

The Oral Traditions of Mukri Community

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Abstract: *Uttara Kannada is one of the outstanding places in Karnataka state. The place is covered with so many lakes, sea views, Western Ghats, falls and of course, a magnificent view of nature. There are so many community people who live together. And each and every community, especially the backward communities of this region have their own different culture. And their cultures are now the main study areas in the cultural studies field. The oral traditions of Hlakki, Mukri, Deeva, Agera, Hallera communities are very unique in their own way. In this paper the oral literature of the Mukri community, their tradition, and culture have been selected.*

Keywords: Folktales, Mukri Community, Oral Traditions, Oral Literature, Uttara Kannada

Introduction

Mukri community is one of the backward communities in Uttara Kannada. They were called ‘Dalits’ in this part. The practices, customs, traditions, and rituals of these people are a little different compared to the others of this place. Dalits in India come in lower strata of the society. In the same way Mukri community people come in lower categories. They suffered a lot. And the atrocities, the oppression of the higher community, the pains, humiliation they are facing in today's lives is undescrivable.

The people of these communities are trying hard to get an equal opportunity, the place, the respect, the justice and all other basic things to survive. They even know that they are a double oppressed group in society. and women of these communities are even worse compared to the male section. The literacy rate of this community is slowly growing. But as always it is not appreciable. Of course, like other communities of Uttara Kannada district they have their own traditions, rituals, cultures and different celebrations; which is nowadays getting more popular. Their festivals, celebrations, songs, and dances become a part of folk studies and cultural studies. The sad part is, their culture is only becoming a part of studies, researchers are showing more interest only about their traditions. But nobody is trying to uplift the community. Like all the backward classes they are also a part of their studies. Still, hesitant to come into the mainstream.

Not getting a proper education, the lack of knowledge, highly believe in superstitious activity, not getting proper facilities, other community (upper caste) peoples rude behaviour, lots of alcohol addiction among youths, women are oppressed in their own house because of their male counterparts. These all are the main problems in the Mukri community. That's the main reason why people are still backward in this community.

Oral Literature

Spoken words are as a medium of communication. Performance plays a vital role in oral literature. Forms of oral literature include songs, oral narratives, oral poetry, riddles and tongue twisters. Myths are a key genre of oral literature. They are characterised by gods and supernatural elements and are sacred and true to the community.

Oral Literature is a genre like folktales, myths, legends, proverbs and riddles. Folk literature is very rich compared to other genres. Mukri community people basically depend on agriculture. The women of this community wear traditional sarees, lots of beaded malas in their neck. They mostly believed in Grama Devaru the most. The Mukri Community's oral culture is something different from other communities. They use ‘GUMATE VADANA’. This musical instrument is made up of clay soil and

contains a small and one big mouth type of shape. People burn this soil made structure in a fire to give it a correct shape, then with the help of this instrument people sing a song (folk songs).

Holi time is most special for Mukri people. They do 'SUGGI KUNITA' at this time. In this particular art form men wear colourful attires and they wear different types of face masks and dance using Gumte Vadana. 'HAGARANA' is also another type of art in this community.

The Mukri women works in agriculture lands at the time of cultivation they used to sing a traditional songs which is called in Kannada language as 'Janapada Geetegalalu' (the folk songs). Singing these songs they work enthusiastically. These types of songs become a type of oral culture. Mukris stands differently in the part of north Kanara district. Their culture is different in its own way.

Yakshagana is one of the performing arts very famous in Uttara Kannada district. One who performs Yaksahagana wears colourful costumes, the makeup of their face in full of different colors. It's a kind of eye-catching thing in Yakshagana. While they performing a dance in the stage the Bhagavatah who plays a Chande Vadya, and sings a song with full of strength (we call it as himmela). Yakshagana is a beautiful art form through which the audience learns the myth stories. This art form helps to keep our culture, tradition, historical myths in the present days.

Grama devaru (village god/ goddess) is part of oral tradition. The poor people mainly the lower community people's god is Grama Devaru. Different communities, different places have different gods or goddesses. It's their belief that goddess/ god gives strength or power to everyone. If any bad things or unworthy things are going to happen in villages they worship Grama Devaru to take care of that particular village. There are so many village deities there. Some of the names: Maasti, Kalla, Beera, Jataka, Naaga deva, Rahu, Ketu, Golibeerappa, Beeraparameshawari, Marikamba, Choudi, and many others.

'Bandi Habba' is one of the important festivals that happens in various places in North Kanara. After Sankranti and before the rainy season starts the 'Bandi Habba' starts in this district. The crops grow better and it will provide food for everyone. This is the main reason to celebrate Bandi Habba. There are different types of practices every temple follows. In some places there is a 'kenda hayuva paddhati' (The system of crossing live coal) that people's do in this 'Bandi Habba'. The god gives strength to people while doing this practice. According to the people, gods/goddesses don't give pain to their bodies. With all the force, with full of faith in god they are practicing this thing from the past. Bandi Habba is a sacred practice ritual that happens every year.

Some Mukri people at the time of Deepavali festival, visits upper caste peoples home to give 'Habbada Kanike' (which means a festive offerings) it adds happiness in their festive celebrations. and reverse to this offerings they get some amount of money, clothes, and good wishes and blessings from 'Mane Odeya' (senior member of the house) this is the sweetest gesture of this community.

Being one of the lower communities is a little hard to push yourself to come into the mainstream. But the Mukri community has improved so much, that means they are continuously doing hard work to come into the mainstream. Their beliefs towards god and goddess sometimes look too superstitious. But it's their true faith towards god.

Their culture, rituals, traditions and everything is different. The educated people are trying to search for their identity in society. The celebration of festivals, the food culture, the language, the variety of clothes, everything looks so unique in Mukri community of Uttara Kannada district. This community women section is trying somewhere to break the shackles of conservatism. The time is somehow changing, the community's people are started seeing world in a broader way, If they get proper education, good facilities from government, in future they surely get more attention care, concern from the society.

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