



Environmental Consciousness in Tripuri Folk Literature

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ABSTRACT

Folk literature is an important component of folk culture. Preserving within itself a long historical span, this folk literature serves as unwritten social, historical, and cultural documents of its era. It acts as a carrier of folk culture. In other words, all consciousness-social, political, economic, religious, and cultural- of human beings is directly or indirectly embedded in folk literature, wherein the entire society and culture are naturally recorded. The relationship between Tripuri folk literature and the environment is fully evident. Without it, no individual can complete their daily tasks or special activities. The environment is connected to every entity- living beings, animals, and nature- containing life force. Elements related to the environment, such as humans, trees and plants (neem, bamboo, banana, Tulsi), animals (cow, hen), sun, moon, water, and all environmental objects and food items, are particularly essential in worship and rituals. Humans worship nature and the environment, praying for their well-being and longevity. The Tripuri community has been worshipping the sun god, rivers, trees, moon god, Tulsi, banyan tree, cow, and many other elements for centuries. This has a direct connection to our environment, the link between environment and religion, and religion with the diverse cultures and folk beliefs of Tripuri communities, symbolizing human faith. There is an unbreakable bond between tribal life and the environment, where tribes maintain balance with nature and play a



significant role in environmental conservation through traditional knowledge. Their sustainable lifestyles, agricultural practices, and management of forests and water resources help preserve ecological balance.

Introduction:

If we attempt to connect the environment with folk literature, it becomes clear that the folk literature long dismissed as inferior and uncivilized is, in itself, endowed with consciousness encompassing nearly every aspect of nature conservation. In these literatures, within the vastness of human and culture, trees-plants, forest wealth, animals, sun, rivers, and so on are fully integrated with grandeur and splendour. In Tripuri folk literature, nature emerges in diverse forms and colours as a life companion, without which all melodies, festivals, and celebrations remain incomplete.

The extraordinary presence of the environment in Tripuri folk literature is the result of the subtle scientific wisdom and consciousness of folk life. It would not be an exaggeration to say that nature is the foundation of Tripuri culture. That is why, in these literatures born from the hearts of folk people, rivers, mountains, forests, trees, fruits-flowers, bamboo, sun, and all such elements are fully incorporated.

Tripuri folk literature is a vital part of the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous (Tripuri society) people of Tripura state. It reflects the close relationship of Tripuri tribes with society's social and economic systems as well as its social values. This literature is not merely a means of entertainment but also provides insight into society's beliefs, traditions, and various aspects of life. Tripuri folk literature depicts stories connected to ancient deities, natural elements, and life's challenges, which are passed down orally from generation to generation.

Tripuri folk literature plays a role in preserving the cultural heritage of the Tripuri community. This literature is narrated from one person to another across generations, keeping traditional values, customs, and religious beliefs alive. Through these literatures, people understand their history, ancient traditions, and religious beliefs, transmitting them to future generations.

Folk literature is an effective way to understand the values, ethics, and ideals of folk life. Tripuri community folk literatures depict good and evil, truth, and deities. Tripuri folk literatures also illustrate human relationships with nature, presenting forests, rivers, mountains, and animals as sacred and



important. Through these literatures, messages are conveyed about maintaining balance with nature and protecting it.

Folk literature also serves as a medium of entertainment. In the Tripuri community, there are many folk songs, dances, and dramas based on these. In Tripuri folk literature, descriptions of forests and folk society are deeply found in their customs, festivals, dances, and social fabric, where water symbolizes life, forests form the basis of livelihood and spirituality, and community unity and identity shine in dances and festivals.

Major Tripuri folk tales:

Chethuwang

Khumpui-1 (Sa)

Khumpui (Nwi)

Baba goriya achaimani kothoma

Kherengbar

Brief descriptions of some of the aforementioned folk tales are as follows:

Chethuwang– This folk tale features natural descriptions along with portrayals of moral values and ancient traditions of Tripuri society.

Raima-Saima – This folk tale is about two sisters. It includes ancient traditions of Tripuri society alongside cultural depictions, folk beliefs, and natural imagery. This folk tale is also popularly known as Khumpui, which refers to a type of flower in the Tripuri language.

Baba Goriya – This folk tale beautifully depicts the customs and traditions of the indigenous people of Tripura state. It includes natural worship, where people specially worship their agricultural tools. The purpose of Goriya worship is to honour farmers' hard work and the importance of agricultural tools, fostering peace and equality in society. Farmers pray for good crops and prosperity. This festival-based tale highlights the importance of agriculture in society.

In Tripuri folk literature, environmental consciousness is generally accepted as evident through the Tripuri community's depiction of nature's importance via folk tales, songs, and customs. Respect for



nature, worship of trees and rivers, knowledge of medicinal plants, and coexistence with natural elements serve as proofs of environmental consciousness in folk literature.

Trees and plants are extremely important for life. That is why folk traditions have linked trees and plants to divine and supernatural powers to ensure their protection. For example, the Tripuri folk tale 'Baba Goriya' reflects efforts toward nature, where bamboo is worshipped.

The connection with nature in the Tripuri community is profoundly unbreakable. For instance, the nature-related folk tale 'Kherengbar' conveys the message of maintaining balance with nature and protecting it.

Tripuri society has traditionally been agriculture-based. Consequently, Tripuri folk literature directly reflects experiences rooted in the environment. The impacts of seasonal changes, crop cycles, rainfall, drought, and water source conditions are clearly visible in folk tales. These tales not only explain how to establish balanced relationships with nature but also impart lessons on responsibility and conservation toward the environment. This is not only part of folk culture but also highly relevant in the context of today's environmental crisis.

Tripuri Folk Song

Garo kwchak garo chikon

Thigwi kaidi bayarok

Watwi thop thop wao

Nobar kwchang sibo

Aliya kuna nokha

Som phaikha

Doui kaidi, doui kaidi

Doui kaidi bayap kwtal rok

The above folk song depicts the atmosphere during paddy planting by the Tripuri community, describing rain, clouds, sky, and so on.



Conclusion

Tripuri folk literature is an important part of the cultural, religious, and social traditions of Tripuri society. This literature is not merely a collection of folk tales, songs, proverbs, and prevalent customs but also encompasses a deep understanding and sensitivity toward nature and the environment. The Tripuri society, primarily residing in India's Tripura state, has long embodied coexistence and balance with nature in its lifestyle. Traditional folk literature contains numerous tales, songs, and proverbs that teach conservation and balanced use of nature. This literature is a living document of environmental consciousness, transmitted orally across generations.

In Tripuri folk tales, nature is not viewed merely as a resource but as a living force. Trees-plants, rivers, mountains, animals-birds, etc., are integral to folk literature. Folk tales often inspire establishing balanced relationships with nature. For example, many folk songs describe natural beauty while also advising against indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources. Traditional proverbs symbolize that human life is unimaginable without nature conservation.

In Tripuri folk songs, natural beauty and nature's pricelessness are presented in a lyrical style. The murmuring flow of rivers, lush green forests, towering mountains, and other beauties are sung with love. Additionally, these songs serve as warnings: if we disrupt nature's balance, we will face consequences. This demonstrates the deep reverence for nature in Tripuri society. For instance, some songs clearly express the need to protect water sources, avoid tree felling, and coexist with animals.

The message of environmental conservation in folk tales is also linked to social and religious perspectives. In Tripuri society, nature is considered the abode of deities. Trees, rivers, mountains, etc., are regarded as sacred sites. Natural elements are incorporated into religious rituals, expressing gratitude toward nature. The influence of these religious sentiments is clearly reflected in folk literature. This religious perspective continues to encourage environmental conservation ideas today.

However, under the influence of modernity, environmental consciousness in Tripuri folk literature is gradually diminishing. Urbanization, technological progress, and growing modern thinking are endangering the relevance of traditional folk literature. Interest in folk literature among the new youth generation is declining. This poses a challenge to preserving the traditional environmental consciousness of Tripuri society. Considering this, it is clear that mere talk of conservation is insufficient; there is a need to reach youth, promote it through modern media, and include folk literature with environmental



consciousness in school curricula. This will raise awareness among the younger generation about the importance and conservation of natural resources.

Environmental consciousness in Tripuri folk literature holds importance not only at the local level but also on a broader social scale. This literature reminds us that living in balance with nature is humanity's fundamental need. By adopting this consciousness, we can address issues like climate change, deforestation, water crisis, and biodiversity loss.

Ultimately, Tripuri folk literature is an invaluable heritage that not only preserves our cultural legacy but also conveys ancient lessons on environmental conservation. If we protect, study, and promote it in new ways, it can serve as an inspiration for environmental conservation not only for Tripuri society but for all humanity. The sentiment of love and coexistence with nature is the soul of Tripuri folk literature. By strengthening this consciousness, we can take steps toward a balanced and sustainable future.

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