



Study Of Ecological Consciousness in Tribal Folk Literature

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Research Summary: -

The tribal traditions of India are deeply rooted in a relationship with nature. The folk literature of these communities – tales, songs, proverbs – is not only a medium of cultural identity, but also a carrier of environmental consciousness. This article analyzes the ecological values inherent in tribal folklore, and shows how traditional knowledge can help in solving today's environmental crises. The folk tales, songs, and traditions of the tribal communities of India are not only cultural heritage, but they also give deep messages of environmental conservation. The life of these communities is in deep harmony with nature, and their literature reflects this relationship.

Keywords- tribes, cultural traditions, environment, ecology.

India is a land of diversity, where the cultural traditions of tribal communities are deeply rooted in their relationship with nature. The folklore of these communities, stories, songs, proverbs, paintings is not only a medium of cultural identity, but also a carrier of environmental consciousness. This article examines how tribal folklore expresses ecological values, and how this knowledge can help in solving today's environmental crises.

The word ecology is the Hindi version of the English word Ecology. The word ecology is derived from two words of the Greek language, oikos logos. Oikos means habitat and logos means to study or describe. Thus, we will call ecology the place where living beings and natural habitats are found. The description of living beings and plants is done in the ecological environment. Ecology is also called environmental biology. In this subject, individuals, populations, communities and ecosystems are studied. The word ecology was first used in 1866 by German biologist Ernest Haeckel in his book

General Morphology of Organisms. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the study of the relationship between man and his environment began and attention was paid to this in many subjects simultaneously.

Folk literature and ecology: An interrelationship

Nature is not just a background in folk literature, but it is present as a living character. By giving divinity to trees, rivers, mountains, animals and birds, the feeling of their protection has been planted in the minds of people. This view of ecology is very effective despite being different from the modern scientific view. Trees are considered as “living souls”. There is a tradition of worshipping rivers as “mother”. Mountains have been given the form of deities. India is very fertile in natural beauty. All the elements of nature have special importance in folk life. Although there are many emotional folk songs related to these elements, but folk psychology finds love, enthusiasm and joy closer to it. It is written in the Rigveda – **Aapo Vai Sarva Devata** – that is, the form of all the gods is water. Water is the provider of all desires. Rivers have been the main source of water in our country since ancient times. Our ancestors considered them worshipful and made every possible effort to maintain their sanctity. In Atharvaveda, a wave of emotions can be seen in the worship and prayer of water institutions by man. It is written in its 11/5/1-3 - 'O water! You are definitely soothing.

Fill us with strength and life force, so that we can witness big battles... We come to your shelter to get that same life-essence.

In Rigveda, rivers should remain kind. They should keep providing us water to drink and keep showering us with joy and happiness. 'O rivers, creator of our precious treasures and also of humans, we aspire for your healthy water'. Similarly, in Yajurveda, it is preached that 'O aquatic animals. You should drink water; this water should be tasty for you'. Through the praise of rivers, Vedic sages preach us that it is our national duty to maintain the naturalness of all the rivers of the country. In Padmapuran, in 'Bhoomi Khand 96/7/8' it is said that those who pollute wells, ponds and rivers, such persons cannot ascend to heaven and are entitled to hell. It is clear in Manusmriti that 'Urine, filth, spit, impure water i.e. leftovers, blood, poison should not be left in water. At that time, the punishment given to a person who polluted water was so strict, as it is not even today. The saying 'If the mind is pure, then Ganga is in the pot' has not been coined today, it has been in existence for centuries. The basic thing is purity and both are necessary in it purity of mind and purity of body. In folk songs, Ganga and Yamuna have been considered as holy as divine powers. Worship of Ganga etc. has great importance in folk life. Ganga has such great glory that all the gods like Shiva, Durga, Ram have come on their vehicles to take bath in it. Due to the purity of Ganga, the Yagyaopveet Sanskar of a child is also performed on its banks.

In the Ganga Darshan of Bharatendu Harishchandra, the writer known as the father of modern Hindi literature, the pure and beautiful form of Ganga is indeed worth seeing. Because even the image of diamonds and pearls fades in front of its water stream. There can be no doubt on the purity of Ganga because Kaushalya told the secret of getting a son like Ram that her wish was fulfilled by bathing in Ganga in the month of Kartik. But today we have polluted the same Ganga. In the Paatal Khand, Chapter 81, Verse-30 of Padma Purana, there is a description of the picturesque environment of the

pilgrimage places like Ganga, which makes it seem that at that time Ganga would have been in its pure form '**Ganga Tirtheshu Vasanti Jiva / Devalaye Pakshiganashcha Nityam.**

Beliefs of folk life have flourished by connecting their faith. Trees like Peepal, Banyan, Amla, Tulsi etc. are considered sacred. Even banana flowers are not cut. Women do not cut pumpkin, watermelon, jackfruit; neither do they break coconuts. Brinjal and mango are also not roasted. The neem tree is especially liked by the mother goddess- by saying '**Nimiya ki dal jhulay hindola ki jhulein jhuli na**' these women maintain the sanctity of this neem tree. The tradition of tree worship can be seen in every region. Tribes have an integral relationship with trees. Perhaps that is why these tribes are not only the carriers of cultural diversity, but are also the silent sentinels of forest conservation. Their life is deeply connected with forests-where forests are not only a resource, but a source of faith, livelihood and identity. Tribes of India have been living a harmonious life with nature for centuries. Their religious beliefs, social structure and means of livelihood have been helpful in maintaining environmental balance. Their traditional knowledge emerges as an invaluable resource in the midst of modern environmental crises. The relationship between trees and culture in tribal communities is extremely deep, vibrant and spiritual. It is not just an environmental bond, but a part of life philosophy, tradition and collective consciousness.

Trees as deities- Tribal communities worship grafted trees on Karam festival. This festival is a symbol of balance between karma, fate and nature. During the puja, a branch of a tree is cut in a special way and marked with vermilion, thread and rice. As a part of nature worship tradition, these tribes consider trees as gods. Karam Devta, Sal tree, Peepal tree, Mahua etc. are considered life-giving and sacred. Due to their forest produce and sustainable lifestyle, fruits, flowers, medicines and wood obtained from trees are the basis of these tribal lives. They cut branches and plant grafted trees so that they can get produce without destroying the trees. Religious rituals like Vriksha Puja, Van Devi Puja, and totem tradition ensure the protection of forests. Festivals like Sarna, Devasthal, Hareli, Sarhul prohibit felling of trees and promote biodiversity. Sustainable collection of medicinal forest produces like Mahua, Harra, Behra, Tendu supports both the livelihood and ecology of the tribes. This approach, while different from the modern scientific approach, is extremely effective because it inspires conservation through emotional attachment. These tribes are "common resources" natural assets such as forests, pastures and water sources that are used and managed collectively by all members of the community. In India, about 350 million people, especially in rural and tribal areas, depend on these common resources. But their access and rights to these resources are still insecure. The loss of these resources has led to problems such as biodiversity loss, land degradation, and water scarcity, which have the greatest impact on vulnerable communities. To address these challenges, it is necessary to secure land rights and promote decentralized governance so that both livelihoods and the environment can be protected.

Environmental Awareness in Tribal Folktales

The tribes of India have lived a symbiotic life with nature. Their folktales not only preserve social values but also transmit environmental ethics from generation to generation. Trees, water, land and animals are not just symbols in these tales but are revered and protected elements. The stories strengthen the bond between nature and humans, thereby promoting reverence and respect for the environment. Folktales transmit scientific knowledge of the use of traditional medicines, correct ripening time of fruits, and herbs from generation to generation. It connects communities with environmental conservation efforts, thereby collectively creating a sense of caring for nature. Trees, rivers and other natural elements are depicted with human qualities in these stories, making people emotionally attached to them. For example, India's Hargila Army- wildlife biologist Dr. Purnima Devi Barman has used women empowerment and traditional skills to conserve the endangered Greater Adjutant Stork (a stork species). Devrai - Many cultures have sacred groves, protected by myths and rules, and which are the centre of biodiversity. Children's stories like 'Barf ka Raja Nono' teach children about endangered species and the importance of environmental conservation. Mithila folktales like Purush Pariksha and BhuParikrama link the digging of ponds, wells and trees with Lokmangal, which ultimately reflects the spirit of environmental conservation. The tradition of worshipping Sahja and Koriya trees, and preserving Mahua and Neem is clearly visible in the tales of the Gond tribe. Tribes of Chhattisgarh like Baiga, Muria, and Halba prohibit tree felling through festivals like Sarna, Devasthal, Hareli. Trees are portrayed as deities, ancestors, or protectors in folktales. In the totemic tradition, each clan has a tree, animal or bird symbol, which is worshipped and protected. The folktales of tribal communities like Gond, Santhal, Bhil, and Warli show a deep sensitivity towards nature. Bhil folktales reflect a sense of co-existence with wildlife, limited permission for hunting and respect for wildlife. In these tales, characters who destroy nature are punished, making it clear that maintaining environmental balance was part of social morality. The folktales of various tribal communities of India show a deep sensitivity towards the environment. Similarly, many local stories inculcate the importance of conservation and protection of nature by instilling fear of punishment or death. By giving elements of nature, a higher, spiritual power, these stories-built respect for natural resources among the community, no matter how lofty and superstitious their claims may be. Nature's stories are far more human than their own stories. From the Indian Panchatantra to the Spanish fables of Samaniego, animals have always been sentient beings who can think, feel, and behave humanly. Who can forget the Panchtantras told at bedtime about clever monkeys, evil crocodile wives and wise old owls? Prominent stories of this type are 'Barf Ka Raja Nono' written by Pranav Trivedi and translated by Manisha Chaudhary and 'Ek Sair Jungle Ki' written by Sezal Mehta and translated by Swagata Sen Pillai. 'Barf Ka Raja Nono' tells the story of conservation of snow leopard, an endangered species in India, while 'Ek Sair Jungle Ki' talks about the organizations working for the conservation of forests and wild animals. These children's stories based on environment are introductory as well as provide in-depth information about various creatures and the environment. Raji Sundarkrishna's story 'Inku Ki Gabar-Gabar' tells the story of the birth of the hornbill bird, its upbringing, food and drink and it's flying freely. Similarly, the story 'Arey...No!' written by Radha Rangarajan and Aparna Kapoor tells the story of the reaction of various creatures when they sense danger. This story has been translated into Hindi by Vanshika Goyal. These stories not only introduce us to various

creatures but also describe their various qualities in an interesting way. Local stories have been playing an important role in shaping an environmentally conscious and sensitive mindset among people around the world. In short, folktales are an integral part of shaping an environmentally conscious mindset and keeping traditional knowledge alive, providing a strong moral framework for environmental protection.

Ecological feelings in folk songs

Folk songs have a direct and honest relation with nature. Folk songs are such expressions of nature, which have a confluence of rhythm, sweetness and essence. This song is so intense that it gives a feeling of sweetness in all aspects. Then whether it is any element of nature - the tinkling of waterfalls or the gurgling of rivers, the trickling sound of the wind or the rumbling of clouds, the murmuring of the leaves of trees or the chirping of birds, the shower of raindrops or the fragrance of flowers, all the feelings are presented in folk songs in such a way that they are presented in the form of a garland, which does not have a sense of artificiality but the musical form of natural feelings like aspiration, joy, enthusiasm is inherent. The feeling of public welfare is paramount in folk songs. The purpose of folk literature is to alleviate the suffering of the people, entertain them and do good to the people.

The common man moves forward with a faith, a belief and with the help of that his belief remains firm and unwavering even in the most intense struggle. He overcomes the sorrows of his life by making these beliefs, fasts, worship, witchcraft, sorcery and customs and through a broad and sacred feeling of happiness, the blessing of human compassion keeps the folk life overshadowed. In tribal folk songs, the welcome of the seasons, celebration of the agricultural cycle, and reverence for water, forest and land are expressed. For example: - songs welcoming the rainy season, songs thanking nature at the time of harvest, songs communicating with animals and birds, etc. This artistic expression easily establishes ecological consciousness in the minds of the people. The tradition of worshipping creatures like Matsya, Kurma in Vishnu's incarnations and the protection of the snake family in festivals like Nagpanchami is mentioned in the culture of folk songs. Bhojpuri folk songs describe birds, trees, and rivers, which are an integral part of life. For example, the song related to the worship of Amla tree expresses respect for nature. In Rajasthani folk songs, Peepli songs sung by women in desert areas depict the hardships associated with agriculture and reveal their dependence and sensitivity towards nature. Folk songs are not only a means of entertainment, but they are also carriers of culture and knowledge. They are a live and powerful medium of transmitting traditional and cultural knowledge of environmental protection from generation to generation, which play an important role in making the society aware and sensitive towards nature.

While maintaining ecological balance, these folk songs promote harmony and coexistence with nature by giving importance to various creatures like swan, peacock, lion and considering them auspicious. Also, it raises environmental awareness among people, especially children and rural communities, and teaches them to respect and preserve nature.

Relevance of Traditional Knowledge in Contemporary Context

It helps in maintaining cultural identity, promoting sustainable development, conserving natural resources, integrating alternative medical practices and providing new perspectives for scientific research. This knowledge is transmitted orally for generations and includes collective experience of various fields such as agriculture, ecology, and health. Today, when climate change, deforestation and biodiversity crisis are in front of us, the ecological consciousness inherent in tribal folklore provides us with an alternative perspective. This knowledge not only talks about conservation but also teaches coexistence and balance. Today, when climate change, deforestation and biodiversity crisis are in front of us, the ecological consciousness inherent in tribal folklore provides us with an alternative perspective. Such as, balance between man and nature, judicious use of limited resources, considering environmental conservation as a social duty, etc. This knowledge not only talks about conservation but also teaches coexistence and balance. Traditional agricultural practices and environmental management practices are relevant today, contributing to sustainable food systems and maintaining ecological balance. Traditional medicine systems such as Ayurveda offer alternative health solutions parallel to modern medicine, focusing on physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Traditional knowledge includes a deep understanding of innovation and scientific processes, which can inspire new theories and methodologies for modern science.

Conclusion

The reverence, sensitivity and sense of conservation towards nature in tribal folklore is extremely relevant in today's times. This article shows that traditional knowledge and folk literature should be incorporated in environmental policy making. This will not only preserve cultural heritage but also help in tackling environmental crises. Today, traditional knowledge is not considered merely a relic of the past but efforts are being made to integrate it with modern science and technology. Preservation and promotion of this knowledge is not only important for cultural and environmental sustainability but also helps in building a more holistic and inclusive future.

Context list -

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