



CHETANA
International Journal of Education (CIJE)

Peer Reviewed/Refereed Journal
ISSN : 2455-8279 (E)/2231-3613 (P)

Impact Factor
SJIF 2024 - 8.029



Prof. A.P. Sharma
Founder Editor, CIJE
(25.12.1932 - 09.01.2019)

The Folk Literature of Rajasthan: A Glimpse into Polity of the Desert State

Dr. Manju Shivran

Assistant Professor (English)

Govt. Arts College, Sikar (Raj.) India

Email: manjushivran88@gmail.com, Mob.-9549666690

First draft received: 09.10.2024, Reviewed: 12.10.2024, Final proof received: 15.11.2024, Accepted: 29.11.2024

Abstract

The folk literature of Rajasthan renders an effervescent replication of the polity of the state, knitting artistic manifestation with the historical and political undercurrents of its sovereign entities. By the means of various cultural artefacts such as folk lore, folksongs, narratives and axioms, this body of literature presents an inimitable glimpse in to leadership and ruling norms, cultural standards, and social codes that gave contour to this 'Land of Dunes.' People associated with Bardic tradition of Rajasthan like Charans, Bhats passed down the valour of the land with their oral chronicles and immortalized the valour and ruling ideals and administrative subtleties of rulers of Rajasthan. On the other hand folk tales and songs present an overview of forms of justice, resource organization and the rapport between sovereigns and their folk. Popular adages have compressed tenets of collective administration and engaged leadership. By reconnoitring this opulent storehouse of folk traditions, we find abysmal discernments into Political history of Rajasthan and the lasting links between its cultural heritage and governance.

Key terms: Folk Literature, Rajasthan, polity, governance, cultural heritage etc.

Introduction

Rajasthan, the land of sand dunes and vast deserts, cradled a glorious past full of rich and diverse cultural heritage. Cultural identity of the state contains number of facets like, music and dance, architecture and art, religious and spiritual practices, festivals, language and dialects, folk lore and literature, desert and nomadic cultures. Among all these aspects folk literature can be singled out as pivotal warehouse of annals, traditions and conventions, and political principles. By the means of songs, ballads, stories and poetry, the folk literature of Rajasthan offers a mesmerising glimpse into the polity of this desert state.

Folk literature contributes in much more aspects of life than mere artistic cognition. One cannot see folk literature in Rajasthan just as an artistic expression but a tradition imbibed in the lives of its people. This tradition had been passed down through generation to generation, oftentimes verbally. A number of literary forms this literature includes. Diverse literary forms like songs, tales, ballads, stories, poetry, narratives, legends, conundrums and adages reflect the struggles, triumphs and catastrophe of people of Rajasthan. This literature is profoundly intertwined with the socio-political fabric of the state. Time and again it shows the subtleties of power governance and the moral codes that mark the

impression on decision-making policies of rulers and subjects. Different forms of this literature make the great kings and warriors of this land immortal. The narratives of local rulers; the narratives of relationship of rulers of Rajasthan with Mughal Empire and other states present valued acumens into political system. These artistic forms were not only for the sake of amusement but they were the means of edification, social interrelation, and political annotation.

Political Themes prevailed in Folk Literature

Valour and ethos of warriors are in the centre of the Rajasthani folk literature. Loyalty, valour and honour of Rajput warriors were the major themes of various oral expressions. Rajput warriors were famous for their fortitude and valour in war and were portrayed as heroic figures in the folk literature of this state. We find the narration of their struggle against external forces like Mughals and Afgans. Many of the kings and warriors became legends fighting against them. Great Rajput king Maharana Pratap is one of them. Many legends of the land of Rajasthan are sung and recited in the form of ballads that keep intact their combats, sacrifices, and rebelliousness. We also can find a number of narratives in written form along oral transmission such as Malik Muhammad Jayasi wrote a celebrated epic Padamavat. In this epic we find the narration of story of queen

Padmini's beauty and Allouddin Khilji's incursion and the valour of Rajput Kings' defence of their honour. This literary composition comprises themes of martyr, dominance and code of conduct and gives us the clues of political and social directive in Rajasthan throughout the medieval period. In past polity of Rajasthan was largely structured by Feudal system and social structure. Under this system generally small kingdoms were ruled by local Rajput rulers. We always find a sight of duties and responsibilities of the rulers and subjects and the narration of their relationship in folk literature. The narration of their deeds reveals maintenance of justice and welfare of public and security of the region. Minstrels sang the glorious deeds of our kings and warriors and also highlighted the nature of governance in the small sovereign entities of land. Along with the triumphs of kings and warriors the folk songs and stories celebrate and remind us concern of rulers to their people and territory.

Concepts of Gender and Honour

Folk literature also provides critique of gender aspects of the time in the narration of the dynamics of sati (the immolation of widows). This literature depicts the concepts of honour and sacrifice regarding women. The practice of immolation of widows had been glorified in the society of the time. Women were considered as a symbol of status and sacrifice. Such themes in literature present an account of societal norms and political realities of the time. We can take these themes as critique of politics of gender in society. A loyal wife, who upholds the honour of family, was taken as an ideal woman and portrayal of such woman we can find in literature. The portrayal of Rani Padmini and her sacrifice of her life in order to protect the honour of her family is presented. This event is depicted as sacrifice against invading forces to protect the honour of the realm. This portrayal is also an illustration of courage of women and their hidden political roles in the greater collective background.

Resistance to External Forces

This is one of the remarkable political aspects of folk literature. The depiction of resistance against Mughal Empire is one of them. In 16th century confrontation of Maharana Pratap of Mewar against Mughal emperor Akbar and his forces is very well known event in history. Ballads and songs on the lives of these legends make the folk of Rajasthan sing the song of resilience of kings in protecting their freedom and uprightness. This body of literature presents the collective consciousness of people and strengthens the self-esteem and pride underlining the political situation of the time. The loss and conquest in battle was not merely a personal or family matter but it was the replication of political structure of Rajasthan and its tactical significance in the larger political scene of India.

The Transmission and Preservation of Political Ideas through Folk literature

It is a well-known fact that folk literature is passed down orally through generation to generation. Minstrels and folk artist would present different forms before various types of gatherings such as royal courts, villages and communities. The folk artists like charans, bhats and other performers were the primary transporter of folk literature. They often also played role of historians and political commentators. Primarily these performers

played key role in the preservation of political history of Rajasthan. Performing different kinds of folk arts these artists kept alive struggles, valour, values and virtues of realm of land of Rajasthan in the collective memory and hearts of people. In addition to that folk literature also served as carrier of political commentary, making people able to evaluate their rulers and rejoice their successes.

Examples of literary artefacts that provide the insights into the polity of Rajasthan- Ballads of Pabuji and Tejaji: These tales of gallant reproduce the decentralized polity of Rajasthan, where indigenous heads and warriors played a noteworthy role in governance and protection of their region. The Classic of Prithviraj Raso: Authored by Chand Bardai, it highlights the gallantry, dogmatic tactics, and courtly principles of Rajput rulers, predominantly Prthviraj Chauhan, representing the monarchical system. Rajasthani maxims and folk songs: many folk songs recount the liabilities of sovereigns, the association between the king and his subjects, and the ethical commitments of governance. For instance, Panihari songs, finely define the significance of rightful distribution of water and resources, reflecting administrative concerns. Dingal and Pingal Poetry: These forms of medieval Rajasthani literature time and again celebrate the political tenets and war ethics of Rajput rulers, showcasing their fidelity to justice and the feudal system. Folk tales like Dhola-Maru: These tales offer glimpses of coalition and skirmishes amid different realms, exemplifying political relationships recognised through marriages and diplomacy.

These literary forms collectively offer a "glimpse of polity" in Rajasthan, blending historical facts with cultural expressions.

Conclusion

The Folk literature of Rajasthan is more than just a cultural treasure; it is a window into the polity of the state. Through its stories, songs, and poems, we gain insight into the socio-political dynamics of the region, its feudal systems, its valorous, warriors, and its complex gender relations. This rich body of literature not only documents the political history of Rajasthan but also offers a window into the values, beliefs, and norms that have shaped the political and social landscape of this ancient land. Today, the folk literature of Rajasthan continues to inspire and inform, reminding us the power of storytelling in preserving the history and polity of a nation.

References

- Tod, James (1829) Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan. Vol. 1&2.- Bardic Literature by Charans and Bhats
- Bhandari, R. (2014). Folk Literature of Rajasthan: A Study of the Themes and Traditions. Jaipur: Rajasthan Publication House.
- Chattopadhyaya, D. (2002). The Rajputs and their Legacy in Indian History. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.
- Grierson, George A. (1908). The Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan. Oxford University Press.- Folk tales like Dhola-Maru
- Gupta,R. (1999). Rajasthani Folklore and Culture. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications.

Jain, V. (2007). Padmavat: History and Interpretation. Jaipur: Kaveri Book Service.

Mathur, R.S. (1982). Folk Songs of Rajasthan. Indian Publications.

Ojha, G.N. (1993). Rajputana ka Itihas evam Sanskriti. Rajasthan Sahitya Mandal. – Dingal and Pingal Poetry

Rana, M. (2015). Maharana Pratap and the Rajput Resistance to Mughal Rule. New Delhi: Vikram Publishers.

Sharma, Dasharatha (1959). Early Chauhan Dynasties. Motilal Banarasidass.

Smith, J.D. (1991). The Epic of Pabuji: A Study, Transcription, and Translation. Cambridge university Press.

Soni, P. (2010). Sati in Rajasthan: A cultural and Political Perspective. Jaipur: Rajasthan Studies Association.

Vaid, P. (2013). The role of Folk Performers in the Political Landscape of Rajasthan. Delhi: Indian Folklore society.