

Role of women in folk culture in the Era globalization

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Abstract

Today the entire universe is reduced to a form of a village. One can get aware of the happenings in any corner of the world sitting in another corner of the world through the use of modern communication media. This, in essence is the process of Globalization. Globalization has gradually got hold of the contemporary world and is exercising control over virtually every other sphere of human life. The effects of globalization are evident.

Keywords: Empowerment, communication media, human life, women, Globalization

1. Introduction

Literature being the mouthpiece of culture holds an important position in our lives. The infinite dimensions of the relationship between literature and life have been explored all along and have found expression through the works of innumerable talented men. Likewise folk literature, which forms the roots of the literary world, has been an area of continuous interest in contemporary cultural sphere. The flowers of folk literature have been spreading fragrance from time immemorial but it could hold the special attention of the world only after the advent of modernity. Folk works were then collected and recorded with enthusiasm. This in turn paved way for a systematic study of folk culture and especially folk literature. Among the multitude of the collected folk literature lie specimens from all genres, those belonging to unclassified genres and those which can give rise to new genres. The knowledge forming the part of the oral tradition has been acquired by many a generations of these people. During various stages of his life, in the ever dynamic environment man had to spend his intelligence, creative zeal and enthusiasm to garner the wealth of knowledge that mankind now boasts of he had to spend anxious moments but had perseverance to decode the mysteries of nature and interpret the happenings around him. But, with the advent of modernity there arises a serious question as to why we need to study and understand the different dimensions of a culture which is thousands of years old. The answer is quite simple. In order to understand any culture we need to understand its oral tradition. Folk culture encapsules a tradition which is beyond the limits of written tradition and this tradition has its roots in the soil from which the existing culture too would have taken shape over a period of time.

The very essence of folklore lies in its traditional and cultural richness. The past is seen in the light of contemporary life and its existence is not confined to the personal but expands its horizons encompassing the entire community. Every folk community perceives the customs, traditions, rituals and thinking handed over by the previous generations within the broad scope of its regional vitality and comprehensive world vision. Hence the folk community have developed their own methods to determine the measurement of time, rainfall, speed of the wind, hotness and coldness, height, weight etc. Man

understood very early that it was inevitable to employ animals during hunting, farming, rearing and other day to day affairs. As he was able to appreciate the subtleties associated with animals he could see the indomitable spirit of nature manifest in the animal world. He, on the other hand, made use of the gift of curiosity, intelligence and reasoning to decipher the mysteries of nature and started to live in a systematic manner. Gradually he was exposed to the process of socialization. This, in effect, was also the way through which man shed the beastly tendencies and started exploring the humane side of his own self, (Dakshina Kannada Pranivasathi, Dr. Ambalike Hiriyanna)

2. Women and Folk Culture

Women hold a key position in folk culture and add vibrancy and vitality to its traditional richness. Folk literature depicts the position and importance of women in folk culture and essence of the concept of the family. "Folk stories usually start by referring to an old woman living in a village and goes on to her daughter/grand-daughter or to her son/daughter. We hardly find stories starting with an old man and going on to speak about his grand-son/ grand-daughter or starting with a father and continuing on to his son or daughter. Even in stories revolving around a couple and their sons and daughters the character of father usually will have minimum importance in the story. The words 'Granny's house (Ajimane), 'Mother's house (Abbemane) prove the importance of women folk in the folk setup. The family, in a primitive society was mother-centered" says Gayathri Navada emphasizing the value of women in folk culture.

The scope of the folk stories created and circulated by mothers extended beyond the realm of pure entertainment value. In some cultures stories play an inevitable role by being a part of religious rituals. There goes a story stressing upon the need for us not to refuse to sing a song or narrate a story which we know. There lived a woman who knew a song and a story. But she never came out with them. The song and story which lay captivated inside her badly wanted liberation. One day the story separated from her and sat outside the house taking the form of sandals. The song took the form of a shirt and lay hung to a hook. The husband who came home found the sandals and shirt and mistook them to be belonging to an

outsider. He quarreled with his wife over this and in anger reached the Hanuman temple at the entrance of the village and slept there. The wife was perplexed at the sight of sandals and shirt and was not able to make out how they came there. She put off the light and slept. All the lights in the village would come to the Hanuman temple after being put off. The light from the woman's house reached the temple late. Upon being asked the reason it narrated the happening. The husband who was unable to sleep in the temple heard this narration and his doubts were cleared. He spent the night there and returned home in the morning. He enquired the wife about the story and the song. But she remembered nothing about that, (Deepa Mathanaditu, Ed. Simpi Linganna, Uttara Karnatakada Kathegalu). This story depicts the indomitable spirit of women folk and also the conflicts deep within her mind. Folk stories very rarely have a tragic end and invariably end on a happy note. These stories which reflect the simple truth of life and also the different shades of human life in a refreshing manner give a true account of man's journey thus far and his present view of life.

There are stories which depict the love and respect women used to get from their relatives and within their community. The stories also bring out a variety of shades of human characters like a brother troubling sisters, brothers killing wives, a couple having seven male children and praying god for a female child etc., Folk stories record the perceptions of the community regarding the personality of women beyond the limits of fidelity and character. But the factors of caste, fidelity and centralization of wealth gave rise to a situation which gave a special importance to the factor of fidelity of woman and it became impossible to perceive women beyond this image of hers. Probably the fear of man regarding the womanliness of women is being manifest here. Folk culture views woman differently from the male dominated society. Folk epics do glorify characters like Sita and Savithri but also depict women rejoicing after obtaining the love and affection of their beloved by breaking the shackles of bond of marriage. 'Songs of The Household Woman' (Garatiya Hadugalu) are three-lined songs which sprang out spontaneously while women folk attended their daily chores of flouring, making the baby sleep by singing lullabies, seeding, harvesting, and other household works. These songs do not bear the name of any of these women even though they are the ones who created these songs. These songs have been passed on to generations orally and bring out the accepted values of the folk community. This in a way is natural and inevitable as folk literature has its roots in the folk community. Hence there is no scope for personal emotions, feelings and opinions. The ignorant, innocent and illiterate folk will collectively celebrate the religious ceremonies; the women should wish all good for their mother's home; the poor should not be discriminated; life should be led in the midst of their own community – these are some of the values depicted in these songs. Many a simple truth which keeps the health of the community in good shape have been told freely in these songs.

The poet and the listener being one in the case of songs such as these the expressions and suggestive notes will be spontaneous. Story tellers who write and narrate their works in front of the audience within the limits of conventionality will not have such an advantage. Hence many a times folk women tend to represent husband in a very symbolic way. Sometimes

even women are depicted very badly. One can even see the effects of male-dominated society in situations like these.

3. The Boldness of Household women

The women in folk stories never run away from responsibilities. She embodies the spirit of pride of women folk. She will not commit suicide or shirk away in the face of difficult situations. She will face the problems aplomb and comes out successful. One can see her taking things in to her stride and remaining calm while being a prisoner of a demon, being kidnapped by a stranger, being pestered by mother-in-law, even in the extreme cases like being given in marriage to a pauper, a corpse or to any animal form. Gayathri Navada, in her article titled 'Women in Folk Stories', sees woman as one weaving her life out of the threads of humane relations, as one infusing new force when others get in to difficulties by accepting humanity alone as her life-value. In the background of the entire Kannada feminine literature if one has to find feminine sensibilities it is abundant in folk literature. The dedication of women folk towards their life is illuminated in the innumerable stories, riddles, songs with woman at the centre of the life processes. Thus the unique status of women is manifest in the different forms of folk tradition.

4. The Effect of Globalization and the Role of Women

The liberal economic policy which came in to existence in the 1990s encouraged private participation in the economic processes and destroyed the constitutional rights thereby converting women in to laborers working on wages. Woman, without the knowledge of market oriented developments is reduced to mere goods. Her strengths and abilities are being robbed in broad daylight. Privatization leading to closure of government schools has denied her even the right to education. Economic instability has even led her to prostitution. Her beauty has got her entangled in the web of human trafficking. Thus problems like disappearance of women and children, selling of children, human trafficking have cropped up as a result of globalization. There is a drastic increase in the rate of death of women, rape and atrocities against her. The problems of unemployment and poverty form the final nail in the coffin for women. The helpless and hapless situation of women has made even home unsafe for her. The age-old male dominated system, in spite of losing its ground to some extent, has sprung in to action by protecting the criminals in the name of religion and culture. The politics of vote bank has added strength to such a system. The social structure in today's globalized scenario has become complex beyond our perceptions. False beliefs, astrology, horoscope and other ingredients cook up to prepare a perfect recipe for a male dominated setup and cinemas and serials competing for TRP endorse such negatives much to the maligning of women folk. Gender discrimination lies at the root of all these problems. It has become essential to fight against these evils by fighting against these in a concerted manner.

In today's self-centered world life is nothing more than earning money or procuring wealth. But it is not difficult to understand that money and wealth are only a part of our life and sacrifice, dedication, honesty and other positive values are more significant in our life. The light emanating from these values makes our life meaningful and purposeful. It instills confidence in us. False prestige, pretensions and pomp tends to create imbalance in our lives and makes it devoid of peace,

happiness and satisfaction. This in turn makes our life meaningless. It is essential to avoid such developments and to build a clean and an ideal society. People should live and breathe human values. In order to realize these goals the initiative of women folk is important and women having their roots in folk culture will have to get their act together to stem the rot that is setting in and degenerating the society.

5. To sum up

- The folk tradition which lies at the root of the world of literature is deeply associated with the very essence of our culture.
- Folk instincts are still alive in the conscious of man in spite of the process of socialization and the systematic manner of life which he is a part of.
- Women lie at the centre of the folk culture. She is a force who manages not just her house but the entire community as well. This is clearly manifest in the folk literature.
- Social, economical and political factors contribute in suppressing women in the male-dominated system but the indomitable spirit of women is coming to the fore in virtually every other sphere of life. The strong grounding of folk women and the progressive values of the folk culture forming a part of her life-perspective makes her role significant in the wake of the challenges posed by globalization.
- The world-view and the perspective of life of folk community can resolve many of our problems relating to the ill effects of globalization. Hence it is perfectly valid that we turn to our roots to unwind ourselves out of this mess. Even here the patience and perseverance of women could be a guiding force.

6. Reference

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