

A CULTURAL ACUMEN OF THE INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN THE FOLKLORE OF RAJASTHAN: AN APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Culture is a broad discipline of anthropological manifestations and interpretations – centred around the symbolic and learned aspects of human behaviourism. It is profusely contemplated as a social cycle of humane interactions and substantial exchange of customary ideas and thoughtful expressions. In lieu of which the present study seeks to encompass the indigenous reflection of the cultural traditions – duly identified and substantially contextualised as the Folkways in the words of the scholarly critic Sumner. Pertaining to this revelation, the thought process further unveils the curtains with a cultural approach to the Historic Tales and Tribal Folklore of Rajasthan; which has been invariably woven with the embellishments of Kathputli tradition, Courtly Artisans and with the native dance forms like Ghoomar and Kalbeliya – to embed the charismatic beauty of the royal culture of Rajasthan.

Keywords

Culture, Performing Arts, Folklore, Anthropology, Language, Social Morals, Oral Tradition, World Literature, Myth and Magical Realism in Rajasthani Historic Tales.

“Humanities are generally regarded as broad based disciplines which are concerned with learning or literature which focuses on human culture such as the Arts, Literature, Classics, History, Theatre arts, Languages and Linguistics; among others” - wherein it mitigates with the prime objective of exercising potently the social integration of the masses within the frame of social milieu and professing the cohesive advancement of the successful transmission of values, social norms, and knowledge to the coming generations via the channel of orality tradition.

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Perusing with this broad vision to Human aesthetics, the thought process furthermore adds to it – contemplating the words of Toby Miller who meditated on this parcel of Cultural Pedagogy of Ideas as:

“Cultural Studies is a tendency across disciplines, rather than a discipline itself.

It also talks about the comprehensive analysis of the forces within and outside which imparts the socially organised conduct and behaviour and helps the people to construct their lives with holistic pleasure and social fulfilment. Wherein, the study alludes the words of the eminent **Raymond Williams** who identified and has verily encapsulated the three major significations of ‘culture’ as *“intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development....a particular way of life’; and finally ‘intellectual and especially artistic activity..... where culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film’* [Chakraborty 2].

Penetrated with this cultural milieu of sociological approach to literature, the present study seeks to unfold the curtains to the rich sands of Rajasthani culture and majesty – known to the global world outside via the native expressions of rich Folklore- sung and narrated with the chivalry of Princely estates and with the religiosity of the cultural deities like *Ramdevji, Gogoji, Pabu ji, Mehaji and Harbuji* – who are reckoned as the Panch Pir of Rajasthan and are verily known to have embellished the historical annals of the state.

Theoretically, the purview of this study further alludes that “Culture Studies views culture not as a fixed, bounded, stable and discrete entities, but rather as constantly interacting and changing sets of practices and processes”.

Moreover, the aim of cultural studies is encapsulated with a vision to examine the cultural practices and their relation to power. It seeks to understand culture in all of its complex stage crafts and thereby exfoliates this discipline in lieu of its social and political context wherein the culture manifests itself.

Sociologically the study proceeds with the words of **Edward Tylor** who referred to culture as '*a learned complex of knowledge, belief, art, morals, law and custom*' [Scott and Marshall 152] - where again it is conjectured as a conscious creation of human rationality processed in the build of highly ordered humane reality.

Besides in the orbit of Cultural Anthropology, the term Culture is comprehended at three levels- counted with the substantial patterns of human behaviour and the below conscious awareness of grammar and the language syntax – of which the native language speaker himself is seldom aware. Alongside this, the third segment is noted with the culturally determined patterns of thought and perception.

Pertaining to this socio-cultural construct of the Indigenous Literature, the study develops with a vision to traverse through the rich and royal heritage of Rajasthan which has often been called as '*the cultural capital of India*'.

Rajasthan is a beautifully woven colourful state which still retains its divine rusticity and cultural simplicity in the chivalrous ethnicity of its tradition and historicity of India's glorious past. The state is nestled with the glories of the historic past – drawn and enlivened in the architectural legacy of the exotic monuments, palaces and expansive forts which melodises the music of the legendary past via the channels of the lively folk music, folk dance forms and folk narratives – incorporating and embedding the kaleidoscopic frame of the genre called FOLKLORE.

WHAT IS FOLKLORE?

Since the mid nineteenth century, Folklore has been collectively applied to the expression of sayings, verbal compositions and social rituals which is transmitted from generation to generation solely or at least primarily by the word of mouth i.e orally in the celebration of the culture and tradition. For the most part, it is called as the creation of primitive and illiterate people who philosophise with the eternal truth of life and existence. And therefore much of it is availed to us in Oral Tradition. Predominantly it is embodied in the form of literature when people assemble it together in context to its socio-cultural milieu and then it is engraved on the manuscripts with the written documents in ink – provided to the world of academia in order to

preserve the legacy treasured so far geographically by the place and the folks in particular. Thus, '*Folklore artifacts are never self-contained, they do not stand in isolation but are particulars in the self-representation of a community*'.

Owing to the indigenous reflections of the Oral Tradition in India, the present endeavour alludes the prolific words of the erudite **Stith Thompson** who conjectured that:

It has had a long varied history, and its people are of most diverse origins. They have behind them a written literature going back centuries before Homer and an unbroken religious tradition changing but little in three thousand years. Superimposed upon the original religious pattern are many others, sometimes in conflict and sometimes supplementing one another....the folklore of India this diversity of history and population. There are, first of all, a number of old literary collections of tales, some of them Brahmin, some Buddhistic, and some belonging to other cults. Much of the best folklore of India is imbedded in these collections. They have been known to the populace for centuries, and many of them have entered into the repertoires of popular tale-tellers... In addition to this well-assimilated literary tradition, there exists nearly in all tribes of India a large store of purely oral tales [Thompson 15].

Historically, the expression of Folklore has evolved as an autonomous discipline at the time of the Romantic nationalism in Europe wherein the further developments were envisaged with the coherent writings of the eminent *Johann Gottfried von Herder*. He is known to have endeared the channel of oral traditions as organic processes grounded in locale.

Meanwhile, there comes a question that- when it happens, it usually denotes and specifically signifies that it communicates or rather gives a strong signal that '*the folk literature in question is in decline*' [Cuddon 281]. Thereby, subsumed with this prime concern to preserve and grow with the treasure house of the folk roots – the present approach is verily designed with a potent impression to celebrate, sustain and cultivate a strong spirit to relive the elegance and beauty of this native sustenance of the charismatic Folklore.

In Rajasthan, the Folk Literature is immensely rich, varied, lively and exotically resonates with the chords of life and experience. It comprises of the folk songs or Lok Geet; ballads or Lok Gatha; folktales or Lok Katha; folk plays or Lok Natyas and Lok Subhasit which incorporates the proverbs, sayings and idioms. Among these the folk songs of Rajasthan are

quite popular which reverberates its symphonies in the ever widening frame of the consolidated world opera. These are regarded as the natural expression of human emotions.

Of this genre of Folk songs, Kesariya Balam is a very popular folk song of the rustic Thar. It was originally sung by the Padma Shri Awardee folk singer Allah Jilai Bai in the Durbar of Maharaja Ganga Singh ji. Allah Jilai Bai took her lessons from Ustad Hussain Baksh Khan and later on from Achhan Maharaj. She was well versed in Maand, Thumri, Khayal and Dadra – the folk expressions. And perhaps she invested her rich insightful cultural legacy in this popular folk song of Kesariya Balam which communicated the royalty of Rajasthan across the boundaries and is yet to add to the euphoria of World literature.

The Kesariya Balam song is probably inspired by the story of Dhola and Maru and thereby glorifies the nuances of the Rajput bravery, sacrifice, valour and traditions with ethnic reciprocity – melodised as follows:

Kesariya Balam Aao sa Padharo Mhaare Des

Maru Thare Des Mei Nipooje Teen Ratan

Ek Dholo, Duji Marwan, Teejo Kasoomal Rang.....

The Folk tale of Dhola-Maroo epitomises divine love and is drawn and developed around erotic fantasies, myths and magical realism in the sketch of romantic tale drawn between Dhola and Maroo. Wherein, the narration reverberates with Maroo's loyalty and patience in harmony with Dhola's Valiance – which ultimately consummates with their undying love for each other. Historically, the story dictates that being married in their childhood years, Dhola forgets all about Maroo when he grows up but then the family of Maroo takes the help of a folk group named as Dholi and this group of folk singers sing the song of Maroo's life which in turn revokes the sensitivity of Dhola. He is reminded of his beautiful past and this is how he conjoins back with the love of his life – surpassing the obstacles erected by Malwani (the second wife of Dhola) and Umar Sumar. And finally Dhola Maroo escapes by riding on a wonderfully flying camel provided to them by a group of saints.

Further the jingle of this folklore of Rajasthan is beaded with another tale of warrior ship of Hadi Rani. Though the folktale of Rao Chundawat Ratan Singh and his wife Hadi Rani is not known much to the reading men outside and it remains buried under the canopy of Rajasthan

folklore tradition but the present study while exploring and travelling the zeniths of this tradition of the state folklore, it meets with the sacrifice and valour of this potent couple who exercised their comradeship in annihilating Aurangzeb's army and reaching the tranquil state of Immortality. Hence Rani Hadi holds a special place in the golden history of Rajasthan.

Likewise there are many more tales like those of Panna Dhai and The Wishing Tree which imparts the rich vision of moralistic lessons and wisdom to the world outside. And these tales are all the more decorated and rather commemorated profusely via the popular channel of performing arts like that of the Kathputli tradition and theatre arts which adds to the beauty of human emotions and Indian Aesthetics – to be preserved and cultivated in the times to come.

Meanwhile the cultural finesse of Kathputli tradition owes its grandeur and picturesqueness to the indigenous soils of Nagaur district of the native Marwar. The bewitching beauty of Kathputli is contemplated as an act or a creative play of a string puppet theatre – motioned and enacted with the rich narration of Rajasthani Folktales.

Being a string marionette, Kathputli pictures forth an anthropomorphic play of the puppet which is made from the wood and is fancied with the embellishments of the native colours and decor of the geographical boundaries. Thus the dance play of these wooden dolls controlled and manipulated by the single metal wire – exercises and paints a wonderful film of the cultural ethnicity of the historical tales in galore. Culturally, the vision finds its allusion in the ancient relics of Rajasthani folktales, ballads and sometimes the reverberations are also found in the melodies of the celebrated folk songs.

Historically, the 'Tribes of Rajasthan have been performing this art from the ancient times and it has become an eternal part of Rajasthani Culture diversity and tradition'. Of which the Tribal Bhat community is reckoned as the originator of this medium of Performing Arts and has also been known to have commenced with this practice of theatrical innovation as string marionette art – some 1500 years ago. It has indeed survived the test of time and is still in vogue and practise with flowering colours and inebriated fragrances – paving and unfolding the developing domains of the cultural rendezvous on global platform with the contemporaneous subject of the Tourist Development and Folk entertainment in particular; ultimately leading to the sociological assimilation and preservation of the bountiful treasure of the cultural heritage of the native states.

There with all the study encapsulates the vision and sums up the idea with the following words celebrated as:

“All folklores do more than merely conveying heart- pourings of natives about the nature around them. They are often, nay, always the carriers of culture, of social mores, customs and forms of behaviour – that is a society, nay, life in a nutshell. Folklores contain the lofty thoughts of yore and highest metaphysical truths, normally incomprehensible to laymen, in a subtle, story forms”.

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