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Literature of Dungri Bhil Tribes and Their Forms.

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the literature and its forms of Dungri Bhil tribes.

Few years back, the situation of tribal literature in academics was moribund. Yet the traces can be found with the publication of *Oriental Memoirs* by James Forbes in 1834. He has produced four volume of which in the third volume we find the writings about Gujarat and its cultural aspects, their customs, beliefs and ritual practices. In 1984 a mammoth task was taken in hand by a person from Gandhinagar/Ahmedabad. By 2010 he, Bhagvandas Patel has documented four major epics titled *Rathore Varta* which came in 1992, *Gujarat no Arelo* in 1993, *Rom Sitma ni Varta* in 1995, *Bhilo nu Bharat* 1997. Among others, there are many short oral narratives too. So far there had been disgust for tribal literature or they were considered taken as marginalised and illiterate people. But after the emergence of fictional myths writings, tribal literature also drawn the attention of scholars. Their myths and narratives are studied with many Indian and western approaches. To name the few approaches are archetypal criticism, psychoanalytical criticism and cultural criticism. The question is how come the people from whom the four epics and considerable other narratives have come out can be considered illiterate. Perhaps they require different measurements or standards. Not only oral narratives but they are the owner of very rich song genres too. This paper focuses on various types of the literature of Dungri Bhil tribes. Paper will also try to brief about what are the forms and structures of these literature, when and how are they practiced and beliefs bound with them if any.

Key words : Dungri Bhil, tribal literature, genres and forms.

Introduction

Bhagvanda Patel has not only documented this literature but also provided some insides of tribal practices when they perform. Where he writes some of the salient characteristics of their oral narratives and of their daily life. The word Dungari Bhil is a Dravidian derived word. Where Dungari means the inhabitants of Dungar that is hills. Their location is around Aravalli ranges. He gives an account of these tribes in social, economic political and economic contexts. How their society is managed, and one of them being the main features is the matriarchal system. Women enjoy the more freedom than their counterparts in the rural or urban area. Which is due their faith in Mahamargi tradition. After the death of a mother they keep her ashes into their homes



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and worship them as Heetdevi (the goddess of wellbeing). In their society a widow can remarry and can bring her husband into his own home also. Before the marriage groom is to pay to win the hand of a girl. If he fails or is insufficient to pay then he has to work into the fields of his father in law. their concept of the gods is also different. They have the stories and narrative of the emergence of their gods. Women enjoys more rights compared to men. Not only that but a widow can marry again too and if she wishes she can bring her another husband in the same house too.

In the preface to Bhilo nu Bharat he traces the history of Oral Narratives in India and also criticizes the false usages of them in current time. He talks of the harsh reality in few of the compilations of oral narratives. He tries to bring out the root characteristics of Garasiya Bhil of Rajasthan. With whatever reasons, when people are to leave their region and to migrate elsewhere, they cannot and do not forget their rituals, customaries, beliefs and their oral or written literature. Garasiya being one them are residing into the regions of Rajasthan. He also decodes few names from original Mahbhart which in Garasiya's colloquial language are different. their societal system is matriarchal.

Since, there is little available, translation would open the further scope for the study. They even lack the appropriate interpreting apart from very little that is available. Their literature is to be seen and analysed into their context and for that any critic would also require to understand their faiths, beliefs, rituals and so forth

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Nature of their folk songs and its atmosphere

Their folk songs are named as Geetan which by no mean are meant to entertain. They have these songs sung on special occasions like that of birth, marriages and so forth. Another form that they have is Hag na Geeto. They have Vatavana na Geeto which are sung in the invocation of the god and goddesses and seek their gracing. They celebrate their friendships and love by songs of Gothiya na Geeto which are generally recited during the exalting atmosphere of fairs. There are many such songs which are recited with the help of musical instruments and some without depending the occasions. Their rhythm, dance and musics are otherwise integral part of the songs. One of the most common and exciting part their songs is Kikiyari. Which can be roughly translated as the onomatopoeic Chorus. Their songs can be divided into two categories. Spiritual or religious songs and the songs on various occasions.



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There is very little available about or on this literature. Hasu yagnik wrote its critical nalysis. Dipak Patel in his book Adivasi Sahity: Vivechan ane Vishleshan which came out in 2015 categorises these songs into following categories.

1. Religious Ritual practices and myth reflective Narratives.

Amog these are aravvali ni pahad ni ashta

Devaliya na Arela

Navalkh Devio ane Karmiro

Aravalli Lok ni Vahi Vato

Bhilli Lokotsav Gor

Kobariya Thakor ni Yarta

Devara ni Varta

Onsdev ni Yarta

Motichara ni Varta

2. Worship reflective discipleship reflective narratives.

Torirani ni Varta

Ruparani ni Varta

Halo Hura ane Satiyo Khatun

Ramdev ni Varta

Gopicand ane Bharhtari ni Varta

Lalu Arid ani Varta



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3. Narratives during the matrimonial practices

Khutano Rajvi ane Devol Gujran

Dhola Maruni

Nagji Dalji

4. Mortuary narratives

Jagde Paramar

Hapiyade Hokhli

Honal Hodhi

Ramdev ni Varta

Gopicand ane Bharathari ni Varta

Hansdev ni Varta

Halde Holangi ni Varta



Lalu Arid ani Varta

5. Miscellaneous narrative

Hansdev ni Varta

Halde Holangi

Ramdev ni Varta

Gopicand ane Bahrathari ni Varta

Lalu arid ani Varta

Most of their stories begin with Jhalukar (flood). Which are found similar in the context with Mesopotamian civilisation too. Jhalukar in the beginning there was nothing except water. The seeds of the earth were underwater. Out of the water there comes Amba and takes the form of Turtle to fetch the seeds of earth which were not only underwater but beside the Vasuki Nag. She goes and bring the seed and then earthly structures begin. *Manusmruti* talks of the same thing in its first chapter that the whole world was dark and was under water. *Mahabharat* says that after each epoch there is great flood and the fertile earths layer changes.



They have narratives which are sung in accordance with the changing of Seasons. They are generally sung with Tambur and Manjira (musical instruments). These narratives are called Bajan- Varta. some Bhajan-Varta are as lengthy as an epic. In these times they are strictly denied to eat nonveg and drink liquors. Nor can lady with period can enter. They first set the seat to invoke their god and get them sit there. This seat is made up of the fresh soil where the plough has just touched and its mixture with young cow's dung. They begin their narratives by first playing Tambur and the then the recitation precedes. In the gaps Tambur is played in cadence.

Hamadh

Hamadh is from which is practiced when the eldest member of a family, or a leader of the village dies. They recite Hamadh in the remembrance if them. Generally, in this practice they worship Hansdev (god). They have whole narrative for the said god Hansdev. they worship for the wellness of the departed soul.

Arela

Arela are the songs recited during the Navratri and Diwali festivals. These songs are sung



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without any musical instruments. There are some songs which can be recited without use of any musical instrument where some requires them. Where the main singer of them comes running and singing by strutting his one hand up. Just because this song is sung in this way, they are named Arela which are matching with similar word to run in their language. For Navratri these songs are performed before the first night Navaatri in the invocation of god and goddesses. In the begging they sing the lines which conveys that those who haven't come to listen these songs will be deprived of joy.

Vahi

Vahi are generally the forms of occultism in tribes. The performer of these vahi are of different ranks. Not all can perform all types of vahi. The proved shaman only can perform the highest form of vahi. It also depends on the condition of a patient for whom they are generally performed. If the patient is normally suffering with any disease then any shamn would be able to do it but in the time of critical condition only the highest ranked shamn can do the job. They are sung the most dangerous or critical time like that of the illness, great illness and terminal cases. They try to cope up and over come from the illness by specific practices with the recitations of Vahi which is more relavant to the level of illness. They take the help of corns and try to figure out what exactly the cause of illness is. If the illness is stronger than Rahra will be performed. That is when some evil soul or spirit has entered into the body of victim. In the last case where the victim is unrecoverable and in terminal stage Tagthiyu is performed. This can be performed only by powerful mystics and not the fresh learner or practitioner occultism can dare. With the burning nugget in hand a big knife held with mouth he tries to recover the victim. When this is performed, the Rahra are recited.

Bethore

Bethore are sung in the matrimonial practices for bride. When a bride's sole rituals are going on, she is asked to come and the Pithi (Haldi) applied to her body for the beautification. Suring this time Bethore Songs are sung.

Conclusion

the preserver of such a great literature cannot be considered illiterate people. They have saved their tradition of literature orally only. Their literature requires different kind of understanding. Faith plays the main role in most of their literature. They have their



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versions of the great Hindu epics like Ramayana and Mahabharat, though in short narratives. Had it not been memorised by them it would have been a great loss. There are further scopes also for the study in Dungari Bhil literature. the scope for the further study is archetypal analysis, cultural analysis, structural and deconstructionist analysis. Having such a rich literature these people cannot be considered simply illiterate. Their literacy is different and requires different measurements. They can be seen and studied from different perspectives. A researcher needs to have the eyes to look at and heart to understand them.

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