



Understanding The Role Of Folk Ballad Songs As Medium Of Mass Communication In Rural India

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Abstract

Folk songs are hereditary tunes that have been handed down through the ages in a certain neighbourhood, area, or culture. They are usually passed down orally, and they are frequently connected to the daily activities, experiences, and traditions of the individuals who originally carried them. A vast array of topics can be covered by folk songs, such as love, employment, social and political issues, historical occurrences, and more. These are mirror of societies and are directly proportional to the inherent cultural richness of that society. Bihar is culturally rich state which boasts of many vernacular languages, viz, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Maithali, Angika, Bajjika. Native speakers of all these languages carry a legacy of folktales, folk songs, and folk dances. In this paper, however, focus is on folk songs emanating from these different vernaculars and their significance as a medium of communication. The cultural values, accepted idioms, and practical significance of folk songs have a profound effect on rural society. Folk songs have the power to transcend communication obstacles such as language, speech, and words, as well as obstacles related to interest, comprehension, interpretation, attitude, and perception. One of the most significant tools for fostering national identity and social transformation is the folk song. Folk media may easily cover social issues associated to rural development, even though it may require significant change to effectively express social themes. Therefore, we must constantly and carefully protect our traditional media from the negative impacts of globalization to ensure its survival.

Keywords: Folk Songs, folk Media, Bhojpuri, Mass Communication, Rural Bihar

Introduction:

A ballad is a type of poetry that is usually composed of quatrains that rhyme with either ABCB or ABAB. Most ballads narrate a tale, making them narrative in nature. The word "ballad" comes from "ballares," which are medieval Scottish dancing songs (L. ballare - to dance). Later, they were also frequently employed in Australia, North Africa, North America, South America, and India in addition to Europe. One of the earliest forms of English poetry is the ballad. The ballads are referred to as "Lok Gatha" or "Lok Katha" in India [1].

A ballad usually has four poetic lines, or quatrains, in each of its stanzas. Every line often contains an iambic meter, or rhyme scheme, consisting of one unstressed syllable and one stressed syllable. Typically, a line in a ballad has eight or six syllables. Typically, the second and fourth lines are in trimeter with three beats each line, and the first and third lines are in iambic tetrameter with four beats per line. The length of the stanzas varies according to the story, which could be very long or brief. Ballads occasionally contain a refrain, or repeated lyrics. These appear in the final line of every verse and are typically seen in folk ballads [2].

A Ballads possess several significant characteristics- structural and regional narrative [3], refrain, and dramatic action. A ballad's primary attribute is its simplicity. Its action is straightforward yet striking presented through dance and music. Character development and plot advancement is done through dialogue. Indian folk ballads are primarily composed by anonymous writers and are passed down from one generation to the following, and so forth.

India is home to a variety of folk ballad genres. It is challenging to categorize each one of them. On the other hand, it can be specifically classified according to its dimensions, form, or topic. It can be divided into two categories based on its structure: little ballads and large ballads. However, the real classification is determined by the subject matter to which it pertains.

Folk ballads, in the opinion of Dr. Krishna Dev Upadhyay [4], can be divided into three categories. 1. Love-themed Folk Ballads, 2. Valuable Folk Songs, 3. Daring Traditional Ballads.

The state of Bihar is rich in culture and is home to numerous regional languages, including Bhojpuri, Magahi, Maithali, Angika, and Bajjika. All of these languages' native speakers have a rich heritage of folktales, folk melodies, and folk dances. However, the focus of this essay is on folk songs that come from these various vernaculars and their importance as a communication tool [5].

Folk songs are customary tunes that have been verbally transmitted within a community or cultural group from one generation to the next. These songs frequently capture the ideals, convictions, traditions, and folklore of a specific

community or area. Folk songs are usually simple compositions meant for the public rather than for performance by professionals.

Materials and Methods:

Using currently available literature, interviews with local writers and performers, and an examination of folk songs from Bihar's regional languages—Bhojpuri, Magahi, Maithali, Angika, and Bajjika—this study has attempted to comprehend the meaning of these songs. We searched 'Google Scholar' and 'Taylor & Francis Online' for academic publications on the many aspects of folk songs as a medium for mass communication. We noticed that when we use search phrases like "folk songs" or "folk culture" in these search engines, the number of publications has increased exponentially. The search yielded results as recent as 2023 and as far back as 1930. Bihar, folk ballads, folk tales, and folk songs were among the search terms or phrases utilized.

Bhojpuri: According to Dr. sir George Grierson [6] "Bhojpuri is the practical language of an energetic race which is ever ready to accommodate itself to circumstances and which has made its influence felt all over India. The Bengali and Bhojpuri are two great civilisers of Hindustan; the former with his pen and the latter with his cudgel."

1. Ballads of Behula and her husband Lakhinder:

These are songs of love and loyalty between mythic couple Behula; daughter of the king of Laxmipur, and her husband Lakhinder; son of Chand, an ardent Shiva devotee, who was bitten by a snake, doing the bidding of Demigod Manasa who desired her seat amid Gods, and died. Behula journeyed towards Heaven in a raft with her deceased husband in order to retrieve his life from the gods above. The songs depict the spirited romance and passionate love and the unyielding stubborn quest to claim the same [7].

Behula plays a major part in this tale. Considered the embodiment of the perfect wife, she makes a vow, akin to that of a sati, to accompany her deceased husband in order to bring him back to life. Like Sita, she fails the chastity tests yet saves a destroyed family by defeating all male efforts at molestation. She is virtually deified by this intertextual device. Both patrilineal and feminist values coexist in the epic. She does not inherit Sita's status; rather, she works for it on her own, but the same critique of patrilineal authority is evident. Manasa fights male chauvinism to uplift her status as God; Behula bears the brunt of same toxic masculinity in her struggle. Ironic, though it may sound, but both appear to struggle towards same purpose; however, it was Manasa who was basically responsible for the pathetic plight of Behula. In some way, they are mirror images to each other- their ego, their dedication to a specific cause and their unrelentless struggle towards achieving that [8].

There appears to be a tension between the worship of Siva and the devotion of Manasa, the latter being a lower caste deity who gains acceptance into the mainstream religion through the benevolence of higher caste/class women. There is a subtle relationship in Hindu civilization between the dominating gods and the dominant gender. The weaker gender challenges the patrilineal authority's decree. They bring fluidity to building and progressively alter the social hierarchy. In Bihar, the certain percentage of populace of districts Chhapra, Siwan, Patna, Champaran, and to some extent Vaishali speak Bhojpuri and the legend of Behula is celebrated in popular folklore. Cultural events are organised where dance groups participate. They reenact the scenes from the story on beat of music. Dance steps are in sync to the emotion of the song and present a visibly magnificent show that is captivating and engrossing [9].

1. Ballad of Bapu Kunwar Singh of Arrah:

One of the most prominent leaders of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 was Kunwar Singh. He came from a noble Ujjainiya (Panwar) Rajput family in Jagdispur, which is now in the Indian state of Bihar's Bhojpur district. He led a small group of armed soldiers against the British East India Company's army at the age of eighty. He was in charge of organizing the Bihar uprising against the British. He goes by name Veer Kunwar Singh in popular culture.

Bhojpuri poet Viswanath Prasad Saida eulogises Veer Kunwar in his poetry which has taken the form of folklore and is sang on auspicious occasions throughout the Bhojpuri belt. Many other writers have written about the stubbornness of his character and inspiring heroism. However, the folk songs and folk dances demonstrate his valour and sacrifice in animated manner which makes the audience emotional as well as patriotic [10].

One folk song goes like this:

Ab chhod re firangiya ! Hamar Deswa ! Lutpat kaile tuhun, majwa udaile kailas, des par julum jor. Sahar gaon luti, phunki, dihiat firangiya, suni suni Kunwar ke hridaya me lagal agiya ! Ab Chhod re firangiya! Hamar Deswa!

Which translates into English:

O British! Now quit our country! For you have looted us, enjoyed the luxuries of our country and oppressed our countrymen. You have looted, destroyed, and burnt our cities and villages. Kunwar's heart burns to know all this. O British! Now quit our country [11]!

2. Sorthi Brijbhar:

A Bhojpuri love poetry known as Sorathi Brijbhar or Sorathi Birjabhar is sung and heard in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Late of the village Ranibari, which is in Bihar's Siwan district [12]. It was effectively delivered by Ram Agya Giri ji. There aren't many of its singers left.

Singings of this narrative have included renditions of "Ekiya Ho Rama," "Ho Ram," and "Ram Na Re Ki." This contains one hundred pieces that tell the account of seven births. Owing to Indra's curse, an apsara and a god are born into the mortal realm and repeatedly cross paths in their reincarnations.

Magahi: The term "Magahi" refers to the upbhansa (derived and diluted) of the Magadhi or Magadhi Prakrit language, whose literature was widely used in recorded form from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, or the Siddha period. And the first poet to receive recognition for his work was Sarahpad. In addition, the title "Magahi" conjures up images of the Magadh Empire, Lord Buddha, King Ashoka, and magnificent establishments such as Vikramshila and Nalanda. However, it never received royal support because the Siddha literary tradition as a whole was anti-Brahminic. Even yet, 25 million people continued to use it, and they have a rich tradition of folk songs, folk tales, and other folk arts. It still receives little attention in scholarly discourse [13].

British scholar Grierson (1926) writes on the character of Magahi language "Magahi is condemned by speakers of other Indian languages as being rude and uncouth like the people who use it. In fact, the principal difference between it and Maithili is that the latter has been under the influence of learned Brahmanas for centuries, while the former has been the language of people who have been dubbed boors since Vedic times." [14]

Magahi has had a rich culture of folklores and folktales. Following are some folk songs which are performed in the regions speaking Magahi at large.

1. *Alha and Udal:*

This is a fairly well-known ballad in the Magahi-speaking area. It tells the stories of two warrior brothers who served Raja Piralma of Mahoba: Alha and Udal. They display bravery in multiple battles, but when they refuse to give up their five flying horses to Piralma, Prithviraj Chauhan, the king of Delhi, forces them into exile. Prithviraj's adversary, Jaichand, the king of Kannauj, is allied with Alha and Udal [15].

More intrigue develops, and Prithviraj betrays Mahoba. Alha and Udal grant the city's plea to return and defend it, vanquishing Prithviraj in the process [16].

Artists sing these folk songs with a lot of energy and a heroic feeling. Recitations start with a plea to the goddess, or "devi," and cover a variety of occurrences from this very long tale. Singing styles vary from place to place, but during the monsoon season—which begins when the first monsoon showers arrive—villagers typically sing throughout this period. The singers, who are always guys, take centre stage as the villagers congregate around the village chaupal. It is also chanted for the groom's procession, who may need to walk for several hours to reach the bride's village.

2. *Lorik-Chanda:*

The tale of princess Chanda, who is wed to an impotent husband, is told in Lorik-Chanda. Even though Lorik is married, she still falls in love with him. Lorik and Chanda elope and go on a journey filled with adventures. They eventually give birth to a son they call Chadrakar. Ultimately, Chanda and Lorik's wife get into a heated argument when they go back to their hamlet. Lorik is now depressed, and one day he vanishes.

The men continue the song-dance throughout the evening, showcasing their unique outfits as they execute the Chandeni Premagatha dance. Dance uses instruments like dholaks and timkis. It was first thought to have been sung without any musical accompaniment. These days, different instruments like the tabla and harmonium are played [17].

3. *Reshma and Chuharmal:*

The narrative of Reshma-Chuharmal centres on Chuharmal, an untouchable warrior, and Reshma, the daughter of an upper-caste feudal landlord. This specific story has caused friction between the top and lower castes in the south of Bihar for a number of decades. In Bihar, caste conflicts and other atrocities have been caused by performances based on the lower caste versions. The enactment of these folk songs incorporates various performance methods and symbols that an oppressed caste employs to combat its marginalization in society and culture, ranging from subversive to regressive. These also demonstrate the contradictory character of identity discourse as well as these performances, whose significance and impact vary according to genre, time, and place [18].

Maithali: Spoken in portions of India and Nepal, maithili is an Indo-Aryan language. It is indigenous to the Mithila region, which includes the Koshi and Madhesh Provinces in Nepal and portions of the Indian states of Jharkhand and Bihar. It is among India's 22 official languages. In 2003, Maithili gained recognition as an Indian language and was added to the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. This allowed it to be utilized in official settings such as government and education. Darbhanga, Saharsa, Samastipur, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi, Begusarai, Munger, Khagaria, Purnia, Katihar, Kishanganj, Sheohar, Bhagalpur, Madhepura, Araria, Supaul, Vaishali, and Deoghar are among the districts in Bihar where Maithili is spoken [19]. A rich language, Maithili was once described by linguist Sir George Abraham Grierson as the "sweetest language".

Folklore study has a glorious and rich history in Maithali. Here in Mithila, traditional musical transmission is more popular than publications featuring ethnomusic. The Bhilini folk ballad is credited with inspiring Gautam, the Buddha, to capture the core ideas of his magnum opus, the Madhyama marg. Mithila has become a renowned Vidya-kshetra and cultural hub. Its history spans millennia and is primarily scholarly in nature. Both the Satpath Brahmana and the Vedas describe its pure splendour [20].

It is quite recent to conduct a thorough anthropological analysis of Maithili folksongs. Sociologists and anthropologists have not made any thorough attempts in this regard in Mithila. However, the seminal work by Makhan Jha is accepted and respected thoroughly. Recent attempt to classify Maithali folksongs by Kailash Mishra is also commendable and noteworthy. He classified these songs in seven categories, viz, songs representing the life-cycle events; songs representing the annual calendar of events; songs of glory; songs of love and beauty; seasonal songs; wisdom songs and devotional songs. The classification is crisp, concise, and consistent and captures the wide spread of the mood and narrative of these songs [21].

1. *Salhesh song:*

The low caste population loves Raja Salhesh's song the most; it is a word-for-word transcription of a Dom's speech. Salhesh, the original Chaukidar, is highly revered among the Dusadhs, a group of people who work as both thieves and Chaukidars, ideally the former. Salhesh Asthans, which is visible across Tirhut beneath the village papal tree, is created up of a raised mud platform with mounted clay sculptures on top that symbolize the several characters in the song. The Dusadhs honor him here. Despite being a song, it is chanted rather than sung and is written in prose. Keep in mind that transitive verbs in the past tense can take on nuances that are only appropriate for neuter verbs [22].

2. *Dina and Bhadri:*

Musahars in the villages are not like mainstream Hinduism in that their gods and prayers, known as bhajans, are a part of their culture. Dina and Bhadri, for instance, are their deities. They portray Dina and Bhadri as soldiers who stood with them through their tribulations. Dina and Bhadri, together with their followers, fought numerous battles during their brief existence and ultimately gave their lives in defense of the community. The people in the community call them Dada, which means grandfather, and Baba, which means father. They are adored and worshipped. The purpose of the bhajans is to honour and glorify Bhadri and Dina [23].

3. *Jat-Jatin:*

Jat-Jatin is the folk art and folk song of Mithila. In this there are two dancing groups, who wish for a happy married life by dancing, singing, bickering, and exchanging vows. This song and dance are performed to please Lord Indra. It is performed by a pair of men and women. Jat Jatin is a women's dance and is performed on moonlit nights during monsoon. It is basically prayer to rain God to bless the land. And also, the teasing and pulling legs between lovers! Or the heartbreaking lament of separation and long painful nights! The songs are a class in themselves [24].

Here is an excerpt from a song in Maithali. Script is Devnagari:

जाय दहिन गे जटिन देश रे विदेश
तोरा लय जे लयबौ जटिन साड़ी सनेस
साड़ी तऽ रे जटा तरबाक धूर
घरे रहु रे जटा नयना हजू
जाय दहिन गे जटिन देश रे विदेश
तोरा लय जे लयबौ जटिन कंगही सनेस

Which translates into English as followed:

Let me go to the country and abroad
I'll bring you a gift of jewellery stones
My beloved with matted hair, swimming dust
Stay at home, Jatin, love of my eyes
Let me go the country and roam abroad
I'll bring you sari, bracelet, Jewellery board

Angika: Angika is a Bihari language and closely related to Maithali and Bajjika. Angika isn't listed in 8th schedule of constitution of India. In George A. Grierson's 1903 Linguistic Survey of India, Angika was categorized as a Maithili dialect. Speakers of Angika claim that their language is distinct, and the state of Jharkhand has formally recognized it as a second state language. Devanagari script is used to write Angika. The majority of Munger, the entirety of the Bhagalpur division, the southern portions of the Purnia division, and the Santhal Pargana division of Jharkhand are among the regions in south-eastern Bihar where Angika is spoken. There are almost 15 million speakers on it [25].

1. *Eco-centric devotional:*

Folk songs from the Angika people present a green viewpoint. Their lyrics offer a thorough and rational appraisal of the surrounding landscape. This folksong's reasoning reveals the dialogue that exists between humans and their environment. The stanza illustrates how human actions can impact nature and how that nature, in turn, affects humans. The way the civilization operates is homocentric. The degradation of nature is caused by a combination of homocentric methods [26].

These songs are devotional in nature and worships Gods and asks for their forgiveness and mercy in many cases. One example is women singing and praying to Goddess to cure their ward's smallpox infection. The narrative is as followed. Script is Devnagari:

निमिया के डारी मैया...

फुलवा बरसाइये हे,
 मैया अक्षतवा बरसे हे,
 मैया हे अपन लहरिया अवे समेटो,
 बलकवा पर मैया दया करो हो।

Loose Translation in English is as followed:

Maa is sitting on the branch of Neem Tree
 Will shower petal of flowers
 Also shower sacred coloured rice
 Stop this viral fever mother
 Show mercy on my child, Please!

2. *Rani Suranga:*

The story of Saranga Sadabrij is a love story which is a love story from birth to birth. Love story of Saranga and Sadabrij [27]. Sauranga is born in the house of a Seth, she is very beautiful and is as fair as the moon. Sadabrij is born in the house of king.

3. *Social Messages:*

About the evil of dowry system [28].

रिमी झिमी पनिया बरसे हे,
 रिमी झिमी बूँदा बरसे हे,
 एंगना ही भीजले, एंगना ही भीजले भीजले
 ओसरवो भीजले।
 भीजी गेले बाबा के पगड़ियो हो।
 तनी कटी दया नैय, तनी कटी दया नैय...
 लागे छे ममता बेटी के।
 रीझी रीझी मांगेछे दहेजवा हे,
 तनी कटी दया नैय तनी कटी दया नैय,
 लागे छे ममताबेटी रीझी रीझी मांगे दहेजवा हे,
 हमरियो चाचाजी के टूटली मढ़ईया हे,
 हमरियो पापा जी के टूटली मढ़इया हो।
 रिमी झिमी बूँदा बरसईहे हे,
 एंगनाही भीजले एंगनाही भीजले ओसरवो भीजले,
 भीजी गेले पापा के पगड़ियो हो।

Which loosely translates into English as followed:

It rains splitter-splatter
 Rain drops fall down
 The courtyard is wet
 And so is porch
 Father's turban is wet
 Show some mercy
 For daughter's love
 Why demand dowry!
 Show some mercy
 For his turban is drenched
 And fallen like raindrops
 But only in shame and disgrace!

Bajjika: In what is commonly referred to as Bajjikanchal, a region in northwest Bihar, Bajjika is spoken. The districts of Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, and Sheohar in Bihar are where it is primarily spoken. Additionally, a portion of the Darbhanga district that borders the districts of Samastipur and Muzaffarpur speaks it. There were an estimated 20 million Bajjika speakers in Bihar at the time, according to a 2013 estimate based on statistics from the 2001 census [29].

Various names for Bajjika have been used, including Vaishāli ki boli, Vrijjikā, and Brijjikā. The origin of all these names can be traced back to a minor Indian kingdom called Vrijji, which existed around the year 600 BC and had Vaishali as its capital. The dialect itself is ancient, but the name Bajjika and claims of its independence are recent [30].

Scholars of Bajjika have made significant attempts lately to write in and about Bajjika. This involves academics writing in the Bajjika language, as well as—and perhaps most importantly—students and linguists who are engaged with and interested in a variety of grammatical and sociolinguistic problems pertaining to the language.

1. *Nature and metaphysical:*

एके तलव्वा में हंसा चुंगे
दोसर ओरा हंसनि हे
तैयो न तलव्वा सुहावन लागे
एककये कमल बिनु हे

Which loosely translates into English as:

In a pond swan peck and play
On other side a pen peck as well
But the pond looks desolate and sad
Just in want for lotus flower

The song goes on drawing more examples and trying to make point that we strive as a society and unit. Beauty is in togetherness, and not in isolation [31].

2. *Bajjika Ramayan:*

Bajjika Ramayan [32] has been written by Bajjika scholar Dr. Awadesh Arun. It's written in Bjjika dialect and Devnagari script. There are subtle differences from Valmiki Ramayan which is the mainstream. It's written in poetry style. There are different chapter, viz, introduction, Baal kand, Abhishek Kand, Chitrakuta Kand, Apaharan Kand etc. The folk tales, folk culture of Bajjikanchal becomes evident in these narratives. Lorad Rama appears to be a simple folk who is laborious and takes his responsibilities seriously. Lessons by his Guru shape his character which is evident throughout his journey.

3. *Kac and Deviyani:*

It is the depiction of the love story of the two imaginary characters Kac and Deviyāni [33]. It was a tale of one-sided love. In the epics, it might be the first of its kind. Girl declares her love for the boy, but he responds that he views her as his sister and declines the proposal. They part, swearing at one another. To put it mildly, the breakup was not easy. Let's get into the specifics now. Brihaspati, the Deva preceptor, was the father of Kacha. Devayanai was the daughter of Sukra, who served as Danavas' preceptor and Brihaspati's opposite.

Conclusion:

Over the ages, folktales and folk songs change. They are the soil's essential components. People tell these stories, enjoy them, pass them down, and make them richer generation after generation. Both folktales and folk songs have carried the unspoken things down through the ages. India's folktales, or folk songs, offer an incredibly accurate reflection of the traditional, tribal, and rural ways of thinking. They have always been an essential component of Indian culture. The variety of religions, languages, and cultures in our nation offers an enormous variety of folktales. It's a remarkable range. Ballads are ingrained in our traditions. It depicts the state of societies today. The charm of the song lies in "the long story telling"—the reader is left wondering who wrote it and without knowing their name. You won't be bothered by this lengthy storytelling, though, because it is conveyed with musical artistry. The core element of ballads is music. The feeling, the songs and music that are connected to them serve as a vehicle for expressing the emotions and feelings of the ballads. It goes by from one generation to the next as societal custom.

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