

An Intersectionality of Folklore and Environmentalism in Indian Cinematography

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Abstract

An evolution of civilization brought diverse disciplines according to the necessity of time and mankind. Folklores are a representation of a certain group of people's life. Especially India has folklores which are intertwined with people's life and their environmental premises. Natural resources which are part of the day today life becomes the practice of worshipping almighty. It is a custom of Indian indigenous civics. Folklores are produced from the life and customs of civics. Hence, nature, climatic cultivation, circumstantial proverbs, Indian granny tales, lullabies, certain kinds of Indian films and rituals are interconnected. Hence, this study revolves around the folklores of the certain land and its representation in Indian movies such as Arunachal Pradesh's folklore 'Yapum' in Hindi movie 'Bhediya' (2022); Kannada deity ritual in 'Kantara' (2022); Bengal tales in 'Bulbul' (2020); Belief of fifth veda in Tamil web series 'Aindham Vedam' (2024) and so on.

Keywords: Legends, Natural Sources, Manhood, Interconnectedness, Films.

Folklore is a common scaffold of every culture of every corner of the world. Each region has its impact and influence in their narratives which spread its wings from generation to generation. It has its evolution according to the time but not changes its fundamentals. Furthermore it spreads its culture, customs, beliefs, identity, belongings, significance, diversity and so on as a legacy to future generations. It gets transformation and incarnation with the scope of time. Folklore is a term introduced by W.J.Thoms in 1846. Folktales and tradition has its embrace in every nation. But India, Africa, Greece, Italy and France are notorious regions for various kinds of Folklores, Mythologies and popular culture which are perpetuated

in literature naturally. Charlotte Sophia Burne, an English author wrote a book on Folklore which covers all its boundaries as parts.

Within all human societies, whether savage or civilized, we may naturally expect to find old beliefs, old customs, old memories, which are relics of an unrecorded past. Such sayings and doings, wherever found, wherever told or practised, have this common “note,” that they are sanctioned and perpetuated, not by experimental knowledge or scientifically-ascertained facts, not by positive law or authentic history, nor by the written record which is the necessary condition of any of these, but simply by habit and tradition. (The Handbook of Folklore, 02).

Folklores are interconnected with its geographical backgrounds. Hence, environmentalism is one of the intertwined factors of folklore and mythology. Especially in India, folktales and legends are not a completely superstitious ideology. It encompasses real traditions and land based customs in it. In parts of India, Sikkim folktales; Assamese folktales; Meghalayan folktales; Punjab tales; Tamilnadu folk tales; Kerala legends have done significant configuration. Stuart H. Blackburn and A.K. Ramanujan states that Indian folklore has five periods. A.K. Ramanujan says that kinds of Indian folktales could be classified into seven types. On that, “Tales of animals; Tales of death, fate” are intimated to ecological survivings. So, Legends and folktales represent not only ancestors’ lifestyle and events but also teaches the culture and identity of the respective region. Ramanujan gives detailed introduction on Indian folktales as,

Wherever people live, folklore grows, new jokes, proverbs (like the new campus proverb “To xerox is to know”), rhymes, tales, and songs circulate in the oral tradition. Chain letters and Murphy’s laws circulate on paper and graffiti on latrine walls. Verbal folklore, in the sense of a largely oral tradition with specific genres (such as proverb, riddle, lullaby, tale, ballad, prose narrative, song), nonverbal modes these expressive folk forms weave in and out of every aspect of city, village, and small-town life. Both public culture and domestic culture cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of the folk idiom. Every kind of Indian cultural practice, every Indian cultural performance, whether it is the classical epic and theater or modern film and political rhetoric, is indebted to oral traditions and folk forms. What we separate as art, economics, and religion appear intermeshed as aspects of the same performance. The aesthetics, ethos, and worldview of a person are shaped in childhood and throughout early life, and reinforced later, by these verbal and nonverbal environments. In a largely nonliterate culture, everyone whether poor or rich, high caste or low, professor, pundit, or ignoramus, engineer or street hawker-everyone has inside him a large non-literate subcontinent. (FolkTales from India, XIII-XIV)

As for the interconnectedness of folklore and environment, it reflects in the cinematography. Indian filmography has unique features in it. Among those natural resources, awareness and folklore related pictures are depictions of indigenous land, culture, nature resources, identity, language, Jargon, people ethnicity and heritage. Folklore and natural manhood are overlapping in its manifestation. It shapes and inseminates the culture, sense of duty of sustaining natural resources for the future generations among the minds through picturization. From puppet shows to today’s artificial intelligence, filmography includes each transition of the circumstances and takes its concept scaffold from environmental, cultural, phenomenal and all discipline’s civilization or changes. Therefore cinematic representations are similar to literary representations of the particular periods of era. Indian Cinematography comprises various indigenous cultural identities. Renu Saran wrote a book on History of Indian Cinema (2012). In that she has analysed profoundly about Indian regional cinemas and its influences. She mainly depicts six influences of Indian Cinema. On that, “The third influence was the traditional folk theatre of India, which became popular from around the 10th century with the decline of Sanskrit theatre. These regional traditions include the Yatra of Bengal, the Ramlila of Uttar Pradesh, and the Terukkuttu of Tamil Nadu” (HIC, 21).

In this way folklore influences films with the scaffold of environmentalism. Maddock films releases since 2018, the “Maddock Supernatural Universe” movie series based on Indian folk tales. “Stree” (2018) is their first movie in that series. “Stree” is based on Kannada folklore “Nale Ba” which is familiar around the 1990s. There is Belief that a girl who is in spiritual form, abducts men who look at her. Because of that, in that certain village men fear to go out after ten O’clock at night. It also has the ironic manifestation that women are secure and men are in fear. Through this indication of protection and gender equality traits. Meaning of the “Nale Ba” is “Come Tomorrow”. The movie “Street” is a Hindi film, on the basis of Kannada folklore, the movie concluded with “Street Protect Us” terms. In that series, “Bhediya” (2022), is based on ‘Yapum’, Arunachal Pradesh’s folklore. Werewolf is the meaning of the term ‘Yapum’. Arunachal Pradesh is a north east part of India, which has more forest area in it. People of Arunachal Pradesh have belief that ‘Yapum’ is a deity as well as forest spirit which safeguards forest range. If there is any threat to the forest, Yapum takes incarnation as werewolf and saves the forest. It is the strong belief of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. The movie “Bhediya” comprises the Yapum story which includes the moral that forest is a source and survival factor for all kinds of living creatures. Yapum gives the remembrance of the novella Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by R.L. Stevenson. Partially it has similarity in its story line. In the series, the third one is “Munjya” (2024), it is a movie based on Maharashtra folklore which is a belief of people that male who dies just before the marriage, transforms as spirit and invades peepal trees as their homes. And such men, abduct the human body to fulfill their wish list. Based on this story, “Munjya” film is taken. And also, it says the scientific truth that the people who lie under the peepal tree at night which could exhale an abundance of carbon dioxide would put pressure on the living people. In Tamil language there is folk slang that says this is happening as “Amukuni Pisasu”. Elderly people advise children not to sleep under the tree at night. “Munjya” gives the impression that unfulfilled desires would lead to the incarnation of the birth cycle.

Kannada Folklore and tribal family’s real story on Karnataka forest deities Panjurli and Ghuliga. It belongs to Tulu oral tradition. Panjurli means offspring. Through this rural story background, the movie “Kantara” (2022) is made. Complete story line of the movie is about saving forest, saving forest tribe people lands, recognising their beliefs and customs. “Kantara” is an Intersectionality of humanity, folklore, environmentalism and legacy.

‘Churel or Chudail’ is a Bengali term which means demon women. In Bengal there is a Folklore, If a girl child or woman dies at young age or at child marriage they will be Chudail who cannot tolerate ill-treatment on women. They will save women by killing tormenting men. “Bulbbul” (2020) is a Hindi film based on this Chudail folklore. In this movie, a woman protagonist kills the men who torment women in that village. She incarnates as Chudail or Kali at night and kills. Through this movie, there is reprimand on patriarchal chauvinistic ideology and awakening of female children with self-protection.

“Aindam Vadam” (2024), Tamil web series based on the belief in the fifth veda which might be written by Brahma. In Tamilnadu, there is a temple in Thiruvaiyaru named Aiyarappar Temple where lord Shiva is worshipped. Name of the temple is based on many factors like rivers, legends. Also, there are depictions of important temples around it. Among them a story on Brahma’s fifth head which is beheaded is mentioned. That fifth head is the fifth veda which could be about AI. In Tirupattur, Brahmapureeswarar Temple is located where Brahma got relief from his curse. Through this story line “Aindam Vadam” series is taken as science-mythological combined picture. On that, the temple location is mentioned as fictional town Ayyankarapuram. It is a caution about AI which could cause severity in future if it is indulged with wrong intentions.

Furthermore, Indian folklore, Indian mythology and all disciplines have subtle uniqueness; hidden meanings of scientific predictions which are interlinked with one another. Indian culture and Indian folklore cannot be separated. So, depictions in cinematography are interconnected. Intersectionality of Folklore and environmentalism is taken into account as scaffold of research in cultural identities. Indigenous civics could be understood thoroughly and profoundly with the listening of terminology; riddles; proverbs and folktales of such oral versus jargon traditions of the certain boundaries.

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