

## **BHILORI FOLK LITERATURE: REFLECTION OF BHIL LIFE OF NANDURBAR DISTRICT**

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### **Abstract**

*The present research paper is based on Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi sponsored minor research project. Tribal people live in the company of forest and mountains. In India, there are references; Tribal people have their residence even before the arrival of the Aryan. Years ago, the local tribes were defeated at the hands of Aryan and hence to save a life from an enemy they shifted to the deep forest. There are many tribes in India. Within Maharashtra, Gond, Korku, Pardhi, Mavachi, Bhil, Pawara and Kokani are some important tribes. The tribes are generally resided in the ranges of the Satpuda. Nandurbar is a district where the majority of people are tribal. Generally, the district is well-known as a tribal district of Maharashtra. Bhil is one of the prime tribes of the district. The Bhil tribe has its own culture and folk literature and 'Bhilori' is the dialect they use for their daily communication. The dialect is available in the spoken form only and there is no script of Bhilori dialect. The Bhilori folk literature largely consists of songs, tales, idioms, phrases, proverbs and riddles. The literature is transferred orally from one generation to another. It teaches moral values and has its own tribal philosophy. It describes almost all the rituals, tradition and customs. The literature strongly shows that the Bhil community is ecologist true in nature and they are true worshippers of nature. Indeed, it is the need of the hour to preserve such a indigenous literature in the modern developed society. This paper aims to describe the distinguishing features of the Bhilori folk literature and reflection of Bhil life through Bhilori folk literature*

**Keywords:** *Bhil, Bhilori folk literature, songs, proverbs, story, riddles, idioms, philosophy,*

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**N**andurbar is an administrative place situated in the north-west corner of Maharashtra state. It is also known as the West Khandesh. The government of Maharashtra, on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1998 bifurcated Dhule district into two districts - Dhule and Nandurbar. In order to uplift the tribal from their isolated life and to bring them into the mainstream of development, the government of Maharashtra decided to separate the tribal majority area from Dhule district. Nandurbar district occupies an area of 5035 km<sup>2</sup>. The district is bounded to the south and south-east by Dhule district, to the west and north is Gujarat, to the north and north-east is Madhya Pradesh. The northern boundary of the district is defined by the great Narmada river. The mentioned geographical location is full of forests and the ranges of the Satpuda. The tribal communities have been living in the company of forests and the mountains. As they live in the mountains and forests, they are called 'vanvasi'. They are also known as 'the kings of the forest.' These kinds of adjectives show the intent relationship of Adivasi with the mountains and forests.

The majority of the people live in the rural part and very few shifted to the tehsil places. There are four major tribes in Nandurbar district- Bhil, Kokani, Mavachi and Pawara. The tribes are the same in many contexts and yet have some visible differences too. In terms of their language, they have less difference in tone. Regarding costumes and living standards, there are many differences among them.

Bhil community is in majority and it resides in the Satpuda ranges especially Akkalkuwa and Dhadgaon tehsils of Nandurbar district. The Bhil people have preserved a very rich folk literature. Literature is a part and parcel of each culture. It is manifestation of their thoughts and feelings. Folk literature available in Bhilori dialect reflects Bhil life and simple philosophy of their

life. The folk literature largely consists of songs, tales, riddles, idioms, phrases and proverbs. All these forms are rich in linguistic structure and meanings. The forms are didactic and consist of tribal philosophy. Though the tribe is largely illiterate, their literature is not less than any canonical literature. Here are some examples of the literary forms and reflections of Bhil life through Bhilori folk literature..

Bhilori folk literature has some short forms of literature. Riddle is a common form of literature. It is widely used in the rural part of the nation. The riddles are short but possess great meanings to live life happily. The Bhilori folk literature has a great space and place for riddles. The riddles have set guidelines for the community to behave gently and wisely. It consists of life philosophy. For example, the riddles are like '*Gay chalati jay aan dudh nigato jay*' (Cow gives milk while walking). The answer to the riddle is 'a hand -mill'. This simple riddle shows the lifestyle of the community. Since they are living in the ranges of the Satpuda and deep forest, there is no full availability of electricity. They do not have electronic mills for the floor. A Bhil woman has to use hand mills to crush grain for the floor. It further underlines their being economically poor. The hand mill is also a symbol of simplicity and labour. Simplicity of their life is addressed in the riddle such as '*Bodki dagive govanje chahe*' (Barren mountain has queues of wheat crops). It means 'tiled roofs of houses'. It shows the structure of their houses. It further demonstrates that earlier the houses were thatched with leaves of teak trees and later on they started using tiled roofs for the house. It is the next generation type of house.

*'Vatkoboy Poysa tul bi nay gonay ne mal nay gonara'* (Neither you nor me can count the plateful money). The answer is 'Sky and Stars'. '*Uchhe koroho puy hakve*' (Upper is house down is an egg). It means 'a fruit arises from the tree of Mahu'. '*Bodhibai Kanakoy Balya*' (A short woman has full of ear rings). It is 'a tree of chickpea'. '*Eka ralala pag nay*' (A king has no legs). It means 'snake'. '*Bodibai banahi ukado*' (A short woman makes dirt at the threshold). It is 'a crab'. These riddles in Bhilori dialect underline the reflection of Bhil life. Since the community lives in the forest they have an intimate relationship with animals. Animals are parts of their life. These simple riddles further show that the animals are also parts of these planets and there is a scope that human beings should learn some life lessons from the animals. Human beings are only part of larger structure. For Bhil community, all animals are equal.

Some other examples of riddles are '*Thi bude aan tih tige*' (Sinks here and appears there). It is a 'plough anchor'. '*Ujali Kukdi ekuj Pag*' (White hen with one leg). It means 'corn of jowar'. '*Chale tiya pay nay*' (Walks without legs). The answer is 'water'. '*Pan taha phul nai, phul taha pan nai*' (Leaf appears when a flower doesn't and when flower appears, the leaf doesn't). It is a 'cactus tree'. These riddles reflect the agricultural life of the Bhil community. Agriculture is the prime source of its economy. They have seasonary agriculture. Even the plough and water suggest that they have traditional farming instruments.

Idioms and phrases are parts of Bhilori folk literature. Folk literature massively extends itself in the oral form and particularly idioms and phrases are practiced by illiterate people. The Bhil community uses some of the following idioms and phrases in the Bhilori dialect. The community follows the simple theory of life philosophy which has been reflected through idioms and phrases. For example, '*Gul tih Makhya*' (Flies gather at jaggery). This is a simple life lesson that shows people always find their benefits and behave accordingly. If they have their business, they come and take the benefit of others. Once they fulfill their business, they systematically ignore others. '*Deva hadno haro pen sarkara hadno nay haro*' (It is better to die than to have jobs at government office). It shows the community's approach towards the government. Actually, it is their negative outlook and considering the government work process is lengthy. According to them, government offices are slow at their work. One will die, but his job will not get done within time. '*Jado poy taha gado poy nige, patlo poy taha khotlo poy nige*' (As you plant the same will come in return). This is a simple life philosophy that one can meet in life. What we do with others, the same we will receive in return. It is also moral teaching that one should keep good relations with others so that others will behave well in return. '*Pagatoli savani pagatule rehti naha*' (shadow never remains at the same place). It suggests that all days are not the same. The situation changes so one should not be much sad or happy. Life is a combination of joy and sorrow. Time moves constantly. It shows very positive teaching that one should not get frustrate rather he should move on. In many developed societies, people commit suicide on their failures. This Bhil community teaches a moral lesson that life should go on. The Bhil people never commit suicide. They have patience and strength to live life happily.

The community resided in the forest area. They are less in contact with another world. They do not have modern instruments of entertainment. They practice traditional instruments and methods to get entertainment. Songs are extensively in practice in the Bhil community. Songs, equal to poems, are parts of folk literature. The songs are sung by almost everyone; however, women are more enthusiastic to sing songs on various occasions. The songs are rhythmical and meaningful. The songs are expressions of their spontaneous and genuine feelings. Whatever may be the festival or ritual they sing songs. The following song is an example of praising 'Devmogara' goddess.

*Chari ori phirali dev yaha mogara*

*Kethalo raje gomalo dev yaho mogara*

*Helo Dabe goyalo dev yaho mogara*

*Sotale pote denari dev yahoo mogara*

*Vanzalo valo denari dev yahoo mogara*

"The song is addressed to Devmogara' goddess. It describes that the goddess has visited many lands, but she liked Dab (part of Nandurbar district) area where the community resided. The goddess gives peace and prosperity" (Bhamare 87). Generally, god's songs, marriage songs, Rodali songs, and festival songs are some major types of songs in Bhilori folk literature. There is no gender discrimination in the Bhil community. They give equal treatment to the boy and girl. The girl child is welcomed in the lines of songs '*Eya jagume tuma swagat hay, prema me reja beni yahki an poyari*'. This shows the attitude of the Bhil community towards the girl child. The girl child is always welcomed and respected. It reflects in the dowry system of the Bhil community. The dowry is given to the girl and not to the boy. The folk song is the reflection of the attitude the Bhil community to the Bhil girls and women. Thus Bhilori folk song is the reflecting of the Bhil life.

They sing songs on different occasions. The song sung on the occasion of Holi expresses the tradition and culture of the Bhil community. The arrival of Holi is in the lines '*Olibai aali gowari. Patla gher fuche, Patla bher fuche*'. Holi is one of the important festivals in Bhil community of Nandurbar district of Maharashtra. The Patil is a respected person in the village. He has the right to enlighten the Holi by log of wood. Therefore in these lines the Holi is asking the Patil. Holi is one of the popular festivals of the Bhil community. Some songs also describe the brave history of the

community. There is involvement of all the villagers. Holi danda (Thick and straight bamboo) is put a month before Holi where the Holi will be celebrated. There is great enthusiasm in the Bhil community. They beat dhol, play flutes and dance rhythmically on the occasion of Holi. They look at Holi as the goddess of joy, peace and prosperity. It is expressed in the lines of the songs

*Holi bay kay kay li aali wa*

*Holi bay naye naye potde li aali wa*

*Holi bay kay kay li aali wa*

*Holi bay suk shanti li aali wa*

These lines indicate that Holi has brought new clothes. It is the symbol of joy. As the new clothes are worn on the special occasions and festivals. It is expressed in the words '*naye naye potde*' (new clothes). Holi has brought peace and prosperity. It is reflected in the words '*suk shanti*' (peace and prosperity). Thus this Bhilori folk song is the reflection of the Bhil culture which is fond of festivals. Thus the Bhilori folk literature is the mirror of the Bhil life. The song sung on the occasion of Holi expresses the tradition and culture of the Bhil community.

The Bhil community considers itself as one of the bravest communities and hence there are some songs that describe the bravery of the Bhil community. The Bhil people are courageous, loyal and trustworthy. It is expressed in the lines '*Shur amuhu, mard amuhu. Vaga amuhu pilu!*' (We are brave and strong. We are cubs of tiger) (Vasave 5). These lines focus on the valour and courage of the Bhil community.

Bhilori folk tales are in the Bhilori dialect. It has some poles apart features as it represents one particular society or area. The Bhilori folk tales focus on the traditions and customs and the way of life of the Bhil people. They are comment on the interpersonal relationship of the Bhil community. In terms of Bhilori folk literature, there are many types of folk tales. "Folk tales of the Bhil community are in Bhilori dialect and they are expressed with artistic beauty. Subject, expression and objective of the folk tales are very much rich" (Gavit 55). The tales generally consist of animals, trees and sometimes inanimate objects play roles of characters. It shows that they treat inanimate objects equal to human beings. The tales focus on the beliefs of the Bhil community.

Songadya Party (Drama Performance Group) is very popular in the Bhil community. It is one of the genres of the Bhil community. Generally, during the nights of 'Gaon Diwali' (Popular Festival of the community), there is an arrangement of 'Songadya Party'. Some amateur artists entertain the villagers by singing songs or performing some comedy acts. "The performance is in the local language. The villagers enjoy the performance enthusiastically. It goes on for the entire night" (Gare 54). India's rich literary heritage is in the tribal folk literature. Bhilori folk literature is the reflection of the culture of the Bhil people. It is the basis of their survival.

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