



Golu And Gangnath Devta, The Renowned Deities Of The Locals Of Kumaun: Readings Of Folklore And Myth In The Select Cultural Text.

Kamlesh Krishna

Research Scholar

Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh (India)

Abstract

The term folklore was coined by William Thoms in 1846. This new term replace the old one *popular antiquity*. William has taken this term from German *Volklehre* which means *people's custom*.

A.K. Ramanujan discusses folklore in relation to voice and agency. In his analysis, folk stories can be 'male centered' or 'female centered'. In male centered tales, women have a secondary role and often aid the hero in his quest, or indeed are the object of the quest. "These stories end in marriage—for they speak of the emancipation of the hero from the parental yoke and the setting up of a new family, as he comes into his own". In the other category, "the heroine is already married or she is married early in the tale, and then the women's troubles begin." She has to overcome marital harassment, and sometimes reform her husband, to achieve a happy married life (Ramanujan 1997: 218).

Myths and Mythology have been an important part of literature since the time Immemorial. Diana Wynne Jones in *Reflections* illustrates

"If you take myth and folklore, and these things that speak in symbols, they can be interpreted in so many ways that although the actual image is clear enough, the interpretation is infinitely blurred, a sort of enormous rainbow of every possible colour you could imagine."(267).

Keywords: Myth, folklore, Kumaun, Golu , Gangnath, saga, Kurma, dangariya, Jagariya.

1. INTRODUCTION

A definition related to the Lore is more than the definitions of Folk. Lore is considered the subject matter of Folklore not the people who use it. In fact there is no perfect definition of folklore is given by the folklorists. The anthropologists consider Folklore as the most essential element in making the culture of any people. This is a universal truth that no culture exists without Folklore. Without Folklore one cannot discover any group of people and their technology. Folklore is said to be bridge between the educated and non educated societies.

The word 'Kumaon' derives from Kurmanchal, the land of *Kurmavatar*, the second incarnation of Vishnu in the form of a tortoise. In the *Ramayana* it is known as Uttarakoshala. In the *Mahabharata* it was part of the kingdom of Uttarakuru. In the *Skanda Purana*, Kumaun is known as Manas Khand and Garhwal as Kedar Khand. Prehistoric dwellings such as rock shelters, as well as stone-age implements, have been discovered in the Almora district. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang (Xuanzang) visited the mountains of Kurmanchal sometime in the period from 633 to 643 AD. He records his impressions of the northern tribal kingdoms (associated with Shakas, Khasas, Magars, Kinnars, and Huns) and mentions a number of geographical locations, later on linked to the valleys of Kumaun and Garhwal (see, for example, Saklani 1998: 48-52).

Despite the isolation of the high terrain, it had borders with Tibet and Nepal and was on the silk route from China. A joyous, pagan animism coexisted with the practice of severe tantric ritual, and Buddhism still thrived in nearby Nepal, across the Kali river. Known as the Deva-bhumi or the 'Land of Gods', it witnessed the constant wanderings of pilgrims, fakirs and holy men and saw a convergence of many peoples and religions. The Katyuri kings, who claimed descent from the Sun god, rule here from the seventh to the 11th century. They called their state Kurmanchal, the land of *Kurma*. Much of the architectural heritage of Kumaun, especially in stone, came from this period.

Kumaun is a region of mixed culture and the land of famous Hindu gods as well as the local deities. When we hear a bell ringing in anywhere in the temple, it is not only for the local deities but also for the host of some other gods and devils etc. These demons have their strong hold on the local people's imaginations. It is in the fashion of the region from the ancient time. The people of Kumaun are very much god fearing and also demons fearing. They consider these demons as a supernatural power and from the early time, they used to worship them as they worship their other gods.

There are so many folklores related to the folk gods of Kumaun region. These folk gods are divided into different categories as follows:

- (i) Kul Devtas (Family gods)
- (ii) Gram Devtas (Village gods)
- (iii) Nag Devtas (Snake gods)
- (iv) Bhumi Devtas (Land gods)
- (v) Veer (the heroes)

Among these gods there are many spirits and some supernatural powers that often come to influence the human beings in order to get worshipped by them.

The Oxford English Dictionary: describes the word myth as "a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon and typically involving supernatural beings or events".

Myths in the life-cycle of human beings primarily concern with birth, puberty, marriage, baptism, initiation, death etc. The myths related to festivals, occasions are also common in the mass of India. Myths can also tell us what a culture considers ethical, significant and central to its ideologies, giving us insight into another culture. Every culture has its own mythology and legends, these reflect the geography of the culture, values of culture and history of the culture.

1.2 Golu Devta: Golu (Goril, Gwell) is the most worshipped local god in the region of Kumaun in Uttarakhand. This is also called by different names like Gwell, Gwall, Goril, Gorla, Bhanariya etc. This is considered as a very effective, result oriented and just god. In the temple of this god, people go to ask for the fulfillment of their wishes. Except this, they go to make a *ghaat* (complaint) against their foes and provoke him to give punishment to their enemies. If a man is oppressed, he directly calls him by his name or go to his court (temple) for the justice. He hears the voice of the oppressed people and widow women at once. Then he gives punishment to the oppressors by harming them mentally or physically. The people have much firm belief in his justice that even they prefer to go to him in spite of the other high court or Supreme Court. The people generally write their problem on a paper and tie it up on a string in the temple. The people, who are very far from there and cannot reach there easily, they can also write their problems on a stamp paper or a normal paper and send it to the temple authority via post. Such a type of many documents can be seen in the temples of Chitai and Ghorakhal. The people who evident this fact of justice done by Golu Devta, say that the oppressors are punished by the God and they come to the victim and ask for pardon. I am also an evidence of the power of Golu Devta. He fulfilled my wishes too when I wrote a letter to him. Hearing about him, I myself went to the temple and made and interacted with the priest the people of local Pat village who told me about his heroic deeds.

Gatha (saga) of Golu Devta's jagar (Traditional ritual god provoking program): This gatha (saga) of Golu devta is sung by the *jagariya* (a skilled folk singer) along with his companion. The musical instruments that are used in this ritual are hudka, doongar, bronze plate etc. Singing this saga, a jagariya provokes his local deity or Golu Devta and impress him by singing in his praise. The lines which are sung by him are as follows:

Mata Kainara ko poot das main garab me rayo, anchari lagaichh.

Saat sauto le cholo racho vo bhuli.

Lyo paso dekhli tu chhai mari jaali.

Tyar ankhan mauja chaamka faatak lage dyulo.

Are patka patoiya chaam ko paatak bagalai.

Aari chirul kolu me ool taalukaa bati jeeb gaadul.

Meri kanara lijiya banaayae tu resmi faatak.

Das main mekai garab me gai.

Mai kani asant aigo meri kAanara tu.

Rasta kholi hota Kaalinara keencha mero.

Garab mauji koi khabeese lai janam dharan lhee haachh.

Maydi tu habdai jan ratiya ko bakhat holo.

Dharam ki bela (jaagali chhatri ko khaando). (UKLD pp. 184-90)

1.3 Gangnath: Gangnath: Like Goril, Gangnath is also the most famous and worshipped folk god in the region of Kumaun. He is mainly considered as the family god of the people belongs to the schedule cast community. But the people of other community also worship Him. It is believed that Gangnath generally incarnates into the body of newly married women and shows his powers by relieving the person who is in any problem. In the process of his worship, there is a provision for organizing a special *jagar* of one, two or even seven days. In this ritual cultural and spiritual program, a *jagariya* sings in the praise of god Gangnath and asks him to be incarnated into the body of a *dangariya* (a person who dances in the form of God). The *dangariya*, in the voice of god gives the solution of all the problems in the family. In the praise of Gangnath, there is also the sacrifice of animals is given. In this process, not only Gangnath but also his beloved Bhana Joshyani, unborn child and very trustable Jhaparuva Lohar (goldsmith) are also worshipped with the same respect and they are offered the articles of their desire. In which Gangnath is given the ear rings, kada and Ghaghara. They offer Choli, chadar, chuteela, bangles, bindi and nath for his beloved Bhana and for the unborn, they offer Jhaguli, hasuli and dhaguli for hands.

Gatha (saga) of Gangnath Devta's jagar (Traditional ritual god provoking program): This gatha (saga) of Gangnath Devta is sung by the *jagariya* (a skilled folk singer) along with his companion. The musical instruments that are used in this ritual are hudka, doongar, bronze plate etc. Singing this saga, a *jagariya* provokes his local deity or Gangnath Devta and impress him by singing in his praise. The lines which are sung by him are as follows:

O Aligara baya hadi Aligara baya,

Doti ka garh me tweelee kya udekh lyaya?

O jogi Gangua jogi kya udekh lyaya?

Bhana ko khatir tweeke kya udekh lyaya ? (UKLD pp. 184-90)

After singing this with the folk musical instruments, the spirit of Gangnath takes place into the body of dangariya and then he dances and asks the people problems and tells them the solution.

CONCLUSION

The objectives of this research are: to thoroughly read and study the domain of Kumauni folklore, myth and beliefs available in the written or oral medium and to analyze the importance of folklore in today's life. Folklore is powerful; it tends to leave an impact on the individuals full of moral values like devotion, thankfulness, gratitude, affection, right conduct, maintaining decorum, sharing and also obeying elders. The best way to preserve the Kumauni folklore is to include the folk tales and the folk songs of Kumaun, in the curriculum of the students. Folk songs play an integral role in teaching the religious and environmental values to the people

Work cited

1. Dr Dinesh Chandra Baluni, Uttarakhand ki Lokgathayen (Folklore of Uttarakhand)
2. Dr Jagdish (Jaggu) Naudiyal, Uttarakhand ki Sanskritik Dharohar, (Partially Folklore of Ravain)
3. Ramesh Matiyani 'Shailesh' 1959, Kumaun ki Lok Gathayen
4. Abodh Bandhu Bahuguna, Dhunyal (Folklore and Folk Songs of Garhwal)
5. Shambhu Prasad Bahuguna, Virat Hriday
6. Kusum Budhwar, 2010, Where Gods Dwell: Central Himalayan Folktales and Legends
7. C.M. Agarwal, Golu Devta, 1992, The God of Justice of Kumaon Himalayas
8. N.D. Paliwal, 1987, Kumaoni Lok Geet
9. E.S. Oakley and Tara Datt Gairola 1935, Himalayan Folklore
10. Sharma, Prof. D.D. *Uttarakhand Ke Lok Devta*. Ankit Prakashan. 2006
11. Minayev I. 1966. *Indijskije skazki i legendy, sobrannyje w Kamaonie w 1875 godu* I.P. Minajevym. Sost. I.P. Minajev. Moskva: Nauka.
12. Minayev I. 2015. *Clever Wives and Happy Idiots. Folktales from the Kumaon Himalayas*. Collected and Retold by Ivan Minayev, with a foreword by Namita Gokhale. Translated by Bulbul Sharma and Madhu Malik. New Delhi: Yatra Books.
13. Ramanujan A.K. 1997. *A Flowering Tree and Other Folk Tales from India*. Ed. With a Preface by S. Blackburn and A. Dundes. Berkley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.
14. Saklani, D.P. 1998. *Ancient Communities of the Himalaya*. New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company.

<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/folklore#Etymology>