
Folk Literature and the Rise of Vernaculars in India

Vanitha P.

Lecturer

English

Mangalore University Constituent College

Nellyadi.

Article Link: <https://aksharasurya.com/2024/02/vanitha-p-2.php>

ABSTRACT:

India is a vast and diverse country having a natural cashier of folk tales and folk literature. Folk literature may be a part and apportion of the language and culture of any society. Folk literature also called folklore or oral tradition is that the masters (traditional knowledge and beliefs) of cultures having no written communication. It is transmitted by word of mouth and contains, as does write literature, of both prose and verse narratives, poems and songs, myths, dramas, rituals, proverbs, riddles, and therefore the like. Nearly all known peoples, now or within the past, have produced it. The diversity of India's culture ensures a wide but complex range of literature which is based on the traditional language and customs from different regions, religious and social groups, and tribes. Most of the Folk tales are created, spread, and retained in the vernacular languages as Folktales exercise a powerful influence over the popular imagination, with folk heroes often being deified in villages. This paper deliberates on various aspects of the Indian Folk literature regarding its connection with the development of regional vernacular literature in India.

KEY WORDS:

Folk Literature, Bhakti Movement, Oral Literature, Vernacular Languages.

Introduction:

Folk literature a part and parcel of the language and culture of any society. Folk literature also called folklore or oral tradition is that the lore (traditional knowledge and beliefs) of cultures having no written communication. It is transmitted by word of mouth and consists, as does write literature, of both prose and verse narratives, poems and songs, myths, dramas, rituals, proverbs, riddles, and therefore the like. Nearly all known peoples, now or within the past, have produced it.

Folk literature is studied for its intrinsic merit and delight, more as an independent writing style, but using these materials as an integral part of our academic and socialization process is conspicuous by its absence. The stories that are included in grade school textbooks years ago still be repeated, even with newer discoveries of folklore materials.

India is a country with tremendous cultural diversity. Each culture has its knowledge system. Since Independence, collection, preservation, analysis, and study of folks literature have received tons of attention altogether the main languages of India. However, the utilization of materials from the Folk literature for purposes of instruction at various levels of education is quite minimal. These could also be wont to imbibe values, sort of language, and lots of other important learning items within the minds of learners. The three models of education, non-formal, formal, and informal that go from teaching literacy to literature and other subjects, can make use of folks literature as a strong educational tool. This paper focuses on the system of data construction embedded into its socio-cultural context. Here is an effort to acknowledge the pedagogical

potential folk literature offers for creative language curriculum, rhetoric, history, socialization, civics, and related subjects.

What is Folk Literature?

It is actually refers to popular literature, mass literature, and literary works rooted in folk literature is the very thing that cannot be regarded as elegant, the one not concerned by the literate but popularized in the folk. It is loved and enjoyed by the mass.

Need and Relevance:

- * Folk literature includes all the myths, legends, epics, fables, and folktales passed down by word of mouth through the generations. The authors of traditional literature are usually unknown or unidentifiable.
- * These stories have endured because they are entertaining, they embody the culture's belief system, and that they contain fundamental human truths by which individuals have lived for hundreds of years. Knowing the characters and situations of folks literature is a component of being culturally literate.
- * Folk literature, regardless of its place of origin, seems clearly have to arisen to meet a variety of human needs- including the necessity to elucidate the mysteries of the wildlife, the necessity to articulate our fears and dreams, the necessity to impose order on the random, even chaotic, nature of life, the necessity to entertain ourselves and every other.
- * Folk literature, regardless of its place of origin, seems clearly to have arisen to meet a variety of human needs:

1. The need to explain the mysteries of the natural world.
 2. The need to articulate our fears and dreams
 3. The need to impose order on the apartment random, even chaotic, nature of life.
 4. The need to entertain ourselves and each other.
- * Their brevity, immediate action, easily understandable characters, recurring features, fantastic elements, and happy endings particularly appeal to children between the ages of three and eight. Folk literature can help children begin to develop a way of morality.

The beginnings of written literature in Sumer and Egypt 5,000 or 6,000 years ago happened during a world that knew only folk literature. During the millennia since then, written literature has been surrounded and sometimes about overwhelmed by the humbler activity of the unlettered. All societies have produced some men and ladies of great natural endowments—shamans, priests, rulers, and warriors and from these has come to the best stimulus everywhere toward producing and taking note of myths, tales, and songs. To these the common man has listened to such effect that sometimes he himself has become a bard.

Historical Perspectives

From the linguistic point of view, the Indian subcontinent features a very rich cultural diversity. All four major languages (Indo-European, Dravidian, Tibeto- Burman, and Austro- Asiatic) are spoken here. That linguistic diversity is reflected in the cultural diversity of equal magnitude. Alexander's (327 B.C.)'s invasion resulted in the establishment of

the first Indian Empire under great kings like Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka.

The very first traces of the Folk are traced back in medieval Indian literature. The earliest works in many of the languages were sectarian, designed to advance, or to celebrate some unorthodox regional belief. Examples are the Caryapadas in Bengali, Tantric verses of the 12th century, and the Lilacaritra (circa 1280), in Marathi. In Kannada (Kanarese) from the 10th century, and later in Gujarati from the 13th century, the primary truly indigenous works are Jain romances; ostensibly the lives of Jain saints, these are popular tales based on Sanskrit and Pali themes.

Another example was in Rajasthani of the bardic tales of chivalry and heroic resistance to the primary Muslim invasions - like the 12th-century heroic poem Prithiraja-Raso by Chand Bardai of Lahore. Most important of all for later Indian literature were the first traces in the vernacular languages of the northern Indian cults of Krishna and Rama. Included are the 12th-century poems by Jaydev, called the Gitagovinda (The Cowherd's Song); and about 1400, a gaggle of spiritual love poems written in Maithili (eastern Hindi of Bihar) by the poet Vidyapati was a seminal influence on the cult of Radha-Krishna in Bengal.

The Bhakti Tradition:

Bhakti, is a form of devotion. That word sometimes connotes something personal and private also. It is also considered as a pluralism of religion which is of participation, community, enthusiasm, song, and often of personal challenge. They are the direct connections to the divine and personal encounters

to the personal gods. Most of the songs poems and oral narratives are connected to individual people. These people moved by their encounters and experiences turned to poetry which became a natural vehicle of Bhakti. There is a whole galaxy of bhakti poets who have been moved to the song in the course of Indian history, and their songs are still sung today, everywhere across the subcontinent and in all its major languages. In Hindi, there's Kabīr and Sūrdās, Ravidās and Mīrābāī. In Tamil, there's Nammāl̥vār and Āṇṭāl̥. In Marathi, Nāmdev, and Tukārām. In Punjabi, Bābā Nānak, who became the first of the Sikh Gurus. All of these are Bhakti poets. (Hawley,2015)

Chaitnya Mahaprabhu, the Hindu mystic, established the Radha-Krishna cult, under in Bengal and Vallabhacharya at Mathura, involved bhakti. The earlier traces of this attitude are found in the work of the Tamil Alvars (mystics who wrote ecstatic hymns to Vishnu between the 7th and 10th centuries). At a later surge of bhakti flooded every channel of Indian intellectual and religious life. Bhakti was also addressed to Rama (an avatar of Vishnu), most notably within the Avadhi (eastern Hindi) works of Tulsi Das; his Ramcharitmanas (Lake of the Acts of Rama, 1574-77; trans. 1952) has become authoritative.

Bhakti as Folk Literature:

Bhakti movement and songs added into the vernacular flavor. In those days Sanskrit was understood all over India but was mainly restricted to the upper caste aesthetics. like Latin or Greek, one had to be educated to take in its meanings. The Bhakti poets propagated a different kind of local aesthetic movement, based on the mother tongue – or rather, the mother tongues. And there was a pattern to it. Among India's regional

languages, Tamil, which is spoken in the far south, was the first to be written down. Tamil was pictured as being the root of the Bhakti movement, and indeed, we know that Tamil Bhakti poets were already active in the sixth and seventh centuries. But they were just the beginning. As the great poet and critic A.K. Ramanujan once said, these Tamil poets lit a fuse that refused to go out before it had ignited the whole subcontinent, first sparking poetry in the neighboring region of Karnataka, then spreading northward to Maharashtra and Gujarat until finally, it ignited the Hindi- or Urdu-speaking regions of north India and beyond. (Hawley, 2015))

Gods- Demons and In-Between

Indian folk heroes in Sanskrit epics and history and also in freedom movement are well known to everyone. They have found a place in written literature. But in the Indian cultural sub-system, Indian folk heroes are most popular. The castes and tribes of India have maintained their diversities of culture through their language and religion and customs. So additionally to national heroes, regional heroes and native folk and tribal heroes are alive within the collective memory of the people. Let's take examples of the Santals of the Gonds. The Santals have their culture hero "Beer kherwal" and "Bidu Chandan". Gonds have their folk hero "Chital Singh Chatri". Banjara folk hero is "Lakha Banjara" or "Raja Isalu". But not only heroes, but the heroines of Indian folklore have also significant contributions in shaping the culture of India. Banjara epics are heroine-centric. These epics reflect the "sati" cult. Oral epics with heroic actions of heroes and heroines produce "counter texts" as against the written texts. Therefore the younger brother becomes a hero and kills his elder brother in an oral epic, which

is forbidden in classical epics. Folk heroes are sometimes deified and are worshipped within the village.

There is a thin difference between a mythic hero and a romantic hero in Indian folklore. In Kalahandi, oral epics are available among the ethnic singers performed in a ritual context and social context. Dr. Mahendra Mishra, a folklorist has researched oral epics in Kalahandi taking seven ethnic groups. Dr. Chitrasen Pasayat has made an extensive study of different folk and tribal forms of Yatra like Dhanu yatra, Kandhen-budhi yatra, Chuda-Khai yatra, Sulia yatra, Patkhanda yatra, Budha-danger yatra, Khandabasa yatra, Chhatar yatra, Sital-sasthi yatra and examined the 'hero characters' of the local deities. Indian oral epics are found abundantly everywhere there is caste-based culture. Prof. Lauri Honko from Turku, Finland with Prof. Vivek Rai and Dr. K Chinnapa Gawda have conducted extensive fieldwork and research on Siri Epic and have come out with three volumes on Siri Epic. Similarly, Prof. Peter J Claus has done intensive work on Tulu epics. Aditya Mallick on Devnarayan Epic, Pulikonda Subbachary on jambupurana, Dr. JD Smith on Pabuji epic are some of the commendable work that has been drawn the attention of the wider readership.

The scientific study of Indian folklore was slow to begin. The early collectors felt far freer to creatively reinterpret source material and picked up their material with a view to the picturesque rather than the representative. A. K. Ramanujan's theoretical and aesthetic contributions span several disciplinary areas. Context-sensitivity may be a theme that appears not only in Ramanujan's cultural essays, but also appears in his writing about Indian folklore and classic poetry. In "Where

Mirrors are Windows,” (1989) and in “Three Hundred Ramayanas” (1991), for instance, he discusses the “intertextual” nature of Indian literature, written and oral...He says, “What is simply suggested in one poem may become central during a ‘repetition’ or an ‘imitation’ of it. His essay “Where Mirrors Are Windows: Toward an Anthology of Reflections” (1989), and his commentaries within the Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology (1967) and Folktales from India, Oral Tales from Twenty Indian Languages (1991) are good samples of his add Indian folklore studies.

Rudyard Kipling was curious about folklore, handling English folklore in works like Puck of Pook’s Hill and Rewards and Fairies his experiences in India led him to also create similar works with Indian themes. Kipling spent an excellent deal of his life in India and was conversant in the Hindi language. His works such as the two Jungle Books contain many stories that are written after the manner of traditional folktales. Indian themes also appear in his Just So Stories, and many of the characters bear recognizable names from Indian languages. During an equivalent period, Helen Bannerman penned the now notorious Indian-themed tale of Little Black Sambo, which represented itself to be an Indian folktale. Post-Independence, disciplines, and methods from anthropology began to be used in the creation of more in-depth surveys of Indian folklore.

Folklorists of India are often broadly divided into three phases. Phase I was British Administrators who collected the local knowledge and folklore to know the themes they need to rule. next were the missionaries who wanted to acquire the language of the people to recreate their religious literature

for evangelical purposes. The third phase was the post-independent period within the country where many universities, institutes, and individuals started studying the folklore. The purpose was to look at the national identity through legends, myths, and epics.

Over time, Academic institutions and universities in the country started opening departments on folklore in their respective regions, more in south India to maintain their cultural identity and also maintain language and culture. Scholars like Dr. Satyendra, Devendra Satyarthi, Krishnadev Upadhayaya, Jhabberchand Meghani, Prafulla Dutta Goswami, Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Kunja Bihari Dash, Chitrasen Pasayat, Somnath Dhar, Ramgarib Choube, Jagadish Chandra Trigunayan and lots of more were the pioneer in working on folklore. Of course, the trend was more literary than analytical.

It was during the 1980s that the central Institute of Indian Languages and therefore the American Institute of Indian Studies started their systemic study on Folklore any then many western, also as eastern scholars, pursued their studies on folklore as a discipline. The pioneer of the folklorists in contemporary India is Jawaharlal Handoo, Chitrasen Pasayat, Sadhana Naithani, Kishore Bhattacharjee, Anjali Padhi, Kailash Patnaik, VA Vivek Rai, late Komal Kothari, Raghavan Payanad, M Ramakrishnan, Nandini Sahu and many more. An emerging trend of the latest folklorists has emerged who are committed to understanding folklore from the Indian point of view than to ascertain the entire subjects from the western model. Some of them are better to like better to understand folklore from folklore providers and consultants who are the creator and consumers of folklore.

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