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BALLADS AND TALES IN MAITHILI LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

These are the most prominent folk narratives in Maithili, detailing the heroic deeds of specific caste or community heroes and are central to their cultural identity and worship. Maithili literature boasts a rich collection of traditional ballads, or lok-gathas, that tell the stories of community heroes and are often performed as examples including the legendary Lorika, Salahesa, Dina-Bhadri, Kumar Brijabhana etc. Other narrative works and literary tales are found in collections like the Bihula-ka katha, Gopichand-ka katha, Ajura-ka katha etc. These ballads & Tales are sung in a specific tune and it relates the ancient culture, which is the root identity of Mithila. In this article, these topics are described in a symbolic way.

KEY-WORDS: Adventure, Arony, Carol, Gatha, Katha, Love, Legend, Melodious Prevalent, Peculiar, Pathetic, Romance, Supernatural, Tradition, Verse.

BALLADS AND TALES IN MAITHILI LITERATURE

Ballads are fundamentally story-telling forms, presenting a plot with characters and sometimes dialogue. They are often sung and were originally associated with dance, with a focus on rhythm and melody. Many traditional ballads were not written down but were passed from generation to generation, leading to unknown authorship and variations in verse which is typically written in quatrains (four-line stanzas). In the context of the English ballad, Ralph Greaves (1889-1966) an eminent British writer wrote in his book 'The English Ballads' (?), "It is connected with the word 'balle' and originally met a dong are retrain intended as accompaniment to dancing, but tailor covered any song in which a group are people socially joined".¹ A "tale" is a story or narrative of real or imaginary events, often embellished with vivid details and exciting elements. While it can refer to any story, it often implies one that is especially imaginative, perhaps about adventure, fantasy, or even a cautionary event. The word can also, less commonly, refer to a falsehood, gossip, or an old belief known to be incorrect.

There are two types of ballads or Gita Katha. Some like 'Lorika', 'Salahes' and dina Bhadri Gitas. are not in rhymed or even versified language, though they are not in prose; they are carolled or sung rather than rebuked. Others like 'Jalecha' and 'Rani Dhonruaini' Gitas are in melodious verse. It is seen in some of the latter's class of ballad songs sung by lower class people during the ladies of high rank for amusement. They are like Bengali Gita-Kathas, not merely nursery tales. According to the ideas of the east for the education of women, there cannot be anything more transcendent or edifying. Unlike, some of the Mithila Romantic prose Folk Tales, the variant of reciting these tales--- "The stop, the sighs and even the coughing"² are presented through the age. Here, firstly described the ballad-songs which are given below:

(A. BALLADS SONGS :

There are many variants of ballad-songs like- Kamala Maiyaka Gita, Lorikaka Gita, Salahasaka Gita, Dina-Bhadrika Gita, Chechhanaka Gita, Gopi Chanak Gita etc. In spite of this, there are many other legendary heroes of Maithili ballads, like -- Kuvar Vijubhan, Amar Singh, Karikh Pajiar, Kewal's songs, Gango Godhin, Guguliya Chaka, Jai Singh, Dulara Dayal, Naika Banijara, Pheku Dayaram, Bakhtaur Singh Basavan Khirahari Bihula, Bulaki Gopa, Rani Bedhuani, Bhuiyan's song's, Rani Bharuani, Mahua Ghatavarini, Raiya Ranpal, Lavahari-Kushhari, Banshidhar Bhabhan, Vijay Mall, Sita -Vasant etc. They belonged in the different casts and were popular not only for Mithila but also the whole of North India. Among them, Lorika in Gopa, Salahesa in Dusadha, Dina-Bhadri in Musahara and Chechhan in Chamar's casts, were prevalent in Mithila.

(1.) LORIKAKA-GITA :

The legend of Lorika (or Veer Lorik) is a prominent ballad in the Maithili folklore of Mithila, Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, centered around the heroic warrior Lorik, known for his strength, love, and devotion to justice. In this epic, it is known as the "Lorikayan". Perhaps the earliest of the Ballads are those connected with Lorika. The ballads of Lorika are known to have been popular as early as the days of Jyotirisvara (1280-1340)³ the author of "Varna-Ratnakar" (lakshman Samvat 315/1224 A. D.).⁴ An account of Lorika was collected by General Cunningham in the course of his remarks on two other folk heroes of Mithila, "Harva" and Barva. "Lorika" was a hero of supernatural strength, who brought away from his last fight the spoils of his enemies fastened round his wrist. See the following verse:

*" Asi manka seli, chaurasi manak khar
Man pachahhtar he jambu katar,
Sat se man sat seva he, Bawan manaka sone katar,
Bais manaka jhilmil, asi manaka lohabanda,
Sat garika bhari lorik bandhe kamar lagai."*⁵

It is not pretty sure of all the terms used here, but as well as it can make them out they are given below:

Eighty maunds of spears, eighty-four maunds straight swords, seventy-five maunds Jambu daggers, seven hundred maunds of satseva, fifty-two maunds of golden-handled daggers, twenty two maunds of Jhilmil (Perhaps barred helmets), eighty mands of maces or lohabanda, seven cart-loads Loric bound about his waist. This analysis shows Lorika's personality. He was really a great warrior. "Of Lorika himself I could learn nothing more than that he was an Ahir"⁶ Certainly, the exploits of Lorika are so stimulant that they have found room in the ballads of the neighbouring provinces too. George Abraham Grierson also noticed them in his Notes on the District of Gaya.⁷ Mr Verrier Elwin (1902-1964) in his book 'Folk Songs of Chattisgarh, has collected the account of some variants of this legend and discussed them."⁸ In the Mithila version the character of the wife of Lorika. Various called Majhari, Majhara and Manjaria, is shown to be a true wife-a 'Sati'. The Mithila version is very much superior to another version, perhaps, because it is really the original version.

(2) DINABHADRIKA-GITA:

"Dina -Bhadri" are folk deities often mentioned in Maithili devotional music and stories. They are associated with local history and traditions, with songs and narratives often detailing their exploits and significance. "Gitas" or Songs about Dina-Bhadri.

His Gitas likely refers to songs dedicated to these deities. The ballad of Dina-Bhadri is purely related to Musahar society. The episode of Dind and Bhadri has also been published in full by George Abraham Grierson (1851-1941). Dina and Bhadri are contemplated to be Gods of the Musahara cast. They were themselves Musahar brothers and were killed by photata the were-jackal with the stimulation and co-operation of salahas.

Here, the legend of phot'ra--- the wear- jackal in accordance with the wear-wolf of European folk-tales is worth noting. According to tradition, Phot'ra is a jackal. Into whose body a malevolent supernatural entry or a man with magical power who is helped by an evil spirit has entered. He is then insurmountable and his bite is certain death. The crying sound of a crowd of jackals on a quiet Indian night is at all times extremely frightening adequate., but now and then one hears a single jackal give aperture to a horridly bizarre cry of the peculiar kind significantly distinct from the ordinary cry of its fellows. This is according to the congenital, the cry of phot'ra and a wise man will not speculate out into the dark night if he hears it close by. In fact it is I believe the cry of the female jackal under the power over to have on the oestrus. The tales of the certain death which result from the bite of a mad jacke.

In the first chapter, Grierson said, "A magician or exorcist asks the services of Dina and Bhadri of Jogia jalari from their mother, Niraso- to labour for him in the fields. They deny, on the ground that they have never lived by labouring but by hunting, and, beating him, entreat him, shameful. The chapter is a dreamy description, though it is not expressly mentioned anywhere, the reason why in the next chapter Dina and Bhadri meet their death in the course of hunting in the forest of kataya. They encounter a beast called Photara (the were jackal), which is killed, but, being brought to life again and again by Salahesa, bring Dina Ram to the ground, and kill him :--

*"Tesar beri Salahesa kahalathinh sat hamar o bat yar rakhu. Tesar beri sat se phot'ra dhailak"
Dina Ram ke delak dharati me khasay
Dinaram ke dharitahi Bhadrik puhanip kehuni chhati gel."*⁹

Bhadri is asked by Salahesa to go back to his home, but he refuses to do so. He says:

*"Marala dunu bhai Kataiya
Jahi muhen dhailak photara gidar jetha bhaike
Tahi muhen dharau hamra ke."*¹⁰

Hence, Bhadri was seized and killed by Photra for the third time. Hereafter, the spirits of Dina-Bhadri bear on the story. Even with a little loss of life of Dina-Bhadri, they send their death by Ahira Goara. See the following example:

*"Dina-Bhadrik nainhi jogia mahim
Sat din sat bital kataia khaya
Keo nahi ayal mora gohar
Kakara de ke jogia janjari bhejab samad"*¹¹

The spirits of Dina-Bhadri disguise themselves as mendicant hermits, and go home. At home, even by their mother and wives also do not recognise. They understand who beggar guests are and they welcome them intimately and shut them in a room. However, they depart and carry off Jiria Tamolini and Hiria Tamolini as their wives. They procure litters and bamboo poles and mount the two women in them. In front went the litters and behind them the two brothers. On the way, the spirit of Bhadri asks the spirit of Dina to allow him to fetch milk for himself from Gulam Jata the owner of Sina and Bena cows in the village of Bagaha. Dina allows him to go. Then, village children follow them, a very homely scene created. To whom he asked for the house of Gulami Jata's master:-

*"Bagaha dhiya puta palara baithal,
Dhiya puta ke puchaita chhathi,
Je, re dhia puta tahir miyanka haveli dekhav
Tora debau motichurak laddu,
Dhiya puta Bhadri ke lait chhanhi danti
Re batohia, tahir miyangamak gumasta chaik,
Okar nam keo ne bat-batohi dharait achhi.
Re dhia puta tahi miyank haveli dekhav,
Uncha haveli nichhe duaria, tahan pahunchal Bhadri."*¹²

However, Dthis Bhadri meets Gulami Jata in the valley of Bara Diha but the latter denies churlishly. Thereupon, into the body of Photara, the two spirits enter, that had killed them and overcome Gulami in a fight. See examples :

*"Parait achhi hank, Gai dait achhi bhrakae.
Photara baradih me Gai bharakabait achhi.*

.....
*Gor lagait chhi, paiyan parait chhi
E nahi janali aha Bhsdari. chhi."*¹³

Henceforth, the above verse shows his promise to serve them faithfully. Thus, Dina-Bhadri's role is that of a hero, who could do heroic deeds much successfully.

(3) SALAHESAKA-GITA:

Salahesa was cast by Dusadha. He was the watchman of Raja Bhimasena's Keolagaraha. The cast of Dusadha of Mithila worshipped him as a God. The most important part of the legend is played by Salahesa's wife named Dauna Malini. Actually beside her, Salahesa appears to be powerless and even a dull hero. Dauna Malini of Morang kept a garden and waited a long time to get her husband. The following Gita describes her eagerly waiting for the day when she would marry salaheda :

*"Se jani chuharmal chadhi kae ael, jhontik kesa bandhal dohari chadhana
chadhaol, lakh dar lakh ch churi gatara me bandhal, kamar me dhala
bandhal. Pestara churi lel hath kain baithal dharati me. Asan lagae kain, del
petakuniyan dharati me senha katai lagala, dui chari kosaka bich sau dharati
me mili gel, senha kati pahunchal jahi ghar me Rani Hansavati sutali sonak
palag par munahar ghar me, tahitham ghar me pahuchal chuharamal
chora."*¹⁴

After then, Raja Bhimasena sends the messenger for salahesa who is found in a wine-shop. See the following lines:

*"Dekhal salahesa kai kalalak bhathi par Daru pibait, ganga malait, karia
pagari matha me, lalaki lathi hatha me, ghorua manti deh me."*¹⁵

Dauna learns by magic the whereabouts of the thief and promises to bring the thief and the stolen properties recover within seven days. She takes the initiative in planning to capture Chuhara Mala. She turns Salahesa and herself into the guise of Nata (impersonate) and a prostitute respectively. See what a Nata and a prostitute are supposed to look like:

*"Mathak tika murae dia, julphi rakhae lia, tasaraka dhoti kacha lagae lia,
uttam rang takhi mura baitha lia, ghorua mati gata lagae lia, dui-chari dand
lagae lia je asale Nataka bhesa lage....."*¹⁶

Finally, Salahesa to chuhara Mala with the help of the hero's wife (Dauna), the story of chuhara Mala's capturing is described in detail.

Then, Dauna beautifies sixteen Bridal adornments and love and affection with each other. In many places we can see the agony of the Salahesa's wife is also lit in this story that touches the human emotions. See these lines:

*"Nanhita sau posalahu, eyek vastu ghar me rakhalahu, taio ne svami
Salahesa ailaha. Hunka karan phulwari ropali, rang- rangak phal ani
lagaoli- beli phul, chameli o bulakung newar tekharik phul, phulwari lagaol,
huni salahesaka karan, sanchi bira pan lagaol, medani phul ganja ani lagaol,
taio salahesa Moranga sau nahi ayal. Bina purusha sau kona divas gamaob,
ehi sok-santap sau teji ditahun Morang raj, desa paisi ke swami takitahu.*

*Swami Salahesa jau militathi, swami salahesa lai raj bhogitahun, nahi milatah hi hari ghurab, sog santap teji dhasi khasab feri palata Morang nahi aeb."*¹⁷

Finally, Salahesa to chuhara Mala with the help of the hero's wife (Dauna), the story of chuhara Mala's capturing has been described in detail. Dona, here also comes to the help of Salahesa and enables him to finally capture the thief. Raja Bhimsena pardons chuhar Mala, and Salahesa and his wife lived happily thereafter.

(4.) KAMALA MAIYAKA-GITA:

All over Mithila, a series of songs celebrate the glories of Kamala (A famous river- Goddess) worshipped by specially fishermen. One of these is given below as an illustration:

*"Kahama bahai chhi maiya Kamalesari
kahama bahai chhi Balan
Maiya he bahai chhi Balan
dachhinahi Bahai chhaik Maiya Kamalesari
Hae Alapur kathi lae bodhabaik Maiya Kamlesari
Maia ho kathi lae bodhabaik Maiya Kamalesari
Maiya ho kathi lae ka bodhabai Balan
Pathi da ka bodhabai Maiya Kamalesari
Phale pane bodhabai balan."*¹⁸

(6.) KUMAR BRAJABHANAKA-GITA OR SUTTHI KUMARIKA-GITA :

It is popular among the lower class people in Mithala. Generally it is sung by them during the night. The story of this Gita is as follows:

There was a king in Pohupinagar called Raja Rohana Mala. He had a brave nephew named Kumara Brajabhan so that he might bring it for him. Rani Sarathi is the sister of Rani Manakali of Katak who is sure to give a male heir. The king wrote a letter to kumar Brijabhana, which is given below:

*"Chithiya me likhaiya Raja chithi dekhi ke bhagan abiha,
Chithi dekhite abiha aba bhejai abaRaja."*¹⁹

According to Dr. Jayakant Mishra, an eminent historian of Maithili literature -- Kumara Brijabhana had recently married and was coming to his newly wedded wife. But he had to leave her. He is called by Raja and ordered him to bring Sarothi. He met Guru Gorakhanath and with his help, he reached Katak after crossing the mountain "Maina" and distinguished himself as an ascetic. His long and adventurous march is described in several lines through Mahananda, Sanopipayara, Vavalanga, Batasa, Gidargang, Daura etc; these were the gardens of the Malini. He fulfills his mission with the aid of magic and supernatural agencies. In this story, adventure, romance love travel and pathos all mingle.

(B) TALES AND IT'S SONG:

On the other hand the second group " Maithili Tales also consists of ballad-songs. This group of ballads is mainly occupied with the celebration of certain semi- religious folk heroes. A religious sanctity and solemnity is attached to their singing. They generally express, of course symbolically,, the latent desires and cherished ideals of the communities by whom they are specially sung. The names of some tael's are given below :-

- (a) Bihulaka Katha,
- (b) Gopichandaka Katha,
- (c) Ajuraka Katha
- (d) Jalechaka katha and many others.

(a) BIHULAKA-KATHA

The story of Bihula in Maithili Tales of a devoted wife who journeys to heaven on a raft with her dead husband; Bala Kumar. Visahari was the daughter of Mahadev who married Basuki. She bites Gauri but makes her live again. She gets the boon of Mahadeva that she will be worshipped by a trader called Cando but when she comes to "Champa Nagar" where cando is alive. He refuses to worship her. Then begins the main thread of the story. Bihula dedicates her whole life to the service of her husband.

Maithili literature boasts a rich collection of traditional ballads, or lok-gathas, that tell the stories of community heroes and are often performed as "Bhao- Khelaeb" (soul invocation performances), like - Mata Gahila, Sokha, Dihvar Baba, Dewani Baba, Brahma Baba, Bandi, Goraiya Maharaj etc . Key examples include the legendary Lorik-Vijaya, the epic Kīchak-Vadh, and Kṛṣṇajanm, which details the life of Lord Krishna. Other narrative works and literary tales are found in collections like the "Varna Ratnakar" and "Katha-Sangrah". Folk-Tale (katha) is the style of a long epic poem. It contains meaningless phrases, unnecessary word-repetition, clauses and even incidents, but there is dulcet music and rhythm of the entire poem. It is heightened when sung in its proper tune. In Mithila, The story of Bihula has become famous since it was published by Raj Bahadur D. C. in Bengali language.²⁰ Its maithili version has also been published. There are minor differences between both of the book but the main story is equal in both versions.

(b) GOPICHANDAKA-KATHA :

Gopichanda's Katha refers to traditional folk narratives often a musical or spoken -word format about the king(Raja) Bharathari and his nephew Gopichanda is as popular in Maithili as in Bengali or Hindi. The version of this story that has been published and translated by George Abraham Grierson²¹ is in the Magahi dialect of Maithili. The story of Gopichanda is more interesting and heart-tuching. See example:

*"Gudari pakari re Gopichand,
puchhae tora Maiya ho Gopiya
Kae karana banale Gopiya yogi ||Re-ki||
Jau ham janitau re Gopiya
Banabae tau yogi re Gopia
Soiri ghar me tora disi dekhio ne takitau ||Re-ki||"*²²

These lines show full of pain in the sole of a mother.

(c) AJURAKA-KATHA:

Ajuraka-katha is a pathetic tale. A girl named Ajura was the favourite of her family but she became an orphan in her childhood. Her mother and father died at an early age and her brothers went away in other provinces to earn money. She was left at the mercy of her brother's wives. See the pain of her heart in the following lines:

*"Kanie chand bhel tau maya mari geli,
Adha chan bhela tau bapa mari gel
Sause chan bhel tau sato bhaiya gel videsh."*²³

(d) JALECHHAKA-KATHA:

The story of Jalechhaka -Katha is also pathetic. It is a tale of the sacrifice of a daughter of a king so that it may have water in it. The story can be fully appreciated only if it is given in detail. The king's astrological adviser advises him that if your daughter 'Jalechha Kumari' will go to the depth of the newly well, the water problems will be solved. The king sends his daughter into a newly dug tank. As she enters the tank, the level of water rises and the most poetic and the most tragic moments are raised. Gradually the Water level is being increased inch by inch and the girl is to sink in water. That time, she sends forth piteous songs requesting people to take her out of the tank. Later, she comes from her husband's house but her arrival is grimly greeted by her mother. This is the abstract of Jalechhaka-Katha.

CONCLUSION :

These are the most prominent folk narratives in Maithili, detailing the heroic deeds of specific caste or community heroes and are central to their cultural identity and worship. Maithili literature boasts a rich collection of traditional ballads, or lok-gathas, that tell the stories of community heroes and are often performed as examples including the legendary Lorika, Salahesa, Dina-Bhadri, Kumar Brijabhana etc. Other narrative works and literary tales are found in collections like the Bihula-ka katha, Gopichand-ka katha, Ajura-ka katha etc. These ballads & Tales are sung in a specific tune and it relates the ancient culture, which is the root identity of Mithila.

Apart from this there are legendary Characters found in mithila like Raja dhodhana Singh and Rani maruani, Bulaki Gopa, Mira, Gaiya, Raghunath Singh, Damodar Singh Jhangaru, Mansa Gopa, Jivai, Goraiya, Sarabania Goara, Gahila, Sokha, Bandi, Brahama Baba, Dewani Baba, Devnath Thakur, Gudaria, Nata, and so forth. It is not possible to describe all these legendary heroes in this "word-limit-article". The main features of the Gita-Kathas are clear. They are meant to entertain their hearers, to cultivate their mind and heart with tales of sacrifice, heroism, tenderness and womanly, motherly or sisterly affection. Their plots and their style follow certain conventions such as the intermingling of supernatural powers and human beings and the repetition of jingling and meaningless phrases

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