

Folk literature among the Rajbanshis of West Dinajpur: A Brief Study

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ABSTRACT

Dinajpur is a famous historic place in Eastern Bengal and it founds several ancient texts by different historic names. There had been living several indigenous groups of people like Rajbanshi community in the land of West Dinajpur. 'Rajbanshi' is the name of an indigenous people and largest ethnic group, settled in West Dinajpur. In medieval period, the social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations at the same time. Though, those socio-cultural traditions became partially aloof from them. The folk literature was spread in this region through the rural culture of the Rajbanshi community. They were the only holder and bearer of folk culture and folk literature of West Dinajpur. Folk literature creates folk-culture. Folk-culture is one of the main elements of folk-literature. This folklore is popularly expansion and spread by speaking from man to man. Folk literature is verbal art or expressive literature, spoken, sung and refers to the oral customs, traditions and culture of a group of people. Folk literature is part and parcel of the language and culture of our pluralistic and multilingual society. Moreover, folk literature is a storehouse of legends, tales of war, heroism, love, miracles, the preternatural, the supernatural etc. For a long time there was a tradition prevalent in this region, the folk tradition or oral legend, which would run continuously from generation to generation. Needless to say, the folk literature more powerful and olden than written documents. The transference of oral tradition to writing and print does not destroy its validity as folklore but rather while freezing or fixing its form, helps to keep it alive and to diffuse it among those to whom it is not native or fundamental.

Keywords: Rajbanshi Culture, Folk Language & Literature, Oral Traditions, Folklore..

Introduction

Nowadays, the study of folk culture has been strengthened in different literary writings. It has found priority is the language of literature. Though it was introducing from primitive time but there was no importance at the same time. The actual history of the country is known by the study of folk culture. In those days, educational outreach in those days was not enough among human, although limited, it was bound to isolate behind. Only folk literature captured to the society and culture of ancient Bengal. That is why most of the literary sources were hiding in the midst of folklore. Although, the modern education had spread in Greater Bengal, especially in Kolkata and adjacent areas but was not applicable to North Bengal. The entire North Bengal remained out of western education i.e. modern education. The western education had entered in Northern part of Bengal was too late in few areas, after the established of the British rule in India. The Bengal Renaissance was not flourishing in this area at the same time. Folk literature creates folk-culture. Both are complement to each other and synonymous. Folk-culture is one of the main elements of folk-literature. This folklore is popularly expansion and spread by speaking from man to man. There is an inner relation between folk literature and written literature. Written literature was developed based on folk literature and oral literature. The folk literature became developed based on some rituals, customs, and practices of the society. Gradually, it is becoming part of the society. Folk culture contained the culture and society of North Bengal at the same time. Folk culture and folklore are available in North Bengal. The influence of folk literature on history and literature remains today. Needless to say, the folk literature more powerful and olden than written documents. "The transference of oral tradition to writing and print does not destroy its validity as folklore but rather while freezing or fixing its form, helps to keep it alive and to diffuse it among those to whom it is not native or fundamental. For the folk memory forgets as much as it transmits and improves. In the reciprocity of oral and written tradition and the flux of cultural change and exchange, revival plays as important a part as survival, popularization is as essential as scholarship, and the final responsibility rests upon the accumulate and collective taste and judgment of the many rather the few."

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In this context, the quotation of Levi Strauss is mentionable that 'as universal structures but precisely because the immediate functions of the rituals change. The kinds of offender subjected to rough music are not the same, from one country to another or from one century to the next. So that once again I have had to resist an anthropological finding that charvari has one constant trans-cultural function of

significance.'[2] Folk-literature is something which the individual has in common with his fellows, just as all have eyes and hands and speech. It is not contrary to himself as an individual but a part of his equipment. It makes possible-perhaps it might be defined as that which constitutes-his rapport with his particular segment of mankind. Some scholar has said, 'unwritten literature of any group, whether having writing or being without it.' In short, all the elements of culture reinvent society and culture was hiding within the folk culture. Excluding the human elements will be crippled. Folk and ritual elements of the changes, not changing its original form. Written literature in those days was not so much the material world of literature has since become extinct.

Educational Status among the Rajbanshis and Contemporary Society

The western education was spread towards the society of the British India, mainly in the urban areas like Kolkata, Bombay, and Madras and so on. But most of the areas, especially in rural areas, there was no scope to receive basic education, western education is too far. Thus, the rural areas of British Bengal pulled to backward than the urban places. After second half of the ninetieth century Bengal, few Institutions were established in different towns in Bengal. Modern education has entered to the Bengal society and different traditions, customs were removed from the society. Western education was not easy to enter into the light of agrarian society. The whole of the rural environment prevailed across the region. There was no learning environment. Every family in the town, but it could not access education. Because the school was not enough at the same time. Few schools and colleges were established; where the study was open to the children of the high society. Ninety percent of the people were illiterate society. The remaining ten percent of the people have been educated by the west education, yet, they had served the British. The proportion of written literature was too low as bearers of the society. Bengali literature had flourished in Kolkata and adjacent areas, after established of the Bangiyo Sahitya Parishad. The prose literatures were spread led by Vidyasagar and Rammohan Roy at the same time. A unit of the Bangiyo Sahitya Parishad was established at Rangpur in 1906 to spread the literary culture in Bengal. The ancient glory of our country to be rescued by the study of folk tradition.

The entire contemporary society Northern part of Bengal had been depending on the customs, traditions, superstitions. Generation after generation would have preached the elements of folk culture than. Folk culture was spread over a large part of Bengal society, especially of those places where the light of renaissance could not reached. It cannot be imagine about the ancient society without the folk culture and literature. Panchanan faced to learn about the society without leaving out many proverbs, rhyme, verse, song, riddle, words etc. Each phrase has a special meaning, which are linked with the society. Song and verse have meaning. Those were written based on the different customs. Though those verse and customs were not written, people used verse for different purposes, like in the time of sleeping child, sometimes playing of drama etc. The actual history is hidden in folk cultures for decades. Jones Balys said, "Folklore comprises traditional creations of peoples primitive and civilized. These are achieved by using sounds and words in metric form and prose, and include also folk beliefs or superstitions customs and performances, dances and plays." [3] Being felt the need of those components of folk cultures; he used to went in several villages for collection. The folk culture had begun to decline after the advent of the British culture in this land. However, western education had reached too late in northern part of Bengal, so the folk culture has reduced to extinct for a long time. Keep in mind; history and culture have hidden behind the folk cultures and folklores. Western educated scholars did not give priority towards the folk cultures and folklores. In fact, it will be impossible to know the true history of many caste and tribes.

Folk Literature among the Rajbanshi Society:

Folklore means, folk tradition of human society, custom, belief, proverb, tradition of folk, all forms of social customs and beliefs, the stories, songs, words and became proverbial. The minimum requirement is the folklore, tradition etc. The usefulness of the folk-culture in the real life of the society is more than that of written form. Theodor said, "Folklore is that part of people's culture which is preserved conciously or unconciously in belief and practices, customes and observances of general currency; in myths, legends and fables of common acceptance; and in arts and crafts which express the temper and genius of a grup rather than of an individual. Because it is a repository of popular "climate" folklore serves as a constant source and frame of reference for more formal literature and art; but it is distinct therefrom in that it is essentially of the people, by the people, and for the people."

According to Johns Billy, 'Oral legend of the primitive and the civilized community of traditional container, sync word and prose, folk-lore, superstitions, customs are included. Different race-tribe, religion, language, dress, customs and behavior have lived in North Bengal since the historic faith. For a long time

there was a tradition prevalent in this region, the folk tradition or oral legend, which would run continuously from generation to generation. For example, the reform history is the means of temporary entertainment boy rhymes, songs, words and cilka or verse, Psalm vow female, feminine rhymes, idioms, proverbs, maxims, fairytale, folklore, including traditional publishing system that collects together. In this context, the historical ancestral Niharanjan Roy said, Bengalis are the history of religious origin, such as Radha-Pundra-Bengal groups of people and the indigenous word, worship, rituals, ceremonies, fear, faith, etc." [4]

Different elements of folk literature are hidden in ancient culture-society and literature but those were not preferred literary values due to unwritten form. The education society did not grant historical and literary values to the elements of that folk culture. Rabindranath was a great writer who included folk culture, like proverb, rhymes, child sleeping songs, verse etc. to the modern literature. He said in the speech of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad that "I welcome to the researchers to search ancient glory and heritage in novels, songs, ruins of temple, rural cottages in faithfully through the independent thinking not only search in the pages of books. If you able to response that you will be student of the University and you may save literature from a simulated problem of fatigue and weakness....." [5] German sociologist Darkhem said, "Literature is written not in individual, the development of these individuals and the generations that are flowing through folk culture tradition. Village meetings, all the rhymes, stories, legends, fairytale, would talk about the many myths and so on. It had been written not mere an entertainment or fable story, yet those bears an important message to writing the oral history today. Subsequently, folklore is well established as a separate branch of modern Bengali language and literature.

Folk Literature of West Dinajpur and Bengal as well:

Most of the places of Bengal were belonged under rural society and civilization. Except the towns and cities, all villages of Bengal were full ambience of ancient and medieval affairs. Entire villages were drowned in the darkness of superstition. Folklore was the sole holder and bearer of society. Each of the main components of the rural culture of Bengal was folk literature. Past glories were hidden inside those components of folk literature. But scholars did not care that. Thus, researcher had started to search folk components in different parts of Bengal. It is known that in order to review them, which is something like the past; they are hidden in the folk culture. As one scholar says, "The traditions, customs and beliefs of the people as they appear in non literary tales, songs and sayings. The basic requirement of living folklore is that it be traditional, widely current, and transmitted primarily through memory and practice rather than by the printed page." [6]

Bengal renaissance begun in the nineteenth century. As a result, the ancient literature was hit on the key elements of folk literature. The new system was introduced to replace the old system. New group of businessman were emerged as landlord in place of old landlords, who were involved into their business under the colonial rule in Bengal. They were well trained under the colonial rule and given up old traditions as well as rural customs, belief, folk culture etc. As a result of the continuation of modern literature at the intersection. British administration system did not believe folk culture and old traditions in the light of western education. Western education had expanded in Kolkata and adjacent areas and the far-off places were exempted from that light of renaissance. He collected of those components of folk literature from remote villages. But at that time kabiyal music, folk tales thoughts, Jhumur, Panchali, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and folk literature were developed under the stories of folk culture. Those components of folk culture were borne rural culture and society at the same time. [7] Dawkins said, "The mythical story with its symbols has an elements of permanency, for it brings before us, under a veil, the predicaments, the joys and the sorrows of human life; we begin to see why it is that folk-tales, these humble sisters of written art, still have power to stir our interest and even our feelings." [8] Subsequently, the contribution of folklore and folk culture influence is undeniable on the emergence and development of Bengali literature.

Conclusion:

Most of the old man and women of villages were used to rhyme and verse as communicative languages to each other. Each of them has a special meaning and literary terms towards the folk cultures, it is true, everybody left his footprints on earth during their life living, a solution will come out for scientific research. The component of folk literature is hiding to all actions of human. However, some of the verses, songs for child sleeping, rhymes, etc., were collected from different villages. Malinowski said, "This stories live in native life and not on paper, and when a scholar jots them down without being able to evoke the atmosphere in which they flourish he has given us but a mutilated bit of reality" [9] Thus, folk literature has occupied a distinguished position in modern literary world.

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