

Traditional Folk Songs of Harvest in Kashmir – Relevance and Prominence

Bhinish Shakeel¹, Anjali Capila² and Rehana Rasool³

¹Subject Matter Specialist, Home Science, KVK Budgam, SKUAST-K

²Professor, Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi

³Division of Soil Science, SKUAST-K

SUMMARY

Traditional Folk media is a reflection of mannerisms, beliefs and customs observed by a typical community. It is oral and passes on across generations through word of mouth. Song singing at auspicious occasions like birth, wedding and other occasions happens in most cultures, especially by women. Among many such genre, there are some typical songs of harvest too. There is empirical evidence that women are involved in about 70% of agricultural operations. The current article deals with traditional songs of harvest as a means of stress relievers among farm women who toil hard from dawn to dusk in a typical season.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a means of sharing information. While Sumerians have been the first to initiate writing script, people have been communicating through art and inscriptions since time immemorial. (1) The urge to express and communicate gave way to performing arts like folklore which may be defined as material handed down by tradition, either by word of mouth, custom or practice. It may be folksongs, folklore, riddles or proverbs. These have no grammar or literature, yet they are nurtured through word of mouth. Strictly speaking, Folk Songs are lyrical, short, simple, less artistic rhythmic song of a folk community (2) Folk songs are traditional heritage of people who give free expression to their sentiments (3). They are not an expression of sophisticated minds. It reflects joys and sorrows, problems and worries of common people (4)

Folk Songs of Kashmir

Folk Songs of Kashmir form an important part of Kashmiri literature varying in theme, form and content. They are not only amusing but also educating in content. There is a wide genre of folk songs that are related to different occupations, festivals seasons and social occasions. There are Love Songs (*Lol Gyeven*), Dance Songs (*Rof*), Pastoral Songs, Boatmen Songs, Spring Songs (*Sonth Gyeven*), Harvest Songs (*Lonuk Gyeven*), Wedding Songs (*Wanvun*), Sacred Thread Ceremony Songs (*Yagno Pavit Songs*), Semi-Mystic Songs, Opera Songs (*Band Jashn*), Dancers Song (*Bach Nagme Jashan*), Ballads (*Baeth or Kath*, literally meaning stories), Cradle Songs or Lullabies (*Lallvun* – meaning to lull) and Choral Songs (*Chakkri Baeth*). Each of these, carry within them a part of custom, history and culture of the region.

Women are an important carriers of oral tradition, indicating continuity and growth. No celebration of child birth, wedding or rites de passage are complete without singing of songs and presentation of folk ritual performance appropriate to that particular community by women. These songs are pervasive in all walks of life including the sector of food production, i.e agriculture. Women are involved in nearly 80% of agricultural operations right from sowing to harvest. In most cultures, food production and processing is mainly the domain of women folk. Cultivation of crops is mostly in rural areas or peri-urban areas where terrain is difficult, access to modern tools and technology for agri operations are minimal. As such, women experience drudgery during these operations. Drudgery may be defined as physical and mental agony, monotony and hardship experienced by humans while of all women as they continue to be illiterate, malnourished and unemployed.

These works which lead to “drudgery” is conceived as physical and mental strain, agony, monotony and hardship experienced by human beings while all of the women in the is regard is alarming as they continue to be constrained by illiteracy, malnutrition, and unemployment (Armstrong, 1983; Nag and Nag, 200 Agriculture is a primary unorganized sector in which women farm workers perform the majority of the drudgery prone work (Rani, 2007; Nag and Nag, 2004; Mukherjee 2004). Women as farmer or farm workers, participate in several activities such as seeding, transplanting, weeding, fertilizer & manures application, plant protection, thinning, harvesting, processing, selling, winnowing, storing, etc. (Sudharani and Raju, 1991 Verma and Sinha, 1991; Sudharani and Raju, 1991; Begam, 2000; Oberoi and Singh, 2001; Rani, 2007; Mukherjee, 2014). These works which lead to “drudgery” is conceived as physical and mental strain, agony, monotony and hardship experienced by human beings while all of the women in the is regard is alarming as they continue to be

constrained by illiteracy, malnutrition, and unemployment (Armstrong, 1983; Nag and Nag, 2004). Many believe that women's involvement in agricultural tasks and large is a source of heavy burden of drudgery on them (Verma and Sinha, 1991). The farmwomen perform agricultural tasks with the age-old traditional tools since gender friendly appropriate tools are either not available or insufficient in number or unawareness. Unsafe, hazardous, unhealthy and long hours of work with age-old traditional and cumbersome tools accelerate health related problems, especially among women farmers (Nag and Nag, 2004). Farmers/ farmwomen are not always aware of the improvements they could make by using scientific and technological knowledge. Thus, the attention of farmwomen was directed towards the women friendly improved farm tools (Gite and Singh, 2005; Nag and, 2004; AICRP, 2009; Anon, 2010; Patel et al., 2015). Farmwomen from the unorganized sector are vulnerable as new and improved technologies are inaccessible for them. It is imperative that they are exposed to these technologies and motivated to adopt the new technologies, which would help them to improve their quality of life (NRCWA, 2006).

Women are the backbone of agricultural work force because they perform more than 79% of farm activities. Farmwomen often lack education and information on the health hazards and habitually view pain as a normal part of work and seek care only when the condition becomes severe or disabling. Usually, they do not understand the association of a health problem with its source. Further, Women being over burdened with so much workload both on farm and at home; they usually neglect their health (Menon and Sheshadri, 2004). Some of the reasons responsible for Folk media such as folk songs play an important role in easing drudgery that affects women while at farm. There is a wide range of songs that are sung on field while sowing, transplanting, weeding, hoeing and harvest. These songs reflect their lives, beauty of the region and an innate sense of pride of belonging to the same. While there are innumerable spring and harvest songs some have been translated below to provide semblance of reflection of culture, tradition and practice.

Song I

*Come my beloved, the spring of my life
Revive the spring in my life
There are pear blossoms all around
The autumn breeze blows them gently to ground
Behold! The gardener weeps at the sight
For he toiled hard to nurture thee!*

*Apple blossoms all around
The autumn breeze blows them gently to ground
Behold! The gardener weeps at the sight
For he toiled hard to nurture thee!
Come my beloved, the spring of my life
Revive the spring in my life...*

Song II

*God knows I couldn't bear the separation
I tread the mountains and hills all this while
All by myself I bore this pain
Alone I suffered the misery!
Gradually, everything I forgot
But I just couldn't let go of your memory
I had long forgotten myself
Look who remind me of this tale!*

*Weeping to my sorrow, the blossoms ask of me
Why are you alone away from beloved
The autumn breeze soothed me-
Just when in revealed my agony!*

*I pray for your long life
And ward off the evil eye –
You settled your own life
Just when I abandoned the world for you*

Similarly, a popular folk song, *Bhiste Bhiste Byariyo, Rind Posh Mal* and many other songs are a repertoire of songs that are sung in fields to celebrate the onset of good times that are anticipated after toil and harvest. Many among these are also songs of forlorn love sung as a woman who is busy with toil on the farm and longs to be with her man.

CONCLUSION

Traditional Folk Songs are a mirror of a society. They reflect their mannerisms and customs. The songs of harvest in Kashmir depict the drudgery of women at farm that consume most of her time. There is a subtle undercurrent that women are overburdened that they do not get time to be with her man. Undoubtedly, these folk songs are a window into the society. They are also a means of light hearted banter and bonhomie that eases off stress among these folk for whom means of relaxation and entertainment are few and far in between. Some of these have typical rendition and traditional tune that any body can connect with instantly. The beauty and meaning of these cannot be undermined. Infact many of these are also sung at weddings, probably insinuating prosperity, as is synonymous after selling of harvest. However, these songs like many traditional skills and knowledge face danger of getting lost unless documented, preserved and shared for future generation to maintain a nexus with their culture and history.

REFERENCES

- Nag, P. K., and Nag, A. 2004. Drudgery, accidents and injuries in Indian agriculture. *Industrial Health*, Vol. 42(2), 149-162
- Pande, T. 1964, *Bhojpuri Folklore and Folk Music, Folk Music and Folk lore on Antology*. Vol. I Folklore and Folk Music Research Institute.
- Srivastava, L. 1974, *Familial Interaction, Folk culture and Oral Tradition (A comparative study of regions in eastern Rajasthan and U.P)*. New Delhi. Abhinav Publications.
- Upadhyay, K.D. *Folklore and Folk Music of U.P in Biswas, op cit. 1964 Nag and Nag for drudgery definition World Book Encyclopedia, 2000*