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SONGS IN YERUKALA FOLKLORE OF TELANGANA- A SAMPLE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Songs, dances and dramatic performances are an integral part of tribal folklore. In most tribes, songs are sung by female members even though male members also may participate occasionally in group songs and dances. In this paper a few songs of the Yerukala folklore of Telangana state are analysed. The data considered here, is part of larger corpus gathered from a field survey

Key words: Yerukala, folklore, tribe, Telangana, songs.

Introduction

Folklore is the most ancient form of world literature. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines folklore as “the generic name used to denote the traditional beliefs, superstitions, manners, customs and observances of ordinary people which have persisted from earlier to later period” (518) The ethos of people is represented through their folklore, which is spontaneous and profound. It is an integral part of the attitudes and beliefs of the rural people, in whose life there is an inherent spirituality and symbolism. A study of folklore helps in the appraisal of the culture of the tribes. Folklore includes songs, myths, tales, beliefs, superstitions, customs, manners, proverbs, plays, traditional ballads and festivals having a bearing on the lives of the people.

In this paper, an attempt is made to analyse a sample of songs of the Yerukala tribes in the state of Telangana in South India. The Yerukalas are indigenous and semi-nomadic tribes found on the plain areas in the states of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra. They are known as Korcha in Karnataka and as Kaikadi in Maharashtra, Korava in Tamilnadu and Yerukala in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana after their women’s traditional profession of fortune telling (yeruka chepputa). They call themselves ‘Kurru’ and their language has no script. The major store house of the wisdom of their ancestors is their folklore. For the purpose of the study only three songs have been selected as a sample out of a large corpus collected during the field survey. This selection of a small sample is made due to the constraints of space. Besides most of the songs are sung by the female members of the community. Such songs of males are very rare. That is, singing is a pre-occupation of girls and women in this Yerukala tribal community.

Tribal communities hold a treasury of songs. Folk songs have a special importance in their transactions, as they relate them to every aspect of their life. The unique feature about them is that they belong to the community. The authorship of the songs is not known to us as they are preserved by oral tradition. The tribal songs are narrative in nature in the form of an address or dialogue. They contain a lover’s address to his beloved, a daughter to her parents or a man to his ancestors. The tribal songs are the part of a complex communal activity. Folk songs of the tribes’ function as a window to their society.

The following sample consists of three songs, namely a woman’s lamentation and two love songs.

1. A Mother's Lamentation as Farewell to her Family Addressing her Son Uppali.

Original:

Pogare pogarelo uppaliga
 Ningavenja vaathalakulo uppaliga
 Pogare pogarelo uppaliga
 Maarumanam pogarelo uppaliga
 Uttimene sorikkirilo uppaliga
 Ningavakiddana nikiddanalo uppaliga
 Vattimeenu shaarikkirilo uppaliga
 Ningaavakiddana nikiddanalo uppaliga
 Maarumanam mene mannuboogalo uppaliga
 Nallomo dorakadosulo uppaliga
 Kattadeegele pandrikkiro uppaliga
 Kaathugundu peyengalo uppaliga
 Pogare pogarelo uppaliga
 Pogare pogarelo uppaliga

English:

I am going, going, Uppaliga !
 For the scolding's of your father, Uppaliga !
 I am going, going, Uppaliga !
 I am going to remarry, Uppaliga !
 There is food on the rope sling, Uppaliga !
 Part of it is for your dad and another part is for you, Uppaliga !
 There is raw fish curry, Uppaliga !
 Part of it is for your dad and another part is for you, Uppaliga !
 Let my remarriage be ruined, Uppaliga !
 I failed to get a good husband, Uppaliga !
 There is a pig beneath the bank, Uppaliga !
 Rear it for your subsistence, Uppaliga !
 I am going, going, Uppaliga !
 I am going, going, uppaliga.

The song is marked by the refrain, Uppaliga, the name of the woman's son and thus the entire song reveals her intense love for her son whom she is leaving against her wish, but only to escape the torture perpetrated on her by her drunkard husband. She is running away from home seeking remarriage. But she is not able to suppress her love either for her husband or her son. This is reflected in her repeated words about food and fish curry which she advises her son to be shared with his father. Similarly, she expresses her concern about the survival and advises her son to rear the pig in order to make their living.

This song illustrates how married women with children in the Yerukala tribal community are harassed or tortured by their husbands who are hard-hearted and good for nothing except for drinking. Thus, this song is culturally significant from a feministic point of view.

2. Love song involving food items and village names.

In the Yerukala community, marriages are strictly based upon kinship as in the case of caste Hindu community. A young man can marry his paternal or maternal sister-in-law (cross cousin). Very often they enjoy either's company making love which is not proscribed. This song, sung by a maiden in her invitation to her prospective bridegroom, celebrates the rural beauty in terms of food items, villages and green forests.

Original:

Keyela keyela kalipigindu shedi shedi thiruguvaane
 Vaye vaye machhade vanamukoku

Shedimenu kallanta, shinnagunna karranta
 Vaye vaye machhade vangapaaduku
 Panumudaadu kallanta, pachhimeenu karranta
 Posham vaye machhade pathhipaakaku
 Poddadu kallanta burrapittala karranta
 Thimbani vaye machhade thimmapurthuku
 Andhi andhi aankallu tharayekirumanta
 Kudipani vaye machhade kaatrapallikoku

English:

Hand in hand and tree to tree, well shall wander,
 Come come my beloved into the forest!
 There is toddy on the tree and a tender pork of a piglet,
 Come come my beloved we shall go to Vangapaadu!
 There is fresh and tender toddy and the curry of raw fish,
 Come come my beloved we shall go to Pathhipaka!
 There is spiced toddy and the curry of small fowls,
 Come come my beloved to eat it in Thimmapur!
 They are giving fresh toddy from trees again and again repeatedly,
 Come come my beloved let us go to drink at Kaatrapalli!

This song celebrates the virgin love of a maiden for her would-be (husband). She is very active, and her dynamism is illustrated by the way she lures her lover to accompany her to different villages nearby. She talks about different kinds of toddy available in the different villages and different types of food as each village is popular for. Finally, after enjoying their rural tour and feast, she proposes that they go into the forest, to wander freely under the shades of trees where perhaps they would make love. Thus, this song is a beautiful example of the flights of imagination found in a joyful innocent village maid of the Yerukala community. It also reveals important facts about their culture marked by love for wandering, drinking and eating.

3. A love song of a work culture by a maid.

This song is also sung by an unmarried girl who invites her prospective husband, a young man, who apparently is unwilling to put in hard work and keeps himself unengaged.

Original:

Naayi doro na china doro machhade
 Ooto munne gendru kellulo machhade
 Thannikindu naanu varekelo machhade
 Kattadeegile kenduhulakolla podulo machhade
 Kendhula kalsa naanu varekelo machhade
 Kendula kollakoku nashtam vandikelo machhade
 Kammalaichhu naanu kattedekelo machhade
 Paati mene pathhi kolla podulo machhade
 Pathhi perka naanu varekelo machhade
 Pathhi kola koru nashtam vandikelo machhade
 Pattagolusula ichhu kattakelo machhade
 Na shilaka mokam chinnabuchhamanolo machhade
 Ne amsala mokam valodamanalo machhade
 Naayi doro na china doro machhade

English:

My lord! My young lord! My beloved!

Dig a well in front of the house, my beloved,
I'll come there to draw water, my beloved!
Begin the cultivation of daal pulse on the banks of the tank, my beloved,
I'll to sow the daal seeds, my beloved!
In case you incur loss in the daal field, my beloved,
I'll sell my earrings and pay you my beloved!
Begin the cultivation of cotton on the dry field, my beloved,
I'll join you to gather cotton pods my beloved!
In case you incur loss in the cotton field, my beloved,
I'll sell my silver anklets and compensate, my beloved!
Don't make my parrot-like face sorrowful, my beloved,
Don't bow down your swan-like, face my beloved,
My lord! O My young lord!

This song depicts how a young unmarried girl tries affectionately to inspire her would-be to work hard so that he would be economically fit to marry her. She encourages him to dig a well for water and promises him to join him in drawing water from the well. She exhorts him to start the cultivation of daal pulse in which she would work along with him to grow the crops. She goes further and assures him that she would finance his agricultural operations by selling away her golden earrings in case he incurs a loss. Furthermore, she entuses him to grow cotton in the dry land and promises him to cooperate with in gathering the cotton pods. In case there is loss in cotton cultivation, she is ready to fill his loss by suppling him with money which she would get from selling her silver anklets. Finally, she implores him not to make her beautiful face eclipsed by sorrow and not to make his own face to sink down with despair. Therefore, she repeats her plea by addressing him as her young lord.

This song is a striking example of how womenfolk, particularly marriageable maids engage themselves in positive and constructive future plans and in the process encourage their male companions and inculcate a work culture in them so that they would qualify themselves economically for marriage and happy married life afterwards.

In this brief analysis of the folk songs prevailing in the Yerukala community of Telangana, an attempt has been made to demonstrate how these folk songs hold mirror to the socio-cultural and economic life of the Yerukala tribal community. A significant finding that emerges from this analysis is that in the selected tribal community married woman and marriageable girls are very active, hardworking and intelligent. Perhaps they are also beautiful as illustrated by the proverbial image 'Yerukala Sani' or the 'queen of sooth saying'.

It may be noted, in conclusion that the present analysis is only limited in its coverage of the Yerukala folklore in the selected area. The constraints of space is also one reason for the brief nature of the sample. The folklore of the Yerukala community of Telangana is very rich and varied. It calls for further study. The present author believes that future research in this area will throw more light on this hidden and unexplored treasure.

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