

Uttarakhand Folk Songs and Tales : An Inclusive Window to the Intricacies of Hill Ethos

H S Randhawa

Ms Shipra Joshi

That literature always remains momentous that arises from the core of people's heart without any adornment or polish. It reveals the intricacies of their life without hiding or exaggerating the ground socio-cultural reality present before them. It may not be able to express things in well-chiselled words but the simple words have the strength of the glacier to affect the chords of readers' heart. The folk literature of Uttarakhand encompasses all those aspects within its fold which give significance to any folk literature. This state has divergent tribal communities and linguistic groups which showcase their inherent talent acquired since time immemorial in the form of folk lore. Being the medium of communication of the locals, these languages have also contributed in the enrichment and dissemination of folk traditions and multi-faced culture of Uttarakhand. There is no gainsaying the fact that the biodiversity of Uttarakhand reflects the abundance of the flora and fauna of the region. Sixty five percent of the total area of the state is covered with forests. The land is known as "*Devabhumi*" because all the four famous *Dhams* – *Kedarnath*; *Badrinath*; *Gangotri*; *Yamunotri*, are situated here. Uttarakhand people have shown creativity of human mind in different thirteen folk languages of this state. Out of them eight are tribal languages like *Buksari*, *Jad*, *Jaunsari*, *Johari*, *Marcha*, *Raji*, *Ranglva*, *Tharu* and five non-scheduled languages like *Bangani*, *Garhwali*, *Kumaoni*, *Jonpuri* and *Ranwalti*. There is a diversity of theme in folk literature and it reveals the amalgamation of rich cultural values of this area. The simplicity of the folksongs and tales of these languages lies in their tranquil expression and guileless communication. Motifs found in the songs and stories are mainly about the daily domestic chores that the residents have to perform under harsh environment. They testify the fact that mountain life is a much of a laborious challenge. Other themes in mountain literature exemplify the emotional vulnerabilities of a lover's longings or a daughter's yearning for her motherland including several other celebration songs of childbirth and marriage. In the portrayal of Uttarakhand folklore, the folksongs and folktales (translated by us for the purpose of clarification) have been taken for review. In this paper all eight tribal languages have been analyzed threadbare one by one.

BUKSARI – This is the language spoken by the Buksa tribe who are found concentrated in the Kumaon region. There is total absence of written literature in this language so the folk songs and folk tales are very popular in their society. Both of them come under the category of oral literature. There has not been found any trace of the ancient tradition of performing dramas in the popular burlesque form. As far as the folk songs of the Buksas are concerned, they are Holi songs, marriage songs, lullabies, night watch songs and children songs. In marriages, when the men from the groom's side leave the groom's house to bring the bride, the women sing and dance. Men are not allowed to take part in the ceremony and the songs sung at this auspicious moment are called *Khauriya* songs. Buksas also have ceremonial songs sung during the festival

of Holi, song sung on the sixth day of childbirth and on birthdays. Their main accompanying instrument is the *Tabur*. They also have amusing children songs like “*Nihana Ko Bhaiya Basula*” and “*Ghan Ghan Ghan Ghan Ghanta Bolo*”. Besides them, there are also joyful songs like ‘*londe re londe teri gulel suvana baitho atariya me*’ which are sung for the *Thariya* dance.

1. Thariya Song : This song reveals the amorous nature of the lover who is ready to perform a number of arduous acts for his beloved. He also avers that she should not go away after creating a spark of love in him. The following *Thariya* song which has been translated from original *Buksari* explicitly presents the youthful gusto of the lovers and their everlasting feeling to enjoy life. He makes all kinds of efforts as the song reveals to carve his niche in the psyche of his lady-love.-

*I implore you by my oath,
Where are you going after exchanging glances?
I can plant orchards for you*

2. Holi Song: This song is an articulation of the exuberant spirit of a woman who wants to do outdoor daily chores without affecting the sensibilities of his male relatives from her husband’s side. She expresses all kinds of doubts with regard to the pot being carried away by her on her head. She is ready to take all kinds of precautions so that her dress may not get wet due to the overflowing of the water. The following song which has been translated by us reveals the coyness of the ordinary domestic woman.

*Please help in lifting the crock and keep it
Over my head, then tell the way to the quay.
If I stand and fill the crock, then my father-in-law observes
and if I bend down to fill the crock, then my scarf will be drenched.
If I walk fast, my water-pot overflows;*

3. Children Song: In addition to the love song or a woman’s song, children also don’t lag behind in revealing their pranks and playful nature. They describe their love of animals, desire to see metropolitan cities and to relish those dishes which have not been served to them so far. Similarly they concoct different stories about different relationships existing among different small animals. The fecundity of their mind is quite writ large in these songs. Despite facing the handicap of cutting away from the mainstream society, they want to enjoy life to the last dregs.

4. Holi Ki Baramasi: This song is an expression of the anguished soul of a lady who feels that her husband is not giving any attention to her. She expresses her agony in the form of describing all 12 Hindu months. She wants to convey the idea that there are concomitant advantages of each and every month which she has been deprived of. Her expectations from life and from her dear ones are according to the related characteristics of each month. In this way she has been able to express her vital knowledge about the inherent significance of each month which others are able to avail of. But to her dismay she has not been able to reap the fruits of the benefits of these months.

*O my soul is confounded
My husband is not caring for me*

*I would have touched his feet in Chait (the 1st month of the Hindu year)
 And in the similar way in Vaishakh (the 2nd month of the Hindu year)
 The youth of Jyeshtha (the 3rd month) is crazier.
 In Asadh (the 4th month) there are very thick clouds.
 O my soul . . .
 O my friend a swing has been cast in Saavan (the 5th month)
 And in the month of Bhaado (6th month) heavy rain is falling.
 He had made a promise in Kwaar (7th month)
 Holi came in Karthik (8th month) *

5. Khauriya Song: This song again shows the love laden soul of the lover. He tries to consummate his love at five different places but due to one reason or the other it got thwarted. He has expressed his pain through this song. After perusing through the song the researchers are of the opinion that love is the main motif of a large number of songs and it provides all round happiness to them. They share it in public because others may also get enjoyment out of these pulsating words:

*Meeting with the lover has become difficult,
 My first meeting took place in the orchards
 The fat bough broke down and made a signal,
 Leaf ruptured and made a signal/it was a signal.
 Meeting with the lover
 My second meeting took place on the roads
 The motor came and it became a signal/it made a signal-
 Meeting with the lover*

In the course of analyzing threadbare Buksari songs it has been found that they have been able to touch the actual pulse of real life. They want to share their moments of joy and unhappiness for revealing their true spirit which gives them sustenance and strength. It is an axiomatic fact that happiness does not come from without, it comes from within. These songs are the finest expressions of the vibrant spirit of these people residing in the lap of nature.

Folk Lore -Many folk tales are popular among the Buksars. Their social and religious life is depicted in these folktales. Tales like “*Satto Beti Poorey Poorey*”, “*Kuch karni kuch karam Gati*”, “*Haari tero har ghisey*” have been passed down from generations of this community. We have made a thorough analysis of a folk tale entitled - “*Satto Beti Poorey Poorey*”. In it, there is a description of Mahua flowers. They got shrunk after having got dried. Satto’s mother thought that her daughter had eaten them and so she beat her daughter so severely that she died. Later on these Mahua flowers were soaked in water and they got their original shape. In this story the people remember this fact that regretful mother got rebirth as the *Pandak* bird and the bird sang the song “*Satto Beti Poorey Poorey*”

Thus this folktale not only describes the poverty of the Buksa household but also their blind faith in the rebirth of a person who has to take birth for absolving herself of the unnecessary accusations made against her. As per their belief the mother could not get contentment even in the next world because she has put wrong blame on her

innocent daughter and this belief killed her. This story imparts a message that the guilt remains so overbearing for a person that he or she has to take another birth for clarifying his own position before the society. It also gives us a lesson that nothing should be decided at its face-value and accordingly and one should not come to a conclusion on the basis of superficial facts. Decisions have to be taken after taking things at a deeper level.

JAD – This language is spoken by Jad community who lives in the high Himalyan area of District Uttarkashi. There is no written literature in this language but many folktales and songs are popular in the Jad community. In this they share the religious sentiments of the local people whom they worship as folk Gods and Goddesses. Various aspects of the folk culture of the Tehri kingdom are also imbibed by this community. There is a greater impact of Buddhism on the folk literature of this community. They offer water to the Dalai Lama in their homes everyday besides worshipping local deities like *Narrsinhg*, *Bhairav*, *Dunda Devi*, *Pandav*, *Nanda*, *Kachdu* and gods like *Shiva*, *Parvati* and *Ganesh*. Besides the first day of the Buddhist calendar is celebrated as a festival called *Lo-sar*. Every year on the occasion of Ganga-Dussera, the Jad speakers keep their Gods and Goddesses in *paagji* and take them to Gangotri. After worship the Gods are established in the Jad homes. Every year, on Dussersa Pandav dance is organized in Harsil. Thus, the Jads pray to Hindu gods and goddesses and they also follow the beliefs of Buddhism.

Folk Songs - Among the folk songs, *Tandi* songs are especially popular. These folk songs and dances are performed during prayer ceremonies, auspicious occasions and special functions. Among them, folk songs based on sacred hymns are well known. The following folk songs which have been translated from original Jad describe the love of people for different natural objects and the local ambience. Their habitation between the rivers Bhagirathi and Yamuna may appear to be difficult terrain to other people but in their songs they admire the natural topography. They migrate to safe zones during chilly winter season and thus they have got acclimatized to their surroundings. Instead of condemning the harsh physical realities of their life, they try to present advantageous aspects out of them before the world in the form of their songs:

Folk Song 1 - *The lofty upland, the petty saplings*

The beautiful mountains, appear agreeable.

Moving up in the summer season, coming down in the winter season,

Staying on the route/appears agreeable.

Loading goods on horses and children on the back,

Beginning the journey at dawn, appears agreeable.

Folk Song 2 - *We, the shepherds who walk with the flock of sheep,*

With the aid of the wood of 'Rayuns' (an evergreen tree of the bamboo breed),

We will load goods on our back and proceed towards home.

Along with the sheep, we also experience discomforts,

We do not get time to eat and drink,

In the second song they describe the utility of their work as a shepherd. They take their sheep from one place to another and thus encounter different kinds of hardships

but they understand that they have to fulfill the responsibility that is destined upon them. This fact is glorified as they sing a song in admiration of that.

Folk Tale -The folktale prevalent among Jad people also reveals their close association with harsh realities of human life and their attaining wisdom out of that. The folk tale entitled “Foolish People” under review reveals the pitiable predicament of an old couple. They take a bet that the early riser will get one loaf of bread and the late riser will get the remaining two loaves of bread. As the result, they did not wake up for three days and the villagers presumed that they had died and so they were taken for cremation and seeing their very end at hand they got up and started running. The villagers thought them to be ghosts and not the living ones. This story throws light not only on their simple and hard life but also their getting enjoyments out of the adverse situations. It elucidates their philosophic bent of mind. Without getting any formal education, they were able to reveal deeper layers of meaning within simple aspects of life.

JAUNSARI - The folk songs and folk tales of Jaunsar-Bawar are a part of the rich cultural heritage of the region. In the paucity of any written literature, these are preserved by being orally transmitted through the generations. It has been found that the impact of Himachali traditions is perceptibly found in their oral literature. As far as folk songs are concerned *Maangal* – auspicious songs are sung during taking out the grains from the granary and sending off a bride from her maternal home. *Haarul* and *Jaanghu* songs are traditionally sung during the Hindu festivals like *Diwali*.

The following *maangal* songs which have been translated from original Jaunsari describe the high regard for a Brahmin priest and the significance of his blessings for getting the plentiful grains during reaping season. It also reveals that they feel the precedence of blessings over hard work delineating this fact that the blessings can yield better harvest than other considerations:

Auspicious song

O Brahmin priest (you) grant prestige

The son of Bajgi is playing the auspicious congratulatory tune.

The son of Brahmin is applying the saffron mark.

Haarul songs are those songs which eulogize the bravery of ancient warriors. They are performed in front of an audience for their imbibing the ideals of legendary heroes. They have faced the armed onslaught of Mughals when they crossed the borders of the present Himachal State. The heroes like Natiram gallantly fought against them and thus saved the honor of their homeland. The adversary army outnumbered the domestic one but even they got vanquished. In this way they present an exemplary courage for the posterity to imitate. They exhort the present generation to rise to the occasion for safeguarding the rights of the area in the same valiant spirit as was done in the past by great heroes of the land. Besides them there are also those songs which describe about the local fairs organized in Jaunsari areas. The following conversational song which was sung on the occasion of *Diwali* is between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law in which the latter wants to go to see *Narayani* fair and the former does not permit her to do so. It reveals the straight jacket conventions and traditional mind-set of the older generation in conflict with the progressive mentality and freedom loving nature of the

young generation. Both of them are sticking to their perspectives as per their own understanding of the situations of their life:

*Dhai has blossomed at the branch of the garden.
Mughals have come in Paonta of Dun.
Dhai has blossomed at the branch of the garden.
Is there any such valiant warrior who can defeat the Mughals?
We have heard that brave Natiram is gallant amongst gallants.
Only Negi of Maletha can do such works.
My messengers you eat food.*

Janguu Songs also reveal their playful nature with regard to enjoying each moment of their life. It also expresses their philosophic bent of mind. They want to search the ultimate reality of life. The perfect example of this is their comment, about the transitoriness of human life. Human beings disappear from this world as a leaf detaching from a tree leads to its disappearance from this earth. The song also expresses that it becomes difficult here to interact with others because sorrows are not understood with an empathetic touch by others. Thereafter the song reflects the travails of scorching heat which needs to be quenched through cold water. In other words, these folk songs reveal different facets of Jaunsari life. Umpteen conditions with regard to their hard life, life of struggle is expressed in the background of the natural beauty and it becomes a redeeming feature for them. They also have the natural instincts of love, relishing festivities and celebrating things without any discrimination of gender. Both the sexes enjoy the celebrations with aplomb.

*That which is now, will not be the same in the future.
Man is decreasing like the leaf which falls from the tree.
Near the hill and on the bank of the irrigated field, a fair was organized.
The others saw the fair and I kept on looking at your face.
I could not understand your Persian
On the blank paper, do write black alphabets in future.
I had come early morning
I was heated by the sharp sunlight,
and because of this I felt thirsty for cold water.*

Folk Tale -There is a famous story of the wisdom of the elders quite famous in the annals of Jaunsari oral literature. It describes about the wisdom of a man Gurku who met with a demon while going to his in-laws house. He reached the village while verbally hoodwinking him and on his return convinced the demon to do such an act which ultimately proved fatal for him. These stories gave a lesson to the younger generations that they should not lose patience in the face of odds and by making use of their cognitive skills they can turn the tables in their favor. This does not require any calculative maneuvering rather it calls for the presence of mind. The person has to understand that his primary duty to save his life and to come out unscathed from the impending doom. The story can be interpreted in different ways. The hill life is connected with a large number of dangers with regard to the attack of wild animals. So the demon becomes a symbol of these wild animals and any helpless men can be able to safeguard his life by his discretion. The story exemplifies the old adage

"Discretion is a better part of valor". In this way the folktales also give life saving techniques and methodologies to the novices of that region.

JOHARI – This language is primarily spoken in the Johar region of the Munsyari block in District Pithoragarh. Johar folk literature is found in the form of folk songs, folk tales *Aukhan*, riddles children's songs, etc. These songs which are sung on various occasions can be classified as religious songs, eulogies, ceremonial songs, romantic songs, laudatory songs and Holi songs of their subjects. The folk songs of Johar were first published with translation in English in 1948 in *Lonely Furrows of the Borderland* by K.S. Pandey.

Folk Songs- The folk songs cover shades of meaning ranging from physical beauty to the natural beauty and the particularization of the details of different hilly flora and fauna. This provides a convincing touch to these songs as they do not mention things as products of imagination but they are the by-products of their daily routines of life. In another song, the importance of different festivals in recharging the humdrum life is underlined with the description of different seasons of the year. They not only blossom the verdure of the area but they also bring mirth and jollity in the life of the residents of that area. In another song we find the plentiful use of similes and metaphors. The perfect examples are as follows,

*How can I forsake her who is beautiful like the moon of Dooj?
How can I forsake her who is sweet like the piece of sugarcane?
How can I forsake her who looks like the Venus star?
How can I forsake her who has a tender body like the protector of poos/paush.*

People of the hills are very religious in nature and that is why different deities are worshipped by getting their temples built on hill tops. It is also found that a description of close-knit relationship of siblings and the uniqueness of their specific traditional occasions are stressed in Johari poetry. This can be found in the following lines:

*My Fair Sister! This month of the love of brother and sister has arrived.
Fortunate person who remain alive to listen to this month's seasonal song!
Who will be able to listen this seasonal song after dying?
Those with a brother, will get a Betholi from his brother
Who will get a Betholi for an unfortunate like me who is brotherless?*

In another song the romantic love between the young couple is expressed. This shows that the Johari people despite facing the hardships of their existence still have a fascination for the basic elements of life for recharging their spirits. In a song there is a detailed description of daily chores of life but this is combined with the expression of love. In one of the songs the son expresses his deep felt love for a girl in front of his father and this emotion is mixed with other things in such a dexterous manner that it cannot be found fault with by the elder generation. The following lines are the example of this love-laden soul of the son.

*The she goat fatigued while ascending Untadhura,
No father, only she has mesmerized my heart.
The she goat was slain, the fat of she goat,
How can I forsake her who is beautiful like the moon of Dooj?*

The songs of Johari people also reveal the beauty of dense forests teeming with multifarious animals so they express their attraction towards the opposite sex with the terminology of the forest and this expresses their vital and meticulous knowledge of different small creatures and their surroundings. The following lines explicitly reveal this aspect:

*Have well shaped shins like the pillar of the plantain tree,
And have a desirable waist like an ant
And refulgent face like the sun and the moon.
By which you survey the entire world.*

In another Johari song we find the pain of a lady whose husband has gone to the Bhabar of Chaurasi to earn his livelihood and she has to serve her in-laws with great devotion. The absence of her husband squeezes her energies and her pain of separation is well understood by another lady facing the same predicament. As they remain in close proximity of nature so the examples they give for expressing their pain also relates to those natural objects. In hills the clouds move at a low height and the enveloping fog obstructs the nearby hills so the lady is not able to see her motherland (maternal home) for getting much needed succour at this period of emotional and physical crises. Her pain of separation gets accentuated when she finds the deer full of life force for enjoying life and the contrast make her all the more miserable. The following lines very well exemplify the feelings of the despondent girl.

*My husband has gone to Bhabar of Chaurasi,
that is why I'm starving and have become so frail,
On one hand the tender musk deer is on the bloom,
On the other hand my hair is graying.
Go away, O condensed fog! So that I may see my mother land.*

Folk tale - Apart from folksongs, the Johari folktales also reveal their grasp of the ugly realities of life. They remain cut-off from the urban life but then even selfishness and self-aggrandizement sometimes dominate the mind of certain persons and they do not feel shy of possessing their *Bhabhi* after the unnatural death of their brother. The scarcity of food is quite noticeable in their folk tales too and that is why they kill small animals for satisfying their hunger. In a most characteristic story revolving around five Pinuryal brothers who lived in Jaitoli Saim this comes out in a most glaring manner. Due to their facing most inclement weather and leading the harsh life of cliffs and crossing rivulets at each and every step, they never fear of their impending doom. That is why Beer Singh in the story under review did not lose hope and by virtue of his intelligence and courage saved himself and reached home.

MARCHE - The speakers of Marche normally live in the upper part of the Niti and Mana Valleys of the Joshimath Tehsil of Chamoli district. Although a lot of devotional songs, ceremonial songs are found in Marche language but it shows the impact of Tibetan and Garhwali language. Some of the folk songs of Marche talk about the closure of the Tibetan trade. In some of their songs they sing about their adoration of folk deity Ghanyaal Devta during the celebration of Laspa festival. While analyzing their songs it has been found that sheep and goats are their lasting companions so they found space in majority of their songs. All the towns of Niti Valley also find space

in their songs. But their best songs are those songs where they express their devotion for their folk deity. This fact is quite perceptible in the following auspicious song of Faila Devta.

*O holy divine deity! The soles of your feet are soft like butter
And the shape of your big toe is like the face of a serpent.
Your calf muscles are like shaft of a censer
And the knots like the stone of a peach.
O Lord! flexible like a serpent,
Your thighs are like a banana.*

Besides they naturalize the physical features of their reverent deity by comparing their organs with different instruments of daily use. This elucidates that their worshipped deity has the edge of nose like the sharp edge of a dagger and the head resembles the entire universe. The following lines are the clear examples of this fact:

*Your eyes are like deep, still ocean
And your eyebrows like a stretched bow.
O Divine Deity! Your forehead has the glow of the full moon.
O Divine Deity! Your head is like the entire universe.*

The most famous Marcha (Rangpa) songs are those which describe the distress owing to the snapping of trade relations with Tibet. As they find more similarities with the neighboring Tibetan lands than with the Indian mainland. The monasteries like Tholing leave an indelible impression on their psyche. The following lines are an expression of their emotional affinity with Tibet.

*When we used to go to Tibet the children (used to) become very happy.
After wearing ornaments, new kilts and clothes they used to leave/drop us till Bolaan (a place)
Now what will mother do, now what will father do?
There were sharp paths
Here and there nothing was present.
On all the four sides there were big stones and snow.*

Folk Tale- In the Marche folktale, it is found that they feel that less snow in the glacier is a bad omen for the Molfa people. Accordingly, their stories revolve around this aspect. The year in which there is less snow, is considered to be unlucky whereas the year with greater glacier formation is seen as a harbinger of a prosperous year. In other words, they feel pleasure in very cold climate as they have got acclimatized to that. In case they are shifted from this region of Mana glacier to another less cold place, then they suffer from the ailment of great magnitude. This fact is found written in a folktale entitled Molfabaank where the King of Tehri felt enchanted of the bewitching beauty of a local girl Uma when he was returning after visiting Sri Badrinath shrine. The marriage got solemnized and Uma shifted to Tehri but she could not bear the heat of Tehri and the fever (which occurs due to heat) gripped her. Despite the best efforts of the doctors and the medicines, no relief came in handy for her. So as a last resort, as per her direction, snow was brought from Mana glacier to be eaten by the queen. With the result she felt her body melting with the snow and the glacier from where the snow was brought is called the Molfa glacier.

RANG LVU - Rang Lvu is the language of the Rang people who live in the Darma Byaans and Chaundas regions of Dhar Chula in district Pithoragarh. They have a very rich tradition of folksongs because the songs are sung during *Namakaran*, marriages and the last rites (the tales told at the time of last rites are collectively called *Kakapuran*). The significance of their folksongs and dances can be understood in this way that they are prominently performed during national festivals. In one of the folksongs they stress on the beauty of Darma which provides substance to the life of its residents under the blessings of Gods and Goddesses. Being god fearing, majority of their love songs revolve around describing the bountiful nature of their 14 Gods and 30 Goddesses. They feel that from the birth of a child to the last day the blessings of God are omnipresent. At each and every auspicious occasion they understand the omnipotent presence of their deities. The following line is a perfect example of this philosophy of their life:

*Oh God! fourteen Gods! Goddess! Thirty Goddesses! Be pleased.
May the agility of the coverlet be blessed.*

Despite residing in inaccessible areas of rough terrain they realize the significance of education. They understand that knowledge is a stepping stone for getting success in life and this cannot happen without the blessings of the divinity. It is education alone which can bring respect for a man in his country or abroad. This clearly reveals that Rang people are the only group who give prominence to knowledge acquisition along with worship of divergent divinities. The following lines quoted below impart a lesson to the fellow beings to drink the nectar of knowledge for their own well being and the well being of the society.

*Now, we will read and write.
Like the voice of a bronze bell.
We will teach our skill to others too.
We will learn other's skill by holding its root.
Till we live, only then there will be our respect in our country and abroad.*

Folk Story- In the folktale it is found that the people believe in the saying that one should lose hope despite being cornered. A python was killed by not just attacking it openly, but by surreptitiously putting the red hot piece of stone inside its mouth. Each and every day it used to eat people on their way up the mountain and swallow people on their way down. And so people by avoiding that route walked through the high peaks of the mountains and valleys below. Realizing this fact that they could not head on face the python, they adopted the indirect method of facing the fatal danger of python. The story belongs to a period of great antiquity but it reveals the wisdom, sagacity and impromptu decision making of the people. The folk tales reveal that they developed their own methods of survival in the face of animals moving in dense forests which they had to cross for running their livelihood. It is also an encouragement to the hill residents living in the dangerous mountains that size and might do not matter.

THARU - Tharu is a language of a minority tribe residing in the Khatima and Sitarganj blocks of district Udham Singh Nagar. Although there is a dearth of written literature in Tharu, the oral folklore and tradition of this language are extremely rich.

In Tharu, folksongs, ballads, folktales, folk dramas, idioms, anecdotes and proverbs are found in abundance. The best feature of their culture is that stories based on the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharat*, social tales, love stories and magical tales are also sung. Among the Tharus, Diwali is a festival of sorrow while Holi is the main festival and they rejoice dancing and singing Holi songs. In their society folk dramas like *Swaang*, *Thitholi*, *Kathageet*, *Nautanki*, *Bhagat* and *Khyal* are popular. These are traditionally performed on an open stage in front of the common public through physical and verbal gesticulations. Their folk literature has its own rich tradition and it reveals the characteristics, lifestyles, social beliefs and culture of this tribe.

Folk Songs - With regard to Tharu folksongs, we have chosen for our incisive analysis four songs namely, *Jhinji* song, *Swaang* song, marriage song and Holi song. When we ponder over *Jhinji* song, we find it revolving around the kidnapping of Sita as revealed to Laxman by a relative affected by the agony of separation. The entire world appears to him to be dull, jejune and diffident. The tree becomes dry and the river lacks water as if got integrated with the pain and sufferings of the person concerned. Another folksong known as *Swaang* song delineates the joyful moments shared by the lover and the beloved. When we try to associate each and every action described in this song at a deeper level we find the breaking of pearl strings and bangles suggesting sexual innuendos. The intact "string of pearls" and "green bangles" reveal the pre-consummation stage of the beloved and the breaking of them bring out their fulfillment of love instincts. The following lines are the perfect example of the inference drawn above.

*String of pearls broke while playing with the lover.
Green-green bangles are there in fair-skinned hands.
These also broke while playing with the lover.*

The marriage song describes the usual joviality of both families which are singing songs of mirth for their establishing close knit relationship. Not only the bride and the groom but the entire household is bristling with activity and enjoying food of fine quality and other gifts being showered over them. The following lines are an example of their happiness and joy

*Groom's mother is asking jovially
What food have you eaten?
The groom replies, I have eaten fine quality rice and green-gram lentil. .
The groom's paternal aunt is asking jovially,
What gifts have you brought?*

. Leaving all inhibitions they get themselves drenched in water. The lines of the Holi song being quoted here below portray the youthful gusto of merry-making on the part of the lover and the beloved. They want to drink life up to the brim.:

*Beloved! where will I hide the stole, where will I hide lover's turban?
My stole will get drenched, behold the clouds are closing in!
Beloved! I will hide the stole in my dress, I will hide lover's turban in the bed*

Folk Story -The folktales of Tharu also reveal their simple lifestyle. They are dependent upon artisans with regard to their daily needs. So they are the main

personages of their stories. They try to hoodwink Tharus through their mischievous machinations so the simple Tharus enjoy their leisure time by describing their series of deceitful acts. As these tradesmen are also dependent upon each other and so they try to take advantage of the credulity of the other tradesman. Later on, they realize that both of them are on the same boat and make friendship with each other. The famous story of *Goojar and Sunaar* is a proverbial example of this marriage of convenience and selfishness.

Thus we find that tribal people of hills remain in the lap of nature by remaining aloof from the hum-drum and mechanical urban life and they try to get happiness out of the simple aspects of their life rooted in rich traditions for enriching the posterity with regard to their ethos. They were encircled from one side – Nepal and from another – China; so the influence of these cultures is also writ large on their languages, besides there is no artificiality in it because they reveal the natural flavor of the soil with a touch of pristine values. They not only unfurl the flag of religious fervor but also show-case their multi-faceted inherent talent through these folk songs and folk tales. Although the folklores of different tribal communities living in far-off areas have been covered under the rubric folk literature for this paper, it can be explicitly affirmed that these folksongs and tales are the manifestations of their multi-faceted wisdom. They lead life by facing the rigors and vagaries of nature and they are affected by each and everything which they encounter in their risky life but all of them become the raw material for their creative effulgence. Folk literature is different from metropolitan literature because it directly stems from the core of unsophisticated sensibility and there is no sophistication or artificiality or foreseeing of consequences in it. They feel it as their bounden duty to reveal the bountiful nature, the simplicity of human behavior, concerns for animals and the outpourings of amorous emotions in the medium best suited to them or their ethos. Here lies the real greatness of tribal folk songs and tales of Uttarakhand that it includes all those singular features that characterize the rich folk forms of the world.

Work Cited

Bhatt, Uma and Shekhar Pathak. *The Languages of Uttarakhand*, The People's Linguistic Survey of India, Volume Thirty Part II (Tr.Dr.H.S.Randhawa), New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Pvt. Ltd. 2015.