



## **Gali in Wedding Song of Manbhum: A Socio-Cultural Study of Ritual Humour and Tradition**

**Rakesh Chandra Mahato**

Department of English and Modern European Language, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, India

Email: rakesh\_phd2025@allduniv.ac.in

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper deals with the use of Gaali in wedding songs (*Biha Geet*) of *Manbhum* with its socio-cultural background and impacts on society. *Manbhum* is a part of the Chhotanagpur plateau in the Eastern India. The area *Manbhum* covers the area of Jharkhand and West Bengal. This paper aims to analyse the cynical use of language to compose melodious satire, which enhances the flavour of the marriage ceremony of rural *Manbhum*. The study involved other rituals of the marriage ceremony of the area. The study observed the result in the form of a connection between the cultural scenario and the rituals of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The tradition serves as an essential part of marriage. It helps in the gradual continuation of the marriage ceremony. The words are formed with the essential symbolic meanings closely connected to the people and the society. It also mocks the hypocrisy of the outer formality. It actually reflects the truth that lies under the traditional performances. This study involved anthropological observation through the villages of *Manbhum*.

### **Introduction**

*Gaali* (Scolding) used in the wedding song provides an interesting atmosphere in the wedding ceremony of *Manbhum*. *Manbhum* is a geographical area of *Chhotanagpur* with the districts *Purulia, Jhargram*, parts of *Bankura, Medinipur, Bardhaman* from *West Bengal* and *Bokaro, Dhanbad, East Singbhum*,



*Seraikela-Kharsawan, Ranchi* and a few other areas of *Jharkhand*. The whole part is also known by other names, such as *Dhalbhum, Barabhum, Singbhum, Shikharbhum, Manbhum*, etc. This area is also known as *Jungalmahal*. The *Biha Geet* (wedding song) is mainly an integral part of the *Kudmi-Mahato* community. The other castes, like Kumhar and Kamar, also celebrate their marriage ceremony with these songs.

Marriage in India is considered as a very essential and vital thing in human life. It is associated with destiny. Living with a life partner for the rest the life after marriage is very common in India. This belief is the reason to glorify marriage and decorate the marriage ceremony with colourful and meaningful rituals. Rituals of the wedding song are not celebrated in the centre of the state, West Bengal, but it is very common in the western part of Bengal. The wedding song is sung in North Bengal also. This tradition is common in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and other parts of North Bengal. But there, the ritual is only within the domestic boundary, where the woman sings with the dholak inside the house. But wedding songs in *Manbhum* are sung in open places, premises, roads, streets, even in a mike, sometimes before a large audience.

The wedding ceremony of the *Kudmi* community does not follow the traditional Hindu rituals. Though they use the sound “Hari Bolo; Bol Hari” (Say Hai, Say Hari; the God *Bishnu*) three times when the *Sindur Daan* take place, all the other rituals are based on their own unique tradition, based on a rural and nature-centric way. The groom put *Mala* (garland) on an *Aam* (Mango) tree, and the bride put *Mala* on a *Mahul* tree or branch before the actual *Malabadal* (garland changing) ritual. It represents marriage with the trees. Beneath those trees, the marriage rituals are performed. The wedding song is also sung. The *Chhamda* (stage) is also built with the *Aam* and *Mahul* branches. This is an example of the nature-centric lifestyle of the people of this area.

The *Gaali* in form of trolling and mockery is used during the welcoming of the Groom party on the day of marriage that takes place in bride’s house or on *Ashirbadi* and on the next day known as *Bahrata* (banquet party from the groom’s side) during *Behan Dekha* (meeting of bride and groom’s parents) and *Viday* (parting) of the bride with her parents. Sometimes these *Gaali* songs are continued when the opposition also reply them with the same types of songs. This quarrel is considered as the medium of starting a new relationship by casting out all the hatred and with the intention of no more quarrels but a sweet relationship in future. The marriage ceremony not only builds relation between the bride and groom, but it also starts a new relationship between the two families and their relatives. The



bride or groom relates to two village also, where the bride or groom finds new relatives in his or her in law village.

Mahato, Mihir. (2023) *Behāin Dekha Ceremony*.



At- Silda, Ichagarh, Saraikella-Kharswan, Jharkhand, India

Mahato, Rakesh chandra. (2024) *Bridal Ceremony; Bride and Groom on their uncles' lap*.



*Shala Dhuti Ritual.*



Manohar Mahato's Residence, Berada, Barabazar, Purulia, West Bengal, India

### Materials and Methods

The study is conducted by field observation, interviews, song transcription, thematic analysis, etc., with qualitative ethnography. The story and narration by the community people play a vital role in the study. The author has observed the ceremony from the very ground level since his childhood, as he lives among these rituals and culture. He has made conversation with the bride, groom, parents, relatives and singers in particular. The songs are collected directly from the singer's mouth.

The theoretical framework for this study is based on theories like Performance Theory, Functionalist Theory, Ritual Theory, Feminist Folklore Perspective, etc. Regarding Performance Theory, folklorist Richard Bauman argues that folklore must be understood as performance, involving performer, audience, and cultural context. The author has first-hand experience of the culture as he belongs to the area and community. He has participated in the rituals from the bride's and groom's sides. He has the experience of going as a *Barati* (groom's party) and in *Bahrata* (as bride's party). According to the functionalist theorist Bronislaw Malinowski, rituals function to maintain social harmony. Through humour and mock abuse, these songs transform social discomfort into laughter and collective



participation. Anthropologist Victor Turner states that sometimes opposite or conflicting things are accepted as normal when they are formed as a ritual.

### Literature Review

The literary sources for this study are Dr Sudhir Kumar Karan's *Seemanta Banglar Lokjan* (1996), Dinesh Chandra Sen's *Folklore of Bengal* (1920), A. K. Ramanujan's *Folklore of India* (1991), Ashutosh Bhattacharya's *The Cultural Heritage of Bengal* (1953), Amitava Bhattacharya's *Folk Culture of Bengal* (2018), etc. In these books, the historical background is stated. The discussion about the geography and cultural source is mentioned. In Karan's *Seemanta Banglar Lokjan* a overview is described with a feminist perspective also. It emphasised the practical social life rather than religious rituals filled with hypotheses and fancy.

### Results and Discussion

The results of the study open up so many things. *Manbhum* is rich with its own culture. The language also has an identical quality. It is neither Bengali nor Hindi nor Bhojpuri completely. Some songs are in Kudmali. Others are in a local language called *Manbhuyan* Which sometimes considered a dialect of Bangla, but actually it has so many words that are not in the vocabulary of the Bengali language. The geographical location of this area is on a plateau. For this reason, the weather is very rough in this area. In Summer it is very hot, in Winter it is very cold. This rough weather is overcome through a lot of celebration of festivals and rituals.

The complete marriage takes place when it is an arranged marriage. Arranged marriage is notably common in the *Kudmi* community. The marriage generally takes place within the same caste, but the *Gautra* (clan) must be different. Usually, a very distant relationship between the families is preferable. The availability of suitable bride and groom leads to the occurrence of a nearby marriage, mostly in nearby villages or areas within 50-80 KM. Both sides of people are generally well-known about each other's area and other things. This leads to the humorous conflict at its peak. Few songs are notable in this context.

### Examples:

1. **Song:** "Toke je lo/re dekhe chhili Chhagal Bagali,  
*Chhagal Garu Chhade diye lo/re o tui kaina/bor saje ali*".

**Translation:** (I saw you, oh man/woman, grazing the goats,

Yoften decorate themselves in a formal, wealthy look, but they are actually poor and simple. The simplicity is the most real and accepted scenario.

Mahato, Mihir. (2023) *Wedding Ceremony*.



Jaladhar Mahato's residence, Berada, Barabazar, Purulia, West Bengal, india

*Bor ghorer lok gilār re dādā upor dige tunti”.*

**Translation:** (Drum-stick stick I say Drum-stick stick,

Groom's party's voice brother, always at the peak.)

This song is a mockery of the groom's party, who are creating chaos, behaving in a very proud manner as they are given special respect. The word *Sannla shunti* is used as a metaphor to project the informal shouting of the comrades of the groom's side, and it also creates a beautiful rhythm.

**3. Song:** “*Borer Bape porer ghare kato dhange Nāstā kore,  
Emon Khābār Bāper kale khāinā kabou ghare”.*

**Translation:** (Groom's father, at another's home, eating food in many poses,

Never ate such food at home throughout his life he passes.)

This song is for the groom's father and his companions who come to examine the bride. They are given special respect, and they do a lot of show-offs in various ways. They demand dowry from the bride's



guardians. The guests from the groom's side are treated with an extraordinary welcome and care. The tradition forces the bride's parents to invest lots of money in the suitor and people from his side. This shows the helplessness of the groom's guardians and the arrogant nature of bride's father.

4. **Song:** “*Buk dekhā jā mā pindhi dehek kesan nāch,*

*Lokek bheede dekhāk jesan chulhay dehek ānch.*”

(Lyricist: Bikash Mahto, Singer: Tilaktama Tantubay)

**Translation:** (In chest-showing shirt, see how they dance,

Seems in crown as they put wood in fireplace.)

Mahato, Mihir. (2023) *Bārāti Dance*.



Jaladhar Mahato's residence, Berada, Barabazar, Purulia, West Bengal, India

These examples are clear evidence of the nature of the treatment of the addressee. The happiest moment of a wedding is decorated with songs. The songs are very melodious and easy to sing. The notation is very simple, the tone is rural, and the tune variation is rare. The songs are presented orally without any musical instruments. This highlights the vocal tone of the singer. These are mainly sung by women. They are not trained by any academic institution, but they can sing perfectly without any fault. Their voice is melodious. Most of them are illiterate. Even if someone is literate, she does not use pen and paper to remember the lyrics. They practice it from childhood with the elders. As it is compulsory in every



wedding ceremony, the practice is more, and they gradually match the perfection. The society people also treat is positively as a talent, and the women are encouraged.

## Conclusion

These *Gāli* songs are very rich with literariness. The metaphor used in the sarcasm shows the ability of the composer. The recent songs may have a composer, but in most of the cases the composer is anonymous. It was probably composed by a woman instantly during a marriage ceremony. Many songs are being composed at present also. The women do not need a pen or paper or very much preparation; their composing ability is very natural and fluent. The written version of this song is rare. Scholars and academic institutions should work on it. The government should promote this culture. The society and future generation have the responsibility to continue the culture. This is very useful in the present time, where people are very much egoistic. This kind of sarcasm is a very effective way to present others' faults in the form of a song. The addressee ought to take the sarcasm playfully. There is a saying by Maa Sārada Devi, “Khetē Janle Osukh Nei, *Kotha Janle Jharā Nei*” (If someone knows the proper way of eating, there will be no disease; if someone choose proper way of speaking, there will be no quarrel).

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