. The women of Mithila worship the "Tulsi" in the "Sanjha" song, sing the Sanjh-Gita so that they can become a virtuous wife like Vrinda. See the following lines as an example:

*"Sanjha dia sanjha dia Jasumti Maiya,
Kathi ker deep kathi ker bati
Kathi ke tel jaraya sagar rati."*¹¹

Sanjhaka Gita and Badisatika Gita are sung on such Vrata days as Tusari and Harisano are really made up to Nacaris and Mahesavanis. Thus, Devi-Devata Gita include the song of the Ganges, the song of Sheetla, the song of Brahma and the song of Guru etc. These songs are all associated with the folk life of Mithila.

(2) SAMSKARA GITA :

Samskar Gita (song) reveals the social and cultural aspects of social life. Under this song it is sung on the occasion of various rites from birth to death. Such as Sohar, Chhathihar, Mundan, Upanayan, pitar, parichhani, Gorlaggi etc. In Mithila, sixteen rites from the tradition are prevalent. This rite is performed to make the body of Dwij varna strong, conscious and holy.

In this regard, Dr. Jayakant Mishra, an eminent historian of Maithili literature says-- " Samskar songs are sung on the occasion of several samskara. They may be divided under four main heads--Mundan and Chudakaran songs, Upanayan songs, Marriage songs and Tattooing songs."¹²

Here, we discuss the different kinds of Samskar Gita which are as follows:

(i) MUNDAN AND CHUDAKARAN SONG:

These songs are few and are generally mixed with 'blessing' songs and Upanayana songs. During these two Samskaras some songs are merely occasionally.

(ii) UPANAYANA SONG:

There are many Upanayana songs. Some are connected with the rites observed on this occasion. Such songs are Keskatti song, Charakha song, Kumarama song, Kaulikalyani song, Chagadana song, Bhikh songs etc. The most common songs in Upanayana are those in which the blessings of the ancestors of the boy are invoked, they are called 'Pitara-ka Gita.' According to Ramaikabal Singha, "Some songs sung during Upanayana describe the life and responsibilities of the new Brahmchari."¹³

The Upanayana is regarded in many ways as a more important Samskara in a Brahminical country like Mithila than Marriage and the number of songs sung on this occasion are numerous. Songs in praise of 'Siva '. a 'Sakti' songs of blessing, songs of various other kinds resound for about a month in the house where Upanayana is celebrated.

Among it in some songs the joy of the parents at being able to witness the Upanayana of their child (son) is celebrated. This is also the sentiment expressed in many blessings. See the example:

"Aju maya purala manorath mana ko
Damodar bar dekhi tan pulkit,
sudhina rahalani taniko".¹⁴

(iii) MARRIAGE SONG:

Marriage is the most important event in the life of women -folk and it provides a large number of ritualistic occasions. It is the one great occasion when songs of the most poetic kind are sung. Some of them narrate the story of divine marriage such as the marriages of Siva and Ram; some describe the appearance and the joys of the bride and the bride-groom; some welcome or taunt the guests. They all combine to build up an atmosphere of mirth and gaiety. These songs of Mithila can be studied from three points of view- Daughter's marriage songs, son's marriage song and song of duragamana. On these occasions many kinds of songs are also very important; like -- Laba Bhujae ba-ka Gits, Dahakans song, Padichain, Othangara- Kutabaka Gita, Vedi-Ghumbeka Gita, Naina-Yoginika Gita, Mauhakaka Gita, Gauri-Pujaka Gita, Chumaunaka Gita, Juti kholbaka Gita, Ama-Mahu Viahaka Gita and so on or so forth.

Most of these are just songs describing a particular custom. But the songs that are the most poetic of all folk-songs are those which deal with love generally. Love songs on the occasion of marriage include some of the literary types as well e. g. Tirahuti, Batagamani, Jog, Uchati and Rasa. Mahesavani and Nachari may also be included. Of course, songs in these forms are sometimes available which cannot be called 'literary' from their language and their treatment of the subject matter. A few forms very rarely connected with literary types of Maithili lyric are 'Jhumari', 'Sammara', 'kobar', 'Sarang', 'Udasi' and 'kautuka' songs.

Here, 'Jhumari' is not a strictly speaking marriage song. They are erotic playful songs said to be sung in the course of oscillating on a swing. 'Sammara' is sung on the occasion of the actual giving away ceremony of the bride. The commonest Sammaras are Sita, Ram Rukammini, Usa and Jagannatha- Sammaras. The Sammaras describes the story of some celebrated marriage of the past. Saranga songs also love songs and are distinguished by their 'raga'. See the following:

*"Ham na jaeb dadhi bechae -- He Rama
Chikahi leli Radha dahi re matukia
Krishna tokala adhi- batia -- He Rama
Jau krisna marata phulak saria
Surdas prabhu tumhare daras ko
Gvalini rahali chhapai -- He Rama"*¹⁵

(3) VRATA-UPAVASA & SAMAYIKA UTSAV:

Under this, songs like Anantapuja, Chhathi, Badisaita, Bhratri-Dvitiya, Madhushravani, Sama-Chakewa, etc. come. In this type of song, the sensitivity of the human element is found to be some expression. In the following lines, the Chhath song, there is a poignant description of the disregard of sterile and the prayer of sorrow:

*"Sasu padhai chhathi gadia ho Dinanath nanadi thunakabae,
Par ke janamal gotiniyan ho Dinanath seho dai ulahana"*¹⁷

In Mithila, many types of Vrata-Upavas and festivals are celebrated throughout the year, all the songs sung on this occasion come in this category. Such as Madhushravani's songs, Nagpanchami's song, Tusari's song, Barisait's song and other Sanskar songs. In this context, Dr. Jayakant Mishra says, "Pavanik Gita are songs and Rhymes sung the occasion of the Vrata. Most of them merely glorify the various rites of Vrats but some of them rise in devotional feelings."¹⁸ Similarly, the Sama-Chakewa's song is very popular in Mithila. In these songs, a feeling of mutual love and satisfaction emerges like -- Bati kuti khaya Raja ghar jaya". See the following Sama's song:

*"Sam chake sam chake abiha he, abiha he
Jotala khet me basiha he, basiha he
Sab ranga patia bichhabiha he
Ohi patia par kae-kae jana, kae-kae jana
Sato jana, sato jana
Ek-ek jana par kae-kae puri, kae-kae puri
Ek-ek jana par sata-sata puri, sata sata puri"*¹⁹

"Through the above-mentioned Sama song, the economic condition of the ancient Mithila is painted and the mutual harmony of the joint family has also been shown.

(4) SEASONAL SONG:

Seasonal songs are of several kinds. In a climate where health, life, and comfort depend on the regularity of the seasons, songs of the whole year and of particular months" are particularly popular. Their theme is mainly frustration or disappointment in love, often due to the callous absence of the lover or the husband. The common type of these songs survey a number of seasons in one long song. Barahamasa, Chhaumasa and chaumasa are like Barahamasa of Bengal. following the old poetic tradition of describing twelve, six or four months of separation. Each month comes with its charms and has its individual's reaction to the feelings of the separated partner. Other seasonal songs are chaitya or chaitavar, Kajari, Phagu or Holi,

Vasanta, Jhula, Pavasa and Malara. These are all love songs but Malara and sometimes Basants display highly poetic sentiments. See a compassionate description of spending different months by a poor women:

*"Puss goitha dahi tapab magha khesarika sag yo
Phagun hunka chhimmari-mokari chsita khesarika dali yo
Katika sukh-dukha sangahi khepaba, aghana dunu sanjha bhata yo."*²⁰

(5) WORK- SONGS :

Labor songs (Work-Song) are sung to reduce labor. It is a song of a complete spiritual spirit. Under this, Lagni, Ropani Charkha, , Ukhai kutaba kal, Sanghi Utheba kal, Karin Pteba kal, Godana etc are sung at the time of neat. Described above songs "Lagani" is the most popular song. "Lagani" are songs mostly by women of lower classes while they grind their hand mills. It is numerous There are longer Laganis too. They relate more graphically tales of women's sacrifice and love. See example:

*"Gauri paravata sau koiliya ek ayala
Sutal koiliya jagavah---- ho Rama
.....
Marihsu bangalina chhauri
Toro jetha bhaiya vari vayasa
Sugga bilamaol -----ho Rama"*²¹

(6) NURSARY RHYMES

Nursery Rhymes is also known as Jingles, and Children's Play Songs. There are many kinds of these songs. Grown up girls when playing with their dolls use the songs of the elders, but young children have set formulas for their games. These are numerous. The renowned scholar of Mithila, Pandit Riddhi Nath Jha has collected some Nursery Rhymes. See examples :²³

(a) *" Atakan matakan, dahia chatakan
Magh masa karaila pharai
Amun goti jamun goti
Tetari suhag goti
bansa karai thanya-thanya nadi gungunai
kamalak phul dunu alagal jaya."*

(b). *"Ghughua jhul, malel jhul
kon gam jhul, beli jhul
Pokhari kata-kata hirana laga
Hirna gelau tuti, dunu gelau rusa*

(7) CASTES SONG :

In Mithila, people of various castes live in mutual equality. Each caste has its own religious belief. Caste song is prevalent on the basis of these beliefs. In which Bhagait, Biraha, Lorika, Bhata, Vakkho, Gopi Chand and Nirguna are able to be taken and they are related to different caste and class.

(8) MISCELLANEOUS SONG:

Apart from the above songs, there are some other specific types of songs. This special song is sung on the auspicious occasion. These songs are attached to human life. These types of songs are Jhijhiya, Jharani, Tantra -Mantra, Witchcraft, Jhumari etc. The song Jhijhia is sung on the occasion of Durgapuja. It is a song of Question-Answer Style. It is sung for anger from witches (Dine-Yogini). The following Jhijia song is seen as for example:

*"Kekara kothia me dali chaur, kekara kolhua me tel.
 Babak kolhua me dali chaur teliak kolhua me tel.
 Kathi ker diara, kathi ker bati, kathi ker tel
 Sona ker diara, patbar sut bati sarisok tel
 Jarae lagal diara, jhajhake lagal bati
 Jhijhari par rahihen khavardar;
 Maia ge jhijhari par rahihen khabaradar."*²⁴

Similarly, the songs of Tantra-Mantra are used to cure the poisoning of snake-bite. See example:

*"Visahari visahri sunie visahri, visahari bada agiari
 Vikh khai vikha, lae jae, vikha lae karae vihari.
 Jai din visahari visha nahi pave, puhpi vet set se dhawe. Kahan Bhagatia bhagat karai chhal, ham
 chhelau Gaura dai ke beti... Visahara visham bharo hara."*²⁵

CONCLUSION :

Maithili folk song is an important genre of Maithili literature. Its area is very vast. It is related to human life. There is an expression of the human conscience in it. Maithili folklore gives a glimpse of the social, cultural, religious economic scenario of Mithila society. In this article the Maithili folk songs are divided into various sections, its description is made- such as Samskara Songs, Devi-Devataka Songs, Nursery Rhymes, Seasonal Songs, Caste Songs, Miscellaneous Songs etc. This song is sung on a special occasion in Mithila. In conclusion, the cultural tradition of Mithila can be known only through Maithili folklore. The tradition of Maithili folk songs is still intact.

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