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Gender and Orality: A Study of Select Folktales

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Abstract

Aim: *The paper aims to analyze gender-biases and discriminatory stereotypical practices as reflected in the folktales to advocate social change for a more equitable society. In pre-literate or non-literate societies, transmission of knowledge, belief systems, lifestyles and rituals took place in oral form that ensured cultural continuity and preserved societal norms/values. Folktales and orality are complimentary to each other as folktales/narratives are passed on orally in the form of speeches, acts, narrations or songs from one generation to the other.*

Methodology and Approach: *The authors have used the primary and secondary sources as part of their research. The researchers have also applied the feminist and gender theories in this work with the intention to bring changes in the modern society with the help of folktales which help to change the traditional thinking regarding women and their individual existence. Folktales in Uttar Pradesh are found in the dialects like Awadhi, Bundeli, Kauravi, Braj and Bhojpuri etc.*

Outcome: *In the countries like India where folk literature has a rich and long-standing history, literature produced and transferred orally is counted among the major defining attributes of its literary and cultural heritage. Orality works as 'lifeblood' to keep alive the folktales across generations.*

Conclusion and Suggestions: *Although in modern age folktales seem outdated, but they preserve the soul of true India within stories guiding in every sphere of life. The folktales attack these traditional norms which become the shackles of the feet of the women.*

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Literary and cultural heritage of India is preserved in the folktales created over centuries in different dialects of all its regions and states. This enormous corpus of folk literature in India and beyond shows how stories and songs in different regional languages and varieties of dialects have been directly contributing to the formation of the cultural consciousness of the people. This is precisely the reason that the well-known American folklorist and anthropologist John Greenway defines folksongs as “socio-historical documents” (Greenway, 1) in his famous essay published in 1960. These tales have been imparting knowledge, values and history in their most elemental forms. They serve as the repository and a sort of continuum of what has been happening in a particular region. Writing as the General Editor to the *Indian Publications Folklore Series*, Sankar Sen Gupta asserts the need to study folklore and says:

It is well-known, to a modern folklorologist, the important question is not what folklore is, on the contrary, what does folklore do for the folk people. It has been suggested by a great many scholars that folklore is aiding the young in education. It helps in cultivating wisdom of the folk people. It promotes group’s solidarity and integration. It has the power to convert dull work into play. It is again a vehicle of communication and it is a medium of social and political protests. It is thus a mirror of rural society and a forceful organ of mass communication, understanding, exchanging views and ideas. (Sen Gupta, xii)

This orally transmitted literature tells about the people of that particular area, their behavioural patterns, value systems, food habits, administrative structures, climatic conditions, crops, dresses, locally significant places, deities and lots of other things that help researchers in their cultural mapping. These tales inspire people and also in turn get inspired by their lives. Ballads narrating the stories of great heroes of the past make the present generation one with the history as highlighting the presence of such songs in Bhojpuri, Dr. K. D. Upadhyaya in his article ‘An Introduction to Bhojpuri Folksongs and Ballads’ writes, “Popular heroes- persons stirred up with a true heroism and philanthropy- claim many ballads depicting both romance and sturdy heroism in their lives.” (Upadhyaya, 85)

A state in northern India, Uttar Pradesh is the most populated state in the country. Divided into eighteen administrative divisions and seventy-five districts, this state shares its borders with a country Nepal, eight different Indian states and one Union Territory. It makes the state quite rich in terms of language and culture. Each region in Uttar Pradesh has its own distinct identity, literature and history which, though culminate and mingle with each other somewhere down the line, make it a linguistically colourful, historically vibrant and culturally rich state. Folk literature that is collected and compiled so far is available in Awadhi, Kauravi, Braj, Bundeli and Bhojpuri etc. All these regional dialects are still spoken by millions of people and apart from the folk literature available; all of them have their own long history of written literature as well that dates back to many centuries.

When we talk of the basic features found in the folktales of these dialects, a very interesting fact emerges that establishes the fact that majority of them, if not all, have many things in common as, for example, basic human sentiments woven around a series of differing events with the aim to make life better, society more sensitive and human beings more capable of handling crises, conflicts and day-to-day struggles. The same basic sentiment and public welfare are presented with different settings, characters and storyline in all of them. It is commonly said at the end of a *katha* or story, “May good days come to everyone”, i.e. “*sabke achchhe din bahure*”. Characters like Shri Krishna, Lord Rama, and Shiv-Parvati keep on appearing in the folk literature of Uttar Pradesh. These stories may be presented in different dialects but the basic spirit remains the same as folk-tale depicting the importance of elders like the one in Bhojpuri entitled “*Bina Budhe ki Barat*” is found in all the other dialects as well. This story contains a message that is quite relevant even in contemporary times.

In the folk-tales collected by Vidya Bindu Singh under the title *Uttar Pradesh ki Lokkathayen*, we observe all the aspects of folk-tales. The stories are not only religious, ethical, humorous and related to nature, but they also raise numerous social issues. These stories are not limited only to the narration of fairytales or ghost stories, but express the problems of their age and their probable solutions too. While searching for gender issues in these tales, we come across numerous stories that highlight problems related to gender in the society. In the

story, 'Pet ka Dukh' ('Belly's Grief'), we see the sorrow of a widow who is dependent on her son and daughter-in-law. Her husband died when her son was only five years old. She brought him up with great difficulty. But after his marriage, her daughter-in-law who herself is a woman, tries to trap her son. She pretends to be a loyal wife and good daughter-in-law, but she does not even give proper food to her mother-in-law in the absence of her husband. Whenever the widowed mother sits down to eat, her daughter-in-law takes out a box of vermilion from the kitchen and taunts her asking, "Yeh logi?" ("Want this?") The mother helplessly replies bowing her head, *Nahi beti, mujhe nahi chahiye. Yeh to tumhare liye hai. Ise apne liye rakho.* (No, daughter, I don't want. It's for you. Keep it with yourself, Singh, 27-28)

In this way, her daughter-in-law always avoids giving her the complete meal. Gradually, she grows weaker. When her son inquires about the reasons for her weakness, she replies, "*Beta, mujhe pet ka dukh hai.*" ("Son, I've belly's grief," Singh, 28). The story narrates the inverse of patriarchal stereotype where normally a daughter-in-law is supposed to be tortured by a mother-in-law but by presenting the case of a helpless old widowed mother-in-law, the tale challenges many clichéd notions and brings the other side of the coin to the fore. Moreover, it also highlights the role of a woman involved in the domestic violence perpetrated against a woman. The story not only furthers the cause of gender discourses and enlarges its frontiers but also shows how keen and sensitive observations lead to the creation of folk literature.

In another story, "Pandit ki Saat Bitiya" ("Seven Daughters of the Pandit"), issues of patriarchy, gender discrimination and preference for son have been presented. In the story, Pandit and his wife intensely desire for a son. So the number of daughters increased to seven. Now they have seven daughters and no son. The story reflects on the social stigma of not having a son and parenting only daughters believing them to be a burden on them. Pandit and his wife are just dragging ahead with their life and take no interest in anything as they always think about how to get their daughters married off at proper age. Financial constraints are such that Pandit who is very fond of sweet delicious foods like *malpuwa* remembers how for such a long time he could not have them,

Jab se tumhari saat saat betiya ho gai, kabhi bhi ji bhar kar manpasand bhojan karne ko nhi mila. Malpuwa khaye to lagta hai, yug beet gaye, uska swaad bhi yaad nhi raha. (Since the times you've borne seven daughters, never could we get the favourite food. Ages have passed but couldn't taste *malpuwa*, don't even remember its taste, Singh, 46)

A son in traditional Indian families is considered to be the bearer of the family name and is therefore always desired. The story shows how in their earnest desire to get a son, they expanded their family to the extent that it became difficult to bear its expenditure and are therefore cursed to lead a life of poverty, destitution and misery. The story quite effectively presents how gender discrimination affects a common man's life in the rawest and vicious form.

In stories such as "*Hum Toh Pooji Har- Kudar*" ("I Worship Plow and Spade"), we see a reversal of traditional gender roles. Traditionally a wife is supposed to look after her husband, but in this story, we observe the vicious designs and selfish attitude of a woman. This again presents the inverse of patriarchal stereotype and demonstrates how unhealthy relationships lead to the unimaginable crises in family life. The woman in the tale prepares good food for herself while she gives her husband only breads made of husk. Such type of stories raises issues of reverse domestic abuse and gender discrimination, where a male is deprived of the minimum basic needs and respect. It further shows that food is not just a means to fill the belly and satisfy one's hunger but a symbol of love and care. The well-known idiom that "way to a husband's heart courses through his stomach" emphasizes the same food-bonding that is always required to lead a happy and comfortable family life.

The story "*Saari Suiyan Hum Nisaren*" ("I removed all the Needles") is a wonderful narrative of deception, fraud, betrayal and opportunism. We see a treacherous and untrustworthy woman cheating an innocent, devoted and loyal woman. In a male chauvinist society, a woman often becomes the victim of 'Internalized Misogyny' or 'pick-me-behavior'. In the present story, a princess expelled from her home by her stepmother gets shelter in a palace. She sees the dead body of a prince lying on the floor. He has needles stuck in his body. The princess starts removing the needles one by one. But one day, a woman crossing through the palace requests her to employ her as a maid to which the princess

concedes. But in the absence of the princess, when only two needles are left in the prince's body, the maid removes the needles and the prince gets a new life. The maid claims that it happened due to her hard work and perseverance. The prince is happy to learn that and makes her his wife. The unfortunate princess now serves them as a maid and wanders around singing like a mad woman day and night—*“Saari suiyan mai nisaryon, mai bhayon daasi, daasi bhai raani”* (“I removed all the needles, I became maid, the maid became queen,” Singh,54). At last, the prince finds out the truth and the maid is punished for her deceitful behaviour. ‘The Internalized Misogyny’ or ‘pick-me-behavior’ is again showcased in the other story “Sherani ka Dudh” (“Milk of the Lioness”), where a maid becomes queen in the absence of the king by kidnapping his real wife after giving birth to a baby boy. The story narrates the betrayal of a maid for the sake of wealth, power and favor of the king.

Stepmother stories highlight deeper issues of gender stereotypes and patriarchal thinking. Stepmothers in the stories like “Chhadi ki Karaamaat” (“The Magic Stick”) are portrayed as cruel, jealous and selfish. This reinforces the patriarchal idea that the women are instinctively rancorous and prone to female jealousy. In the present story, a prince is expelled from his palace because of his stepmothers and has to suffer a lot. But with the help of a magic stick he solves all his problems. Such stories promote the stereotypical definition of ‘an ideal mother’ where a biological mother is considered ideal and stepmother as an epitome of evil.

The story, “Chatori Sethani aur Kanjoos Seth” (“The Miserly Businessman and his Gluttonous Wife”) presents the clash of traditional gender roles and economic principles. Men are traditionally considered as ‘providers’ but the miserly Seth does not want to spend his wealth portraying himself as ‘unproductive’ who cannot even provide for his wife’s basic needs. In the same manner, the gluttonous Sethani presents her ‘unnecessary craving’ all the time, a stereotype often associated with women. In another story, ‘Jue ki Shart’ (‘Bet in Gambling’), a king gambles with a man belonging to the *Dom* caste who lays a condition that if the king loses, he will have to marry his sister to him. Due to his gambling addiction the king accepts the *Dom*’s proposal. The *Dom* finally wins and the king loses. After losing the bet, the king is forced to agree to the proposal.

He tricks his sister to the river bank and hands her over to *Dom*. Returning home he informs everyone that his sister has drowned. One day, the sister's pet parrot sitting on the parapet of her new house cries, the sister answers:

Kaise ke aai! More ram sugva!
Hath banhal ba, god banhal ba,
Dom baitha ba, soop beenat ba,
Kata lihe ba, kaise ke ai more ram sugva!

(How do I come? O my dear parrot! My hands are tied, my feet are tied, Dom is sitting, he is making a winnowing basket, holds a fork in his hand, how do I come? O my dear parrot! Singh, 83)

The parrot recognizes her voice and informs her parents so that they may plan to set her free. This story is a classic example of the 'objectification' of women. It reminds us of the archetypal story of Draupadi in the *Mahabharata* where a woman is staked in a game of gambling. Here, a woman is depicted as an inanimate object or property rather than a human being who can be won and lost in a game played just for the sake of enjoyment. This act normalizes sexual violence against women as a sport or entertainment. Such types of stories portray the patriarchal mindset where men consider women under their control and claim ownership over them. This story raises the issue of the gross violation of gender equality.

The story entitled "Neelkanth" explains the unwavering dedication, sacrifice and loyalty of an Indian wife who by her courage and intelligence saved her husband from the trap of the fairies. She is shown following the *pativrata dharm* that makes a husband a god-like figure (*patiparmeshwar*). This patriarchal idea contradicts the modern principles of gender equality. A faithful woman is forced to surrender her dreams, desires and individuality to her husband's will. In the present story, the husband passes away during the performance of the wedding rituals, but still the bride must go to his place and live like a widow. In short, the story of a *pativrata* bride, from gender perspective, portrays the woman as a 'wife' living for the sake of her husband rather than as an individual. The story further shows how with the help of her dedication and devotion towards the ideals she follows, she ultimately wins her husband's life back from the clutches of the fairies. The narrative reinforces the patriarchal ideals of how a wife can achieve

even the impossible with the help of her undaunting courage and determination. This story again resounds the famous archetypal episode of Savitri bringing the life of her husband Satyawana back.

Another story, “Bana Rahe Baba ke Khetava” (“May Baba’s Farm Remain Prosperous!”), raises a complex issue of gender hierarchy and domestic violence, where a sister-in-law is harassed by her brother’s wife. In this story, Ranbhopali is married in a poor family, but her brother loves her too much. So, she decides to stay at her brother’s home. But her brother’s wife does not want her here at any cost. So she makes her sister-in-law sit on a sack and sings- “*Sukh sukh khulari, nanad hai bhukhali, pison, povon, khay, ghar jay apne.*” (“O khulari!, you dry up quickly! Sister-in-law is hungry. I will grind you and make roti. After eating it, she will go back to her place.”) (Singh, 98). Here, *khulri* is the wheat straw which is used for animals not for human beings. So Ranbhopali understands intentions of her brother’s wife. She decides to return to her in-laws’ house. On the way, she fills her stomach by eating wild green leaves and sings, “*Bana rhe Baba k khetava, sagva-patava bhara mor petava.*” (“May Baba’s farm continue to grow! The greens filled my stomach.”) (Singh, 99). Her brother is surprised to see his sister filling her stomach with green leaves and decides to teach a lesson to his wife. He returns home and tells his wife, “*Are, aaj tumhare maayke se ek aadmi aaya tha. Wah kah rha tha ki tumhare ghar me aag lag gai. Sabkuch jal kr swaha ho gya.*” (“Hey! A man came from your parents’ house today. He was saying that your parents’ house has caught fire. Everything has been destroyed in the fire.”) (Singh, 99). Under the pretext of sending a lot of goods to his wife’s maternal home, he delivers them to his sister’s house. When we look at the story from the perspective of gender bias, we end up facing many issues but the most prominent one that naturally emerges out of this narrative has its roots in patriarchal mindset of considering married daughters the ‘*paraya dhan*’ who should never live with their parents for long and remain with their in-laws forever. It exposes the roots of patriarchal set up in Indian society. It creates a sort of crisis of identity for women. This makes her feel like ‘an outsider’ in her own parents’ home where she was born and brought up. It further creates gender discrimination and even women also start acting accordingly as is done by Ranbhopali’s sister-in-law. When the girls are ill-treated in their parents’ home, they become emotionally

isolated and doubly victimized as they are often advised to endure with everything at their in-laws' place and are also not accepted in their parents' home. This situation leaves them with no option but to endlessly bear brunt and accept their fate. In the case of Ranbhopali her brother loves her too much, while her brother's wife is jealous of her and treats her as a burden. So this again proves the 'Internalized Misogyny' or 'pick-me-behavior', where women unconsciously provoke patriarchal thinking.

Similar gender issues have been raised in the story 'Rakt Se Rangi Chunari' ('The Blood-Stained Scarf'), where a beloved sister of seven brothers is treacherously murdered by her seventh brother's wife. A plant grows from drops of her blood which turns into a dense shady tree. Whenever a traveller rests under that tree he hears a strange voice. When her husband himself stands under the tree, the tree starts speaking:

Janam k saathi , daari bhal chhuya,

Paat bhal chhuya,

Daari jhuki jahiyen,

Paat musukaihen,

Bhaiya maaren, bhauji marwaven,

Hamare rakt se chunri rangvaen''

(O my partner! It's good that you touched my branch, you touched my leaves, the branch will bend, the leaves will smile, my brother killed me, my sister-in-law got me killed, she dyed her scarf with my blood, Singh, 123)

Her husband gets the tree cut. His beautiful wife emerges from it and he takes her home happily. Thus, Nature saves her and restores her happiness. Here, the formation of the tree from drops of blood and the girl being transformed back into a girl after cutting the tree shows that Nature does not discriminate between boys and girls. She saves the girl from the cruelty of her brother's wife. Employment of the supernatural agencies and their roles in giving interesting twists to the plots of the tales are also one of the major features of folk literature and the present story is a wonderful example of the use of the machinery.

There are so many folktales which raise the issue of polygyny by presenting a king with multiple queens. The stories like 'Sonth-Ganth' and

‘Nevalabhai’ (‘Brother Mongoose’) deal with the issue of polygyny. It is a serious threat to the general cause of social justice and creates innumerable issues related to gender. These stories attack on the patriarchal mode of thinking that allows a man to have multiple wives whereas women are supposed to remain loyal to their husbands and follow the ‘*pativrat dharm*’. In the story “Sonth-Ganth”, the king having two queens loves only one that is Ganth. Sonth is neglected. Both queens have daughters, but the daughter of Sonth does not get love of her father because he neglects her mother. The daughter of Sonth has to suffer a lot. These are the outcomes of polygyny. Having more than one wife creates jealousy, tension and co-wife rivalry in the home. The daughter of Sonth becomes a victim of this patriarchal system that undermines efforts towards women’s empowerment. The same happens with the seventh wife of the king in the story ‘Nevalabhai’ who places the piece of fruit given by the Mahatma on the shelf because she is busy in the kitchen being the youngest wife. The piece is contaminated by a mongoose. She gives birth to a mongoose baby because she ate that piece of fruit.

The story “Cham ki Chamoti” (“A Leather Strip”) deals with the issue of gender objectification and dehumanization, where a king stakes half of his kingdom and his princess to learn the name of a tree. A Yogi, by chance, listens to the conversation of the two *paniharan* (waterbearers) who are talking about the name of the tree. He accepts the challenge and tells the king that the white tree grew from the buttermilk thrown by the queen. The statement proves to be true. So as per the condition, the king has to give his half kingdom along with the princess to the Yogi. The princess walks away behind the Yogi weeping over her helplessness and thinks, *Stri ka jivan kitna paradhin hai! Wah to bejuban pashu samajhi jaati hai.* (How dependent is the woman’s life! She is considered a voiceless animal, Singh, 152)

She therefore decides to help herself to overcome this situation. On the way, she meets a shoemaker and requests him to give her a leather strap with two pockets. She puts all the jewels and cloths into the pockets and covers herself in that *chamoti*. Thus, the Yogi could not recognize her. Anyhow she reaches her in-laws’ kingdom. There she lives in the house of an old water bearer. With her courage and intelligence, she makes her in-laws recognize her and lives there happily. The princess is treated even by her father as a ‘medal’ to be handed over

to the winner. This event reflects on the objectification of women where women are seen not as independent individuals but as inanimate beings, objects or trophies that can be played with or won in games. Possessing women is a matter of status that eventually makes men wealthier and more contented with the addition of increased property. This status of women as toys in the hands of men paves the way for all sorts of harassment whether it is social, psychological, physical, sexual or even cultural.

The second work to be discussed in the present article is “Bhojpuri ki Lokkathayen” compiled and edited by Shachi Mishra. We can get the glimpse of folk life and detailed description of its important features through these folktales. The folktales in this collection have been selected from the vast repository of oral Bhojpuri folk literature. Stories in this collection often take us on a guided tour to the sites of the interpersonal relations, behavioural patterns and such other life situations in human society that prompts us to reflect on the nature of truth, belief systems and values that regulate our day-to-day life. If we study these stories from the perspective of gender, we find that folk literature has numerous insights to offer about the categories and status of men and women in the society. Some of the stories are meant only for pure entertainment whereas others contain serious discourses and present extremely bitter circumstances that lead to the inevitable crumbling of various socio-cultural institutions.

The story entitled “Chandika” presents gender stereotypes where women are assumed to be expert at lying and pretending. In this story, the wife of a farmer is presented as a sly and cunning woman. Before leaving for the city, her husband asks her to spin yarn from cotton and husk the paddy to get rice. But she continues to lounge around eating and sleeping comfortably. When her husband returns, the wife stages a drama to hide her lie. She disguises herself in the form of Goddess Chandika and scares her husband in the darkness and gives him order to chant the following lines- “*Soot se kapas hoy, kothila se dhaan bhusa hoy*” (“The yarn turns into cotton, the rice again turns into paddy”) (Mishra, 22). When in the morning her husband returns home and tells what happened to him last night, she starts crying as if she is quite innocent and is completely unaware of everything. Thus, this story reinforces the stereotypical behaviour of women that calls for dismissing everything done by them as simply an emotional drama. It

creates a general perception about the women being ‘manipulative’ increasing tension in personal and social relationships. Such narratives picture women in a negative frame that does not only make a woman’s life toxic but also result in creating a depressing atmosphere of perpetual uncertainties full of mistrust and doubt which badly affects their mental health in general.

The story “Baat ka Batangad” (“A Mess of Things”) raises the issue regarding the gossiping nature of women. In this story, a Hindu Pandit notices something white in his saliva. He calls his wife and shows it to her. His wife thinks it as the wings of a crane. The Pandit thinks that it must have gone into his mouth with the air while breathing during a cough. So he advises his wife not to discuss about it with anyone. But his wife loves gossiping. She tells her friend about the wings coming out of the Pandit’s mouth. Slowly, the news spreads and reaches the point of claiming that not only wings but cranes, sparrows, crows and pigeons also come out of the Pandit’s mouth. When this news reaches the Pandit, he is stunned. Then he advises everyone not to twist or exaggerate what they have heard. In this story, Pandit’s wife, her friend and other female neighbors have been portrayed in the role of making a mountain out of molehill. This narrative refers to a socio-cultural ploy used to depict women negatively as gossip-mongers or as the ones who love backbiting. It reflects on a gender stereotype born out of patriarchal ideology which assumes every woman to be the same; it out rightly ignores their individualities. Moreover, talking generally, nobody can contradict the fact that men perform no less in this regard. Further, although such stereotypes got created with the passage of time and vilified women in general that women normally like gossiping, it has absolutely no solid grounds. But if we try to search for the probable reasons for labeling women as gossip-mongers and look at the whole issue from the socio-psychological perspective, one very prominent reason that easily comes to our mind is that since women have always been largely excluded from the whole decision making process, they created informal networks to communicate, share their ideas and problems with each other. But these networks could hardly ever get any attestation in the society and that is why they could easily be labeled as ‘talkative’ or ‘backbiters’. It again proves how women have been allotted marginal spaces in the general scheme of things. The

result is that in a typical traditional Indian setting, talks among the womenfolk are considered ‘gossip’ and are therefore not given any serious hearing.

In the other story, “Panditain ka Vrat” (“Fast of the Wife of Pandit”), a Pandit uses the Teej fast to test his wife’s love and dedication for him. He tries to verify if his wife follows the fast strictly in his absence or not. So he hides himself in the cupboard at home and to his utter dismay, he discovers that his wife has broken her fast and satisfied her hunger with various delicacies. Here, the belief of a husband that his wife must prove her love through devotion and sacrifice of *vrat* creates a serious issue related to patriarchal thinking and gender inequality, where a man’s love is never mandated to pass such tests. This suggests the one-sided sacrifice of a woman to maintain her relationship and equates love with sacrifice. Love is a feeling while such type of belief measures it with *vrat*. Likewise, the story ‘Pavnara’ deals with the harassment of a girl by her brothers’ wives in the absence of her brothers. The girl Pavnara is the beloved sister of seven brothers. After her parents died, her brothers readily shouldered the responsibilities. But when her brothers go abroad to earn money for her marriage, she is harassed by her sisters-in-law. This showcases how patriarchy is enforced not only by men but also by women because her sisters-in-law now consider themselves to be the owners of the house and call her a *paaraya dhan* that is a burden on them and the resources of the family. This story also deals with the same theme that has been discussed earlier while analyzing the story called “Bana Rahe Baba ke Khetava”.

It is thus evident from the exploration of these folktales that they are powerful media to connect to the remote past. They make us aware of those dark pages of history whose written records are not available with us. These tales whether in the form of songs or simple narrations have formed part of the collective memory of those particular geographical territories that have been peopled by the speakers of these languages. They are such documents that should be studied keeping an eye on the time, place and space of their production. In an ancient country like India that can always boast of its grand narrative tradition, these tales serve as the cultural bridge among generations; they help construct people’s identity and hand over the acquired knowledge to the coming generations. In this way, they develop social understanding. In the contemporary

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times when oral narrative traditions the world over are undergoing transition, these folktales need to be continuously passed on to the public. These stories develop our sense of history that will in turn prepare us to face the challenges of the present and possibilities of future.

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