



ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Gender and Socio-Cultural representations in Oral Literature: Documentation and Literary Study of the Oral Story "Justice in Jungle"

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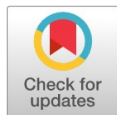
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Abstract— Lust and loyalty are interlinked concepts that have a history as old as that of human beings. Human psychology and emotions have gone through different phases of development, yet these two emotions still exist. Literature being the true depiction of human life is full of stories of the human lust for power and search for loyalty. English writers such as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlow, and Francis Bacon have highlighted these concepts in their literary oeuvre. These writers have mentioned dimensions of these concepts that are instrumental in laying out the specific instinctual flaws and follies of human beings. This research paper investigates these human characteristics being portrayed through fictionalized and dramatized accounts in the oral sources of literature in Sargodha. The oral sources of literature in Sargodha are interpreted for the exploration of the role of both male and female characters and their emotions in ancient Punjab. The research is qualitative in nature, and the primary source of oral data is collected in a recorded form. Moreover, different genre-specific books, research articles, and online resources have been consulted for the purpose of analysis and discussion. The story of Justice in Jungle is primarily documented and translated into English by the researcher. The findings show that the basic innate potentialities of different cultures and their inhabitants remain unaltered despite the literal uniqueness of the specific regions. The research is innovative in the way that it explores the universal human traits in the documented oral story and thus serves to authenticate the socio-cultural purview of the local oral literature of Pakistan.

Index Terms— Socio-cultural, Oral literature, Justice in jungle, Human psychology, Lust for power

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Introduction

Literature mirrors human life by recording the socio-cultural and socio-religious activities of human beings (Wimsatt, 1978). Oral literature is an art that uses language. This art is transferred to the next generation through word of mouth as oral narratives, drumming songs, riddles, and dances (Makhulo 2019). Oral literature represents the real soul of any culture and constitutes the seedbed of modern literature by supplying both spirit and approach to the various forms of artistic and creative use of the word (Mathonsi, 2012). Oral Literature is the repository of critical knowledge, philosophy, and wisdom for non-literate societies (Adakonaye, 2016). Oral Literature, through the genres of poetry, narratives, songs, fables, dance, and myths, portray the meaning of life as interpreted by the people of a specific time (Slotkin, 2000). The literature has the potential to celebrate the existential questions of life in colloquial and informal language. It is a way to preserve the traditional knowledge, values, and beliefs of a society. Thus literature is a significant way of portraying the moral life in

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a society and the relationship of its inhabitants to divinity. Literature of every society not only preserves knowledge and wisdom of that time and place but also passes it to the coming generations (Perdue, 2009).

In modern times technological progress has revolutionized the writing skills to preserve literature and history by affecting the core of oral traditions, but no one can deny the importance of Oral Literature. Oral Literature is a healthy source of entertainment as it encapsulates many versions of linguistic expressions and is helpful in performing multiple functions for society (Okpewho, 1992). Oral Literature retains the history of a society more realistically, which that can be further taken as a guide to human behavior and their inter-subjective position in society. Oral Literature provides its receptors with an active response to the universal qualities of human beings by portraying a unique version of reality formed by their socio-cultural and socio-religious environment. Oral literature has the power to reshape gender relations in any society as it gives a voice to the marginalized one and redefines their role (Sadeghi, Sajjadi, Nooshabadi, & Farahani, 2018; Sotunsa, 2021). Oral literature is also used by African writers for political causes as well (Sone, 2021).

Religion is an important need of human beings to survive, and oral literature is enriched to fulfill religious and spiritual needs (Teasdale, 2010). It can be seen in folk tales, songs, and rituals that these artistic expressions have enhanced their spiritual requirements (Harrison, 1913).

In ancient times literature existed in oral form. The natives stored their literature in their memories and transferred it from one generation to another in oral form (Kellogg, 1973). The natives' literature, identity, and culture depend on their native language. Our ancestors share experiences verbally to guide the coming generation (Finnegan, 2003). In the global world, technology has facilitated the world through the process of translation. We get guidance and experience by translating their language in our own (Vasconcellos, 1988). Still, much literary work has not been documented till now. In academics, not much attention is given to teaching Oral literature to the young generation. There are multiple reasons for this failure in teaching Oral literature. The exploitation of young people by the entertainment business and social-economic pressure are among these reasons (Mullins, 2008).

This documentation provides a roadmap for coming generations based on the experience of the past. Therefore, each coming day is considered an advanced day when we compare it with the past. Humanity is touching new heights through the process of constructions, deconstructions, and reconstructions of different isms, theories, and ideologies (Heaphy, 2007). The process of the enlightenment of the human being has not reached its end (Monatschrift, 1984). The literature in all its forms informs its reader about their surroundings adequately.

Like other nations, Pakistan is one of those countries where so many tales and history need documentation. The natives are always available to transfer their memory of literature verbally to the listeners. Consequently, one tale has different versions of narrations in different regions. Still, the natives are so inclined toward their social norms and traditions continuing from their ancestors that they are not willing to accept global change. They show strong resistance to the globalization of cultures. A major chunk of Punjabi literature exists in oral form, which is a good source for exploring the vernacular beliefs, values, and traditions of the old days (Tatla, 2002).

Justice in Jungle

(Loyalty, thy name is woman)

Loyalty and Lie are like Death and Die

Where everyone has to say Bye Bye

Trees of tears were drawing bloody maps on her face. Horrors and hells were waiting for her fate. Fertile land was throwing its fertility on a reddish ground. Lion, deer, bear, and hare were drinking water from the same pound. That pound was full of snakes, crocodiles, fishes, and ducks. Everyone was singing the song of his lust. They were living like family and were quenching their thirst for each other. Sometimes they behave like a family that quenches its thirst by drinking the blood of their relatives. Old Crocodile felt pleasure when soft fishes touched his body, and he decided their fate. Whenever he came out of the pond, beautiful daffodils were brutally crushed under his bulky body. The lion ate here with wine and always preached to the community that he was divine.

Nights and Lights Dance for Crows which are White

Why are Children of Black Crows dying for Diet?

The divine sun was throwing light on juicy oranges, and a goat was eating leaves. A middle-aged woman was singing the songs of her married life and was kissing her polio-stricken child. She felt pleasure in her breasts when she looked at his child. The innocent eyes of the orphan child were blaming his fate. Mother was confident that God would open up new gates.

The death of Hanif closed all the doors for Bivi and she decided to live with her husband's family. Her son was a reflection of her husband. Her brother-in-law was very kind to him. Her in-laws gave her a share of her husband's property. She became a true farmer to feed her only child. Everyone in the village had sympathetic feelings for her. Her husband's family never stopped their helping hands, but the mouse of mischievousness was running in their minds. They wanted to send her back, but she was chained with the strings of loyalty and love for her son and husband. She always listened to the song of a brown crow and sang:

Loyalty and Sincerity are Crown of Eastern Authenticity

Sometimes flashes of her good memories ran behind her eyes. She used to fly like a butterfly in the arms of her husband. She believed that in the world, love is the only real emotion. She used to imagine how her husband kissed her in the fields. The stories of her baraat (Groom's wedding procession in North India and Pakistan) were very famous in the village because her father turned against this marriage when the baraat reached his doorsteps. The father of Dullha was a very dangerous man. He fired, and Kullah, Dulhan's cousin, disappeared. His head looked like a motorway. Everybody was crying in horror with happiness. The natives of the village were not ready and happy about this marriage. Chaudhry (a person who belonged to the zamindar families in British India) was convincing her father to revert the decision he took, while some others were not happy with this opinion. They were trying to get the favor of Dulhan's mother and stepbrother. At last, nikkah was completed, and Dullha returned with Dulhan. Good memories also mingled with bad ones when she thought about the hardships of her life.

Sun was burning the heavenly bodies, and she was frozen to see the dead body of her husband. Mice and cats became lions. Every relation was enjoying the taste of desi wine. Wine and heavenly divinity are just for sunshine. Everybody became a policeman and suspicious of Bivi as if she had killed her husband. It was a natural death as he remained bedridden for so many years. The crows were narrating the stories that she is an evil witch, and no one can expect any good thing from this bitch.

Blood was flowing from her ears like waves of the river, and the old monkey was listening to her tale in detail. Her child gave her courage at the time of her disappointment. Her child grew up slowly and steadily. She used to look at the picture of her husband in the face of her child. Everyone had sympathetic feelings for her. She became a farmer for the growth of her child. The child started attending school.

The school was a sensational place for her child because the teachers loved him. He remained busy the whole day playing with his class fellows. His cousins used to beat him. Some students who were living in his neighborhood were very sympathetic to him. They shared their food with him as their parents advised them. They were well aware that God helps those who help orphans and widows, and God takes revenge on those who hurt orphans and widows. At the same time, the child was alien to his paternal relatives. He was a very beautiful child, like a shining star. But the lower part of his body was weak. The natives call him adhmahno (Crippled). With time, as he grew up, he started helping his mother.

He helped his mother in taking care of the cattle. Buffaloes, cows, goats, lambs, donkeys, bulls, and sandas (Male buffalo) were his very good friend. They gave their response that when someone tried to hurt him by any means and they would stop eating for days. His dog did bite and bark at those people who physically hurt its feeder. These animals were a complete family for the boy, and he always felt comfortable with them. With the passage of time, the boy learned the language of these animals and talked to them in their language most of the time.

Love was lacking in his life. He got sympathy but not true love from relatives and friends. He used to visit the grave of his father to find out his identity.

The element of jealousy was rising in the minds of his paternal uncles and cousins. His face was like a full moon, and his cousins were like dim stars. He was very intelligent and always got the first position in the class, while his other cousins were very dull in their studies. His mother wanted to see him as a policeman. But he did not want to see his mother working in the field with cattle because she was grown old, and he was a young boy now.

Paternal uncles started planning to occupy the land of the orphan nephew and widow. In the beginning, they were very kind to the widow but they became their enemies when they saw that her son had grown up. They had beaten her many times.

Fate and Fear of Mom

Mountains were malicious, Satans were suspicious, and the sun was singing the songs of sorrow. Israel was driving his boat towards the house of mud. The stick of the old mother was invisible to fate. Clouds of sensation were covering her hut, and the cold breeze was burning the hopes of the widow. Her basket of bricks was going to break. Son was growing, and she was becoming more suspicious of her brother-in-law. They had their sons and daughter with black colors and fat bellies. Their ears were pink with pride. They were tigers of the families, but they treated their cousins as a lamb.

Bivi's heart was full of pleasure and pain when she thought about the marriage of Shabir. She was wandering like a girl. Her heart was spreading the flowers on animals. Monkeys were malicious with treacherous eyes. Bivi started searching for a girl for her son. She wanted a very beautiful girl for her son. She called migration (a low-caste female in Punjab usually serves the family through her match-making skills) to search out any girl for her son. She gave two away to mirason for that purpose which was never fulfilled. How can any girl be engaged without the permission of the elders of the family?

The family decided that Bivi should trace any Duhlman from the family. Her brother-in-law had daughters. As per the direction of the family, Bivi contacted Aflo for the hand of his daughter. Initially, he did not agree, but she visited his home, again and again to talk to the wife of Aflo. The wife convinced her husband by saying that Bivi was running on a stick that was not durable. We will capture the share of

an old bitch after the engagement of our daughter with her son. Suddenly, thunder threw the light of horror on fertile land where husband and wife were getting inspiration from Satan. Earth was crumbling.

Under the golden shadows of the sun, rings were exchanged. The mother was very happy to strengthen the existing relationship. She was unaware of the uncovered hell which was desperately waiting for her. Three years passed, and the family was very happy with the engagement. But greedy mad dogs were crying like a wolf at night which was not a good sign for a deprived family.

Sun was going to set. Bivi decided to visit her brothers. She requested machani (Bread maker woman in the village) to provide food to her son in her absence. Meanwhile, when she left home, leaves whispered, and the boy received a message from his uncle Aflo that the dinner would be at his home at 10:00 pm. The boy was very happy to know about his guests. He arranged for delicious food to impress his two Uncles and one kammi (a person from the inferior caste of Punjab).

The mother saw a dream in which Satans were swimming in the body of his son, and his son was singing that they were angels. In the morning, when she returned home, the whole village was weeping. The old woman was moving here and there with a pious stick to search for her son. Days and nights passed, and she remained unsuccessful in searching for her son. Dul (An old well that stopped working) started spreading the smell. The village arranged for tobas (The persons to go inside the well), and they traced out the deadly bundle at the bottom of the water. The case was filed in the police station, and machani became a witness that she saw Alfo with two other men in the hut of the old lady. Later on, they accepted that they had murdered their nephew for land.

The days turned into nights, and the land became limited for the old lady. She spent her whole life in the village and prayed for the destruction of the whole family of her husband. Her husband had four brothers and their families. All of them disappeared from the screen of the world one by one. The stick of the old lady ate all the snakes and their families, and now the land is searching for its owners. Evil desires of the owners and lands are riding on the same horse in the air.

Text Analysis

Gender in ancient Punjab

Gender difference is a common theme in Western literature. These differences are based on the biological differences between the two genders. Socio-cultural stereotyping has been created based on gender differences (Friedman, 1987; Tarigan, 2019). All the abuses and weaknesses are associated with females through the manipulation of language. The taboos have been generated through monolithic religions. When the population of females increased over time, people started talking about the equal rights of females (Matthews, 1997). Even the right of the vote was given to females in the 19th century. It is also a fact that females are low-paid human beings in most countries. The world has passed through different phases in pursuing women's rights. All three waves of feminism are proof of the struggle that western women have been doing to date. But, this inequality still exists across the world. A lot has been said and written about the equality of males and females in western literature, where prominent writers declared that females are inferior beings.

Bivi, the protagonist of the folk tale, represents a strong character who works more than the male characters of the village. She not only takes care of the cattle farm, but she also plays a complete role as a hard-working farmer. She works in the field and takes care of her son, a polio-stricken child. Bivi is representative of the qualities which are traditionally attached to males. The death of her husband was shocking news for her, but she faced the circumstances very confidently.

Loyalty in ancient Punjab

Loyalty and sincerity are considered the Jewels of eastern society. As a female, this character seems one step ahead of the standard of sincerity. She reflects the shadows of Aryans' brevity, where the loyalty of females is part of their religion and culture (Childe, 2013). Shakespeare has presented very weak women characters. These characters are a puppet in the hands of male characters who do not have any remarkable opinions (Chelliah & Litt, 2019; Jam, Singh, Ng, & Aziz, 2018). But, when he portrayed female characters in antagonistic roles, they proved powerful like anything. Most Shakespearian characters become mad when they go through the great stress generated by female characters. Macbeth (1623) and Hamlet (1604) are remarkable examples of this notion. Unlike western society, Punjabi social and cultural values are more dominant because they are based upon the notion of collectivism.

Loyalty is a remarkable characteristic of Eastern women who spend their lives alone even after the death of their husbands. Bivi is the mouthpiece of women who are brave and hard-working as compared to men. They seem much more loyal as compared to the male members of society. Bivi has not only presented the example of sincerity with her husband but also with her son too.

Materialistic lust in Punjab

The story shows that people have a materialistic approach; even male characters seem disloyal to their blood relatives. Uncles have murdered their orphan nephew without thinking about his widow's mother. They gave preference to land and property over blood relations.

Rights after the death of their brother, they were very sympathetic toward their Bhabhi. As soon as the child grew up, they became enemies. They sacrificed their relations over lust. Their lusty nature becomes a symbol of shamefulness even for the whole region.

It shows that the natives of the region were inclined toward capitalist thinking, even being a part of the medieval age. The brothers of Shana are also greedy, as they have not cared about the socio-cultural values of the region. They have no care for their daughter, who was engaged to their nephew. Their attitude reminds us of King Lear (1606) by William Shakespeare.

Justice in jungle

The title of the short story is Justice in Jungle, which compares the co-existence of the criminal nature of human beings and the justice of God. Four brothers killed their nephew to occupy his share, but with time, their sons and daughters also died of natural disease, and there was no one to occupy their share. Everything was destroyed. The older woman remained unsuccessful in getting justice from the judicial system, but God provided her with justice.

Symbolism in the story

It is said that an oral narrator has no control over the story's content as it has been handed over to him from generation to generation. The claim might be partly right, but it is also true that an oral story is a language and region-specific. Every language and culture has a specific pattern and set of values that help generate a system of symbols. This specificity of the pattern of symbols provides a unique meaning to the narrative.

The tale Justice in the Jungle is also full of symbolic elements. The story's setting takes place in a village far away from the hustle and bustle of city life. Country life signifies a close association with nature. All the major characters are a symbolic representation of the natural elements in the world. Nature is comforting as well as outrageous in its demeanor. Phato symbolizes Mother Nature. Despite being weak in her social status, she has the comforting quality of providing a shed to her orphaned child. Just like a tree, she provides food and shelter to her only child. She prefers to become a farmer who is again symbolic of being nurtured like Nature. Cattles are symbolic of family and friends. The child who has been deprived of a family seeks his relationships among these animals. Just like siblings, they are around him to take care of him. Phato's in-laws symbolize the rage and destructive quality of Nature. When Nature is unkind, it crushes everything which comes in its way. The same is the case with her in-laws. When they see that Phato's son will be a shareholder in their property, they decided to kill him brutally.

Conclusion and Implications

In the present article, the researcher has attempted to highlight the themes of gender, injustice, and materialism in the tradition of oral literature. The District of Sargodha is an enriching part of Punjab. As far as the matter of oral literary tradition is concerned, the story Justice in Jungle is one such story narrated by one of the natives of Sargodha received through the long track of oral narration. The tale is significant as it throws light on human behaviors, their weaknesses, and the follies in their personalities. The researcher, in his interpretation of the story, highlights the fact that no matter how far we go back in history, human nature remains the same as it is today. Their instinctual qualities, fears, whims, likings, and disliking remain the same. It also established that no matter how powerful a person is, they cannot escape from the Divine Justice of Nature.

The study provides significant implications for the preservation and documentation of the oral literature of Sargodha and other oral literary repertoires of different districts of Pakistan. Specialists' translation and governmental support, in this regard, would be required for archiving the rich and resourceful oral literature which is on the verge of partial obliteration.

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